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23rd Psalm Of The New Testament

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If you would like to look at the beginning text for our spiritual meditation this morning, turn to Ecclesiastes the first chapter. Here we are going to find the Lord tells man something about himself that on the surface he is pretty prone to deny. The Lord made man, the Lord knows man, the Lord tells man what he is like and he operates. There are four basic spiritual thoughts involved in this passage. Beginning at verse 9 he says, "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun." There is nothing new basically in the human race or in the world. Now, I said basically. Externally, top-water, superficially we run into new insights and get new information right along, but it has always been there. We are simply unearthing it, and it is being revealed to us. Now a second thought that he says is in the next verse, "Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us." That which to us looks like something new, the Lord said that's not new; basically it is not. It is that which has been before. The third thought is that man is very forgetful of the past. In verse 11, "There is no remembrance of former things;" Man by nature looks forward, and that is good, and he has a tendency to forget the past. "neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." So the last two thoughts are, man is a forgetful being and forgets what was done before or what has been before, so he says "this is new - first time". It probably isn't at all. Or "this is new", and it isn't. It has been before.
The last thought that Solomon shares with us for the Lord here is that man will, not only in the past has been, but will always by nature forget that which has been done and that which is, and will continually from time to time
say, "here is something new". This is very vital to our study, because the conclusion we draw is simply this: The basics of this earth have not changed since the beginning. They are not changing now. They are never going to change. These are the basics. Let me illustrate this. In James 1:17, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." God does not change. God is the same that he has always been. In Hebrews 13:8 it says "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." These are fixed in their work, and in basics they will not change. In particulars and other details there will be changes. In 1 Peter 1:25, "the word of the Lord endureth for ever." It will not be altered, nor will it be changed, nor will it be improved, nor will it be extended. The Word of the Lord has once for all been delivered unto the saints and cannot be improved upon. Even man has remained basicly the same; he has the same appetites, the same passions, he commits the same sins. There are no new sins today; there are no new atrocities today; there are no new emotions today; there are no new basic ideas. We are unearthing a lot of new thoughts, but not basic thoughts as such." It has been appointed unto man once to die and after that the judgment." Man is still dying and will continue to die as long as we have man on the earth. In first Peter 1:24, Peter said man is like the grass and the glory of man as the flower, the bloom, of the grass. Certainly we know now in this state, in this city, under this burning sun that we have the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever." The Lord endureth forever, and Jesus does not change. These are basics that will not change. So if you have been upset recently by feeling that we are going to overhaul the world and revolutionize everything, just calm your fears, because it hasn't been done since the beginning and will not be done until the end.
Let me give another illustration. The basic scheme of redemption (I said basic - that means the foundation, the very beginning, the most simple, fundamental). The basic of God's scheme of redemption, God's plan for saving man, has never changed from the beginning. It has always been the same basically. That is man must come to an acknowledgment of and a faith in God almighty and do God's bidding. Man is saved by faith and obedience. Now in the Patriarchal period, the Jewish period, the Christian period that we live in the details are different. This is perfectly normal. The particulars change; the basics do not change. Since Pentecost we have had a way to be saved, a way to satisfy the Lord, a way to placate justice, a way to come to a unity with God. No one ever before Pentecost had been told to find peace with God this way. We are told: I want you to repent, every one of you, and be baptized, every one of you. This is on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2. It comes on through to us today. I want you to repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Now this is a particular difference. The Jews carried their animal sacrifices to the altar in the temple, and they cut the throat of the animal and bled it and contained the blood in some kind of vessel and poured it at the base of the altar and burned the body of the animal. That was satisfying to God under the Jewish dispensation, under the animal sacrifice period. Today we are giving our bodies living sacrifices. Our blood, our flesh, our bones, our spirit, our mind, will, heart, soul - everything - is a sacrifice, a spiritual sacrifice to the Lord. Men every day are being told just like the preacher Aninas said to Saul, "Saul, why tarriest thou, arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." There is not a single person going to be cleansed from his sins today, nor has there ever been one from Pentecost until now, who was saved from his sins except by arising, showing his faith in the Lord Jesus by
being baptized for the remission of those sins, and by the grace of God his burden was lifted from his heart. Or you take the great commission in Mark 16, "go into all the world, carry the good news, preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." In every case he is talking about faith in God, obedience to his Word. Jesus brought the truth, so we are to believe in Jesus, and be faithful to his Word. He came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him. Now in Psalm 23 we have a series of great truths that have not changed. The same relationship exists today between man and God, if man wants it that way, as before. There are fifteen promises written in the 23rd Psalm. It was written about 1050 BC. All of these are reaffirmed in the New Testament between the years 50 and 100 AD. I would like to read for you, and do it a little differently if I may. I want us to take each promise and take just a few moments to let it sort of be absorbed into your mind, into your heart. Then today when you get home and are in the quiet hour of your own house, take the 23rd Psalm; read it again; it will thrill your heart; it will put a power, a strength within you. Here the great psalmist, a man after God's own heart, said,
The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; 
he leadeth me beside the still waters. 
He restoreth my soul: 
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, 
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; 
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. 
Thou prepardest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; 
~ thou anointest my head with oil; 
my cup runneth over. 
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: 
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

That is some of the greatest power for the wounded soul, the fearful individual, 
the one who is apprehensive, the one who is carrying a very serious heavy 
cross or problem in his heart. I noticed in reading throughout the New Testament 
that each promise is beautifully re-phrased in the New Testament. It is just as 
fresh, just as new, just as modern, just as relevant to my life today as the very 
moment that David uttered this 23rd Psalm. There is not a person in this audience 
but that has an apprehension, is dealing with some kind of a problem, has 
something of an upset, has a difficulty he is trying to work out. We know, 
there is going to be illness sometime in our life in the future; there is going 
to be a loss of loved ones, dear ones, they will be taken away from us. We 
know there will be tragedies, hours of darkness, shadows, death. I suppose 
this 23rd Psalm of all the readings of the Bible is the most loved, the most 
read, the most cherished, and that reading that has lifted and sustained more 
hearts longer than any other single passage in all the Word of God. And today 
it is just as wonderful and vibrant as it was in 1050. The first promise 
is that of peace and prosperity for the righteous man. "The Lord is my shepherd", 
and that's exactly what Jesus had to say to us. Turning to the 10th chapter of 
John, beginning at verse 1, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not 
by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a 
thief and a robber." There is only one legitimate shepherd of your life, he says,
"But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep, to him the porter openeth; /the sheep hear his voice; /he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." There is a tremendously close relationship between shepherd and sheep. "And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice." "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." "The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of my Father." As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." He is talking about the Gentiles who are going to come into the church and be a part of it just like the Jews. Then there is going to be one shepherd and one church, one fold. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Then going to the 27th verse through the 29th, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." I shall not want for any thing. In Psalms 37:25 when David was an old man, he said "Once I was young, now I am aged. I have never seen the righteous forsaken or want, nor have I ever seen their children begging bread." ("I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.") - King James I

In Matthew 6:33, the Lord said "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things (food, clothing, and shelter) shall be added unto you." Paul, the apostle, in Philippians 4:11 said, "for I have learned, in
whosoever state I am, therewith to be content." There were times when he was full and times when he was hungry. But it was the Lord's testing, and he was in the palm of the Lord's hand. And he said, whether I am being chased, and pursued, and persecuted, or accepted, and loved, and blessed, or hungry, or full, or whatever the case may be, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content", because this is the will of my Father, and the Lord was his shepherd and he did not want. I believe that God has fulfilled his promise today. Any keen observing individual would say, "look at America today and God has fulfilled his promise - If I be your shepherd you shall not want." In his book "How to live 365 days a year" Dr. John A. Shimer said, "No age has ever had it as good as ours. No age has ever been as free of want as ours. We in the United States probably have less stress than any people ever before in the history of the world." That's a pretty bold statement. We only tend to advertise what stresses we have more. It would be well if we believed our news, propaganda advertising, and propaganda less. He is saying that if you have an accident you hear it four or five or six times in a day, and if there is a problem, or a tragedy, or a crime you hear it repeated again and again, and it has developed a syndrome, an attitude pattern, that the whole world is going to pot. Everything is bad and wrong. It's not that bad, he says. Also the promise of security and strength to the righteous man. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." Here is plenty always. This is what the shepherd is looking for constantly leading his sheep to those pastures which are green. In the 6th chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus is trying to say to his children, to his sheep, "Therefore I say unto you, do not continue to worry for your life what you shall eat or what you shall drink; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than meat, and are you not more important than raiment. Behold the fowls of the air:
they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are you not of more importance than them?" And then he goes to the pasture, "Why take you thought of your clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

("Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?... And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.") - King James I

God can just touch the earth and make the flowers spring up in a grandeur and sublimity beyond anything that man can ever produce. "Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" You shall not want, because you shall be in green pastures. You shall not want, because you will be led by still waters. You know that sheep are a fickle animal, the rushing of the rapids where water is, they will stay on the bank and starve to death. When the water is deep and silent flowing the sheep will come and very gingerly and innocently drink their water. It makes a big difference whether that water is noisy or silent. Not only is there much water here, but there is safety and security in it, and there is much of it, for God gives only in great proportions. The woman at the well had come with a pitcher to draw water, and Jesus said, "Did you know I have water to drink that you don't know anything about?" Eternal life was what he was talking about. She said, "Give me of this water that I may drink of it and never have to come to this well and drink again." And he said, "The water that I give unto you, when you drink of it/
you will never thirst again. It will well up within you a well of water springing forth unto everlasting life. You have learned the truth; now you tell the truth; you evangelize the world. It is a more important water than this; it is the water of life. You come here and you have your pitcher and you fill it and you empty it and you fill it and empty it, but I can put the truth in your heart and it will stay full forever and forever. I will lead you by the deep and the abundant water. He restores my soul. Philippians 4:6-7 I suppose has to be one of my favorite passages, "In nothing continue to worry, but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be known unto God. And the peace of God that passeth all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord."

("Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.") - King James I

And yet I like to think "shall restore your heart and mind. You are troubled. you are worried, you are anxious, you pray to God and in supplication you ask for something, and the peace of God that passes understanding shall restore your heart and mind, and give you that sustenance sustenance spiritually that we so want and need, and he leads me in the paths of righteousness. People say the Bible is a very limiting message; Christianity is a very narrow message. And it is, thank God that it is. If it got so broad and went in all directions, you wouldn't know what to follow. You wouldn't know what to do. You wouldn't know where to go. The Lord said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto destruction and many people go in thereat."

You go the narrow way. I am thrilled with the security I have in knowing there is a way; it is this way; it is not a broad way, so broad that I can't find it all, can't see it all, and understand it all. It is enough.; I can follow it; I can be safe. I thank God for the narrow way. I use that in the proper termenology of
that term "narrow", for that way I can find my way. / and it gives me security and it gives me comfort and peace of mind. Likewise the psalmist says, 
I shall have comfort and consolation which goes to the reliable man." Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

Can you imagine ascending down into the shadows at the close of the day, taking his sheep with him, and down there are jackals, lions, leopards, mountain lions, and no telling what all, and he says, "I will fear no evil for God is with me". There are some words of some who have sought Jesus when they died they said these things, "I shall be satisfied with thy likeness, Lord Jesus."

Another said, "This is the last of earth. I am contented." Another said (and this person, incidentally, was deaf) "I shall hear in heaven." The blind say, "I shall see again." Another who was dying said "These rays (the sun rays coming through his window in his sick room) seem to be beckoning me to heaven." Not a single person listed here was afraid; not a person was upset, in agony, in contortions, a fear for what lay ahead, because these quotations were taken from people who had sought Jesus. I would like to ask of any in the audience who are not Christians, "What would you say if it were your lot to go down in the valley of the shadow of death; you are facing an eminent departure from this world and into the world where you will face God at judgment; what would you say? What would be your last words? "I am not a Christian. I am not saved. But I am contented. I am happy in my sins. I am satisfied carrying the burden of the iniquity of my life all these many years." It couldn't be possible. But rather it could be we could say "The Lord is my shepherd, and I shall not want. Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me."

We need a trust like grandma had. I think I know now why we have grandmas and grandpas, because they are aged, experienced, spiritual, deep, and dedicated. There was a mother, children, grandmother. Husband was gone, and the grandfather.
was dead. They were in the house when a terrible storm arose. The lightning was flashing, the thunder roaring, and even the panes of the windows had been blown into the house on that side. There were three children there, and the mother noticed the 11 year old son leaned over and whispered something to grandmother and then she noticed a little later he was gone. She became concerned and frantic and rushed through the house, and found the 11 year old child in bed asleep, and the storm raging at its mightiest. She said, "Son, you frightened me to death. What are you doing up here in the midst of all this storm like this?" He said, "Well, I just talked to grandma, and grandma said 'God will take care of us.', so I thought it was time to give up and go to bed and go to sleep." And he did. Do you really believe that the Lord can be your shepherd, and will be your shepherd, and certainly wants to be your shepherd? If you do, why not let Jesus be your shepherd like he is the shepherd of so many many wonderfully happy people in this world today who are members of the body of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ? Why not let Jesus lead you to green pastures, beside the still waters, along the paths of righteousness, down into the valley of the shadow of death, and you with great courage, complete fearlessness walk into the experience of death and on into the land beyond, into the home where God lives and is awaiting for all his redeemed? Why not accept Jesus' ever promise so that you too, along with many many others who for years have, and many who today can say with great relief, comfort, consolation, happiness, and joy "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want"? While we stand and sing, will you not come?