

Shepherding

by Gary Sharp

Duration: 28:15

Transcript

Enough notes up here to read, keep me busy. Turn, if you would, to the book of Mark's gospel, Mark's gospel and chapter 6. Gospel by Mark, chapter 6. And let's read, please, at verse 34. Mark's gospel, chapter 6, verse 34.

And Jesus, when he came out, or when he came forth, saw much people and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep, not having a shepherd, and he began to teach them many things. Oh, the grace of the Lord Jesus, and oh, his vision and understanding of the need that he beheld. He saw much people, and he was moved with compassion.

Oh, that God might move us at this conference like the Lord Jesus, that we might have a care and a desire for others as the Lord Jesus did. You have to stop sometimes and wonder, when you read words like this, how much am I like my Lord? Now, in particular, I want to look at the subject of shepherding. And I realize that that's just directed towards a few, and maybe there aren't that many here, but it's been one that's upon my heart.

The Lord Jesus saw sheep without a shepherd. The Lord Jesus saw danger and need around him, and he was moved within to consider it, to take it in, and oh, that we might be the same today. By the way, it may apply to you in the sense that if there's someone here, and at some point in your life, you desire to be a guide or a shepherd amongst God's people.

There will be truths that we will touch that you need to consider and think of very carefully, because this is a work. If any man desire the office of an overseer, it's not just an office. It's a work, and it's a good work.

It's a responsible work before God. It is a work that takes time, much time, and it takes a heart for God and for his glory. I want you to turn back to the Shepherd Psalm, Psalm 23, Psalm 23, and I want to use this psalm not so much to comfort our souls today with the great truth that has comforted so many with its simplicity and with its beauty, but I want you to think with me, if you like, of some similarities that ought to be evident amongst those who shepherd God's people like the Lord Jesus, the Shepherd of our souls.

Psalm 23, 1. The Lord is my shepherd. My, what a priceless truth that is. I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.

He guides me. He leads 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 preparest 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 forever. Someone tells, but a man who pulled up for a red light, and beside him he saw a truck with a trailer and many sheep inside.

And he couldn't help it. He rolled down his window, and he yelled to the truck driver. He says, you know, you shepherds don't move your sheep around like you used to.

And the man leaned out the window and said, I'm not the shepherd. I'm the butcher. I wonder how we're viewed today.

How we treat God's sheep, those that he has put in our responsibility. Do we even know as we count them up day by day how many there are? There was that old shepherd who was keeping his sheep one day, and a man came along who really didn't know much about it. And he says, good morning, Mr. Shepherd, with your score of sheep.

And the man said, I haven't a score, nor half a score, but if I had as many more, and half as many more, and two and a half more, I'd have a score. I hope we have a better idea how many sheep we have than that fellow who was asking the question. And maybe your algebra will help you figure that out, but I'll leave it with you for inquiring minds.

Shepherding. You know, there's a number of personal pronouns in this psalm, and I know that we could count them up and talk about them, but I think what's so evident in this psalm is the tender, the tender relationship that there is between the shepherd and the sheep. And I think that that's returned just in the beautiful words that he uses, the Lord is my shepherd.

I wonder if we recognize today, just in our own souls, how precious it is to know him as mine. Now it says he's the Lord, that's the one who needs no one, yet he provides for all, giving light and guidance, one who loves to reveal himself to us. And I am certain that there were many occasions in which those sheep knew their shepherd because of his care, and his interest, and his watchfulness, and his vision for them, his desire on their behalf.

How much are we like the Lord Jesus? How much care do we manifest? Are the sheep touched to think of our care? This psalm has brought sweet delight to God's people down through the ages. And at times I have found its words have such personal comfort to my own soul. And I stand in need of it today and many days.

I find myself longing for his touch, for his closeness, and thankfully we do experience it many times. However, that's not my concern, as I've already mentioned. My focus is really on the great truth of the shepherds of God's people.

And I don't want to offend anyone, but I am concerned about leadership amongst God's people today. And I'd just like to pass on, if I can, a few thoughts today. We need Christ-like shepherds.

This world needs to see Christ in the believer, and the believer needs to see Christ in those who would guide them. And shepherding is truly a full-time position, a full-time job, a full-time work, far more than we estimate, far more than we think is needed, it's required, it's so essential for the good and the health of God's people today. And we need more who are like the Lord Jesus.

The tactics of the enemy of our souls mean to do us harm, mean to damage us. To bring us down, to tear us, to rend us. And we need the watchful and visionary care of a shepherd amongst God's people.

You know, if all shepherds fail, He will not. Maybe you're thinking or saying, I would that I had someone like that to model my life after, to take as an example, to follow willingly and gladly. But oh, dear child of God, if men should fail you, let me at least assure you this, the Lord Jesus will not fail.

We are so thankful, so thankful for the shepherd care of the Lord Jesus, for its precious revelation to our souls that He is mine, and He is not only mine, but He is my shepherd. He is the one who cares so much for me. He is the one who took the lamb in His arms, the one who gently leads those that are with Him, the one who carries them, feeds them, gathers them, and leads them.

A shepherd for my soul. God's people, according to verse 2, need rest, rest. They say that most Americans, and that's ditto for Canadians, are sleep deprived.

Now, that's not exactly and totally the kind of rest, but we all do recognize, don't we, that we need rest. And there are many things that can hinder that rest, that can trouble that rest. Why, the loud noises and the business of the mind that goes on, sometimes even during the hours of night, keeps us from really getting rest.

Here, perhaps the emphasis is, in the heat of the day, they need rest. With the obstacles of life, with the dry desert of our world, with all the things that we might encounter, with just the weariness of going on, He tells us we need rest. God's people ought to have leaders who will lead them into rest.

Into that kind of confident resting, whereby they know someone else is on the watch for me. You'll notice He makes them lie down. He makes them lie down.

He knows that we need those quiet moments. And godly men amongst His people will recognize God's people need to have confidence. They need to be able to settle.

They need to be able to rest. He speaks about pastures. Like an oasis amidst all the dryness, those pastures are not merely to laze around in.

Nor are those springs of water, that water that He leads us beside, simply to bathe in. But those things are to equip us, to fit us. And you know when He speaks about this pasture, He's talking about grass as it comes forth fresh.

Green. Didn't you like seeing that grass as you came along today? I know you're going to have to mow it eventually, but right now, isn't it nice to see the green freshness of spring arising? It is. You know what God's people need? They need shepherds who can bring before them what is fresh and green, strengthening.

God's people need men who can give them something fresh. Oh, you say, well, sometimes you come along and I get an old message. Yeah, I know.

Sometimes it's hard to be fresh. It's so important for God's people. And sometimes why there are thoughts that come before us that may have been precious in times past and they get a fresh fire to them.

There's a fresh appreciation of its truth. As it's brought before His people, how precious and encouraging and strengthening it is. God's people need rest.

God's people need refreshment. That's verse 2. Verse 2 says, He leads me beside the still waters. How well the shepherd knows that when God's people encounter the rough, disturbing, noisy waters, they do not function as they should.

It's sad to say many companies of God's people have experienced the noise, the disturbance. And you look at them and check how they're faring. Check whether they're really growing.

Whether they're really functioning the way they should. Sadly, sometimes you can tell they need a word that would refresh them and stimulate them. It says, He leads me.

Leads me. How much the sheep need gentle leading. Leading by example.

Leading with care. Leading that gently guides them in the right direction. That turns them the right way.

Teaching us as believers to trust everything to Christ. Turning our thoughts towards Him on whom all depend. God's people need refreshment.

Brother, are you refreshing these people? Giving them that which will stimulate them to grow, to produce, to be a blessing in turn to others. You look at verse 3. God's people need restoration. He restores my soul back to the starting place.

Back to the place where we're functioning, enjoying, thrilling in our souls at those things which are spiritual and valuable. Turning aside from those noxious things of the world that will drain us and our strength for God. Turning away from the danger that's all about us.

He restores my soul. You know the Bible still tells us in the book of Galatians chapter 6, if any man is overtaken, oh, how sad. The enemy has risen up and pursued.

And while it may have seemed that in his own strength he tried to get away as much as possible, if any man is overtaken in a fall, you which are spiritual, restore. Not turn your back on them. Maybe they've been troublesome.

Maybe they're hurting so bad that when they respond to you, they respond unkindly too. Restore such a one in the spirit of meekness. You know, there's always a danger for any of us that we'll be caught.

That we might be overtaken. That we might be brought down. There are men that we have highly respected and we have watched and we have heard and we have witnessed the enemy so successfully eliminate them from the race.

Take them out of that which is for God. I remember going to a birds of prey exhibit in an area not too far from where I live. And they showed us a number of things that these birds could do and then they brought in a peregrine falcon.

One of the fastest flyers in all that rapture world. And boy, could he go. He came right down between our heads and snatched the bait.

Seemingly out of nowhere. And then they told us the story of the bird. They said this bird was in a zoo.

Both its wings were broken. It took a lot of care. It took further training.

But here's the bird with the broken wing. You know, sometimes, brethren and sisters, we see someone and that statement we make. A bird with a broken wing can never fly so high.

But I want to tell you, that bird flew fast enough and far enough that I couldn't tell the difference. Oh, that God would grant us restoration. And maybe, just maybe today, preacher included, every one of us need a fresh touch from the Master's hand.

He restores. That takes work. It takes time.

It takes making choices about other things. He restores my soul. Notice He speaks about His cup.

My cup runs over. He's not just speaking about the excellence of the contents, but He's talking about the ever-flowing supply. Thank God.

Thank God for the Lord Jesus who fills our cup till it overflows. And, you know, sometimes we look on brethren who are local brethren, but they know where the goods are. And they're enjoying God's truth.

And they're putting it into practice. They're applying it in their own life. And when they speak, it becomes a most precious thing.

My cup overflows. Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful to see some soul who's been down, who's been discouraged, who needs that touch from the Master's hand and just see them rejoicing and this just spilling over. I remember a young fellow who got saved out in the Midwest.

I know this was his first joy. But you could just tell it was coming from somewhere deep inside. Have we lost our joy? Have we forgotten to be joyful in our salvation? In our Lord or in our assembly life? He restores.

Brethren and sisters, we need that kind of joy brought back again. And shepherds amongst God's people are called upon to be like Him. It's a tall order.

It's a huge job. It's way bigger than the ones you'll find in the world. It's more precious to God because those are His people.

Those are the sheep of His pasture that He's trusted you with. God's people need restoration. And notice please, God's people need right paths.

Verse 4 and 5. Oh, here's a shepherd and he's got vision. He's looking ahead. He's watching.

He's looking around. He knows that God's people need right paths. The paths of righteousness.

And the very orbit of those things of God that matter. Child of God, there's so much other stuff in this world. There's so many things that will distract us and attract us.

And God has given shepherds amongst us. Shepherds that ought to be able to steer us and to right paths. Paths of righteousness.

Shepherds that sympathize like the Lord Jesus. That revive in comfort. That lift up God's people.

Oh, how much we need true shepherds that have His heart amongst us today. Leads carefully. Understands the rest.

Understands His goal, His purpose. What God has designed and purposed for Him. Longing that Christ might be honored as a result of their service, as a result of their work.

Oh, how we ought to pray for men who are shepherds amongst us. And we ought to encourage them in keeping with how they encourage us. Lift them up before God.

That they might carry their responsibility before Him so that men and women, the sheep of His pasture, might live to the honor and the glory of our Lord Jesus. How much He deserves it. What a noble purpose and calling it is if you have been called by God to share in a part of His work.

It's humbling. It's thrilling. It's precious.

It's vital. Shepherding amongst God's people because God's people need right paths. Shepherds need to be aware.

Watchful. Why, the shepherd we read of who welcomes his flock back into the fold, those eastern shepherds, they would check them over to see if there was anything wrong. If any illness or injury would mar them or harm them.

That takes attention. It takes a vigil. It takes careful watchfulness.

There are many, many shadows. As He speaks, we shall hear the shadow of the valley. The valley of the shadows.

He's not speaking about when I die. He's talking about the shadows that are oftentimes cast upon our pathway because we're not always on the mountaintop. We're not always on the ridges.

Sometimes we spend time in the valleys. Sometimes there. Calamity.

It can overcome us. Pitfalls surround us. Dangers and enemies that are real.

He says, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort. But you know, it also tells us in Isaiah 40 about His arms. Not just a rod to beat off the enemy.

Not just a staff to strengthen them along the way and to guide me. But His arms to enfold me. His arms to examine me.

His arms to encourage me. Thank God for shepherds who care. I remember as a young believer, it's precious.

Some dear elders, shepherds, and guides in our assembly. I'm not saying they were perfect. But as I look back now, I can trace their care.

I can see the value that they placed upon me. I can still remember some of their encouraging words. I can still recall how they directed me in the paths of righteousness and how they put me to use in God's things.

And then, sometimes I remember one time I was teaching a class and it never occurred to me to say this, but I was teaching a class of children. I was invited by my uncle to take his class and I had no idea he was sitting right behind that curtain listening. He didn't do it to stand there and criticize.

He did it to see how I was growing. How I might have an effect on others. And I remember a few words he spoke at the end that just kind of lifted my spirit to think that what I was doing was something that might be a help to someone else.

Shepherds. Oh, the need of a shepherd to take God's people along the right paths when there's danger to steer them from it. Oh, he says, I'll fear no evil.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/36/SID36602.mp3>
Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/gary-sharp/shepherding/>