

The Sovereign Shepherd's Grace that Makes Me Lie Down

Preached by Pastor Phil Layton at Gold Country Baptist Church on May 30, 2010

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Psalm 23 (KJV) A Psalm of David. ¹ *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* ² *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters.* ³ *He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* ⁴ *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.* ⁵ *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.* ⁶ *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.*

In our continuing study through the phrases of this psalm, today in v. 2a I pray we can study and see and also celebrate the Sovereign Shepherd's grace that makes us lie down in green pastures. Rather than rush through this verse, I want to rest in v. 2a awhile. God's sovereignty (almighty ruling and governing all things at all times) has been described as the pillow on which every Christian can rest. Not only is our Lord all-powerful, He exercises His power daily to His sheep, power along with personal care, protection, provision. My goal is not to just explain this verse; I pray we'll experience its reality, and that our Shepherd's grace would cause us to lie down like David resting in the Lord and His sovereign care for us.

OUTLINE: *1. What "Green Pastures" Mean to Sheep*
2. What "Lying Down" Requires for Sheep
3. How the Shepherd's Grace Makes us Sheep Lie Down

Starting with the original context of geography, "green pastures" is significant. This verse was not written in the evergreen State of Washington a few hours north of us, but in the ever-brown state of Israel. When you consider v. 2 on the backdrop of a dry dusty desert landscape, it makes the green color of lush pastures and still waters in v. 2 vivid visual contrasts that can revive a dry and thirsty soul (v. 3a).

John Davis, who lived with shepherds in the hills of Judah, writes how this verse came alive to him in living color in those days:

'The oppressive heat coupled with the blowing sand made our journey through the wilderness extremely uncomfortable. Even with a well-made *keffiyeh* wrapped tightly around my head, I could feel sand in my teeth, and my eyes burned from irritation. For three hours we struggled half blindly across rocky hills and small sand dunes in an attempt to reach our destination ... Looking up my eyes to the horizon, I saw a sizable cluster of trees, lush grass, a small pool, along with shepherd and sheep. The mere sight of the water, along with the vegetation, began to revive my oppressed spirit. Even more invigorating was the later experience of washing my face in the cool water of that pool and relaxing in the grass with the shepherd.

Withdrawing from the clamor of a sinful world to the serenity produced by meditation in Psalm 23:2 provides the same sense of refreshment and revival of spirit. David, who penned the words of this lovely psalm, knew well what green pastures meant to the flock at the end of a long journey. But more significantly, he was well aware of the deep satisfaction one enjoyed when resting in the presence of the faithful shepherd ...

It is quite startling to travel through vast stretches of desert and then come upon an oasis with its water surrounded by thick vegetation ... I can remember well the refreshment of both soul and spirit at being able to drink cool water and lie down in the grass after an arduous journey through the wilderness. My spirit was lifted and my endurance renewed ... the believer who is led by the Lord through the wilderness of this world enjoys equal refreshment as he finds himself in the Lord's pastures, rich in green grass, and plenteous in fresh water.'¹

Psalm 65 uses similar blessing imagery in regards to pastures: ¹²*The pastures of the wilderness drip, And the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.* ¹³*The meadows are clothed with flocks ... They shout for joy, yes, they sing.*

When the pastures would drip with dew in the early morning, the meadows would be covered with flocks because good shepherds know those green pastures will not only give sheep sufficient food but their early grazing on dew-drenched grass can satisfy a sheep's need for water as well, so that they shall not want/lack (like v. 1b). Psalm 65 presents green pastures as giving joy to the animals and even the land is blessed and refreshed with the rain that makes it green.

Joel 2:22 *Do not fear, beasts of the field, For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green ...* ²³*So rejoice, O sons of Zion, And be glad in the LORD your God; For He has given you the early rain for your vindication. And He has poured down for you the rain, The early and latter rain as before...* ²⁶*“You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied And praise the name of the LORD your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you ...*

Godly Israelites didn't complain about rain like Americans do, they rejoiced when it rained as a blessing from above. There was an early and latter rain (late fall, early spring) but much of the year there was none, and droughts were disastrous. Green pastures cured fears and caused the Lord's sheep Israel to praise His name for how wondrously He dealt with them. They could rest in the Lord's green pastures as satisfied sheep with plenty to eat. This is how the Lord provides for us our needs and rest (physical/spiritual)

'Since green pastures of Palestine are so few and far between, the sheep must be led from pasture to pasture. When once a pasture is found, it is there they rest before moving on to the next pasture.'²

Shepherds After My Own Heart gives some good background to help us appreciate v. 2 and to appreciate the care of our Shepherd:

'One of the most pressing challenges for shepherds is to provide food and water for animals in environments that frequently withhold these essential elements for life and production ... A shepherd must make sure that the [sheep] have access to a variety of vegetation, and also be careful not to graze too soon or overgraze an area. A balanced diet may require moving several times in the course of a given day ... The good shepherd must 'lead with compassion' (*nhl*; cf. Gen. 33:14; Ps 23:3; Isa. 40:11; 49:10), knowing that the pregnant and nursing ewes need more rest and extra nutrition in the winter and spring, as do the lambs and the kids. Shepherds have to watch their animals carefully; the right balance of eating, drinking, and resting is essential.

Rest is not only a function of being well provided for. It is a state of security that comes from the shepherd's protective presence. The image of a gathered flock lying down in green pastures was commonly used to picture satisfaction and safety (Isa. 32:18) ... Because the climate is so variable in the marginal areas, shepherds have to predict not only the weather, but also the amount of water and pasture needed in anticipation of each move they make. Neglecting the mothers and young, or driving the flocks too hard can bring on fatalities (Gen. 33:13). [Besides making the flock rest and lie down in green pastures during the day, at night the shepherd might keep his flock safely resting in] ... separate stone pens, caves (cf. 1 Sam. 24:3), or simple extensions of the tent dwelling [which] were used to protect the flocks at night, and to provide safety and special provisions for the sick and young during the day.³

When the shepherd brought his flock to the sheepfold at night he counted each sheep, in the words of Jeremiah 33:13 *“the flocks shall again pass under the hands of him who counts them.”* Leviticus 27:32 explains they were counted passing under the rod. Sheep at night might sleep in their own private protective fold. Occasionally some enclosed folds contained multiple flocks and there was a gate with a doorkeeper. In the morning when the shepherd came and the door was opened to him by the porter, the shepherd had his own unique call that only his sheep would respond to, knowing his voice.

In 1867 one writer wrote his observations on a bigger scale as ‘shepherds led their flocks forth from the gates ... Thousands of sheep and goats were there, grouped in dense, confused masses. The shepherds stood together until all came out. Then they separated, each shepherd taking a different path, and uttering as he advanced a shrill peculiar call. The sheep heard them ... points struck out in the direction taken by the shepherds; these became longer and longer until the confused masses were resolved into long, living streams, flowing after their leaders ... It was perhaps one of the most vivid illustrations which human eyes could witness of that beautiful discourse of our Lord recorded by John’⁴

John 10:2: *he who enters by the door is a shepherd of the sheep.*³ *“To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.*

I read in more than one source, human shepherds not only know their own sheep but some have names for their own sheep. What a touching picture this is for us who know “the Lord is *my* Shepherd, and He personally calls *me* by name and knows *me* individually!” This is the same God who sovereignly reigns over all the universe!

Isaiah 40:26 *Lift up your eyes on high And see who has created these stars, The **One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, Not one of them is missing.***

God does that with stars no telescope will ever see, hundreds of billions of stars He knows by name and never loses track of one, and on this tiny planet earth in one tiny part of the universe He also knows me and you by name and never loses one of His sheep ever!

That same great chapter begins with the same great God saying:

¹ *Comfort, comfort my people, says your God ...*

... ¹¹ *He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he **gently leads** those that have young [the nursing ones]*

What a touching and tender picture of our kind gracious shepherd who not only knows us intimately but knows exactly what each of us need at each stage of life and gives special attention to particular sheep needing special care and who loves and gently leads us all!

John 10:4 *“When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice.”* ⁵ *“A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers.”*

One writer said he and his brother had almost identical voices (on the phone people often couldn't tell them apart) but when he was watching his brother's flocks in a field one day and tried to call them, they wouldn't even respond to his voice (he was a stranger to them). As soon as his brother the shepherd came back though and called, they knew his voice, and they all came to him. Even others who dress just like and act just like the shepherd don't get response either.

Jesus says in v. 9: ***I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.***

Jesus is the only door, the only way to be saved. There aren't multiple ways to be saved, Jesus is *the way*, and no one gets to the Father except through Him. And once you're in Him, He as the door will not let you be lost. But it's not through what you can do *plus Christ* that gets you in; Christ alone is the door. It's not based on the sheep's goodness or works, it's the Shepherd's grace and work on their behalf. Verse 11 explains that Jesus paid it all, He buys His sheep with the price of His blood: ¹¹ *“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd **lays down His life for the sheep.***

Acts 20:28 calls the church a flock needing shepherding, a flock that the Lord purchased with His own blood. How do you know if you're His redeemed sheep? You follow Him (Jn 10:4) when you hear His voice. Not perfection (as sheep) but the direction of your life is to follow Him. Your new desire is to be with the Shepherd. If you're His sheep you also know Him (intimate, family relation):

¹⁴ *“I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and **My own know Me,*** ¹⁵ ***even as the Father knows Me** and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep.* ¹⁶ *“I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; **I must bring them also,** and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd.*

Christ's flock was not just Israel, v. 16 extends even to us in this church 2,000 years later and others He will bring in. All who hear and respond to His voice will be one flock with one shepherd, one church, one people (not Israel and Gentile separate), one body, one Lord Jesus who is the one way to heaven. His one word: repent. Turn from your own way and trust not in what you do with your life but what the Good Shepherd did with His, laying down His life in death on the cross as the lamb of God slain in your place.

If you come to Christ confessing your wandering ways of sin, come through Him as the door like a lowly sheep whose only hope is the Shepherd's grace, v. 10b says you can have abundant life forever. "... *I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.*"

When you parallel the end of v. 10 with the end of v. 9, it seems to be associating abundant life with pasture (v. 9). Not only eternity is in view, but v. 9 says Christ's sheep go in and out and find pasture, and then v. 10 says Jesus came so we might have life abundant. So with Christ's own words applying pasture language with abundant life language, it's not a stretch to view Psalm 23:2 through Christ as making us lie down in green pastures, i.e., abundant provision.

John 10:9 says the sheep would go out to pasture, and we learn in Song of Solomon 1:7 that around noon typically the sheep were made to lie down: "*Tell me, O you whom my soul loves, Where do you pasture your flock, Where do you **make it lie down at noon?***"

So the shepherd in Bible lands would lead his sheep out the door of the fold in the morning to pasture, and then in the heat of midday they would be made to lie down.

2. What "Lying Down" Requires for Sheep

As we consider what needed to occur before sheep could lie down in rest, I trust the applications for God's people will be apparent. For the original readers of Psalm 23 who grew up around sheep and shepherds as a part of their life, the analogy of sheep lying down communicated things that are not so obvious to us all today.

One American Bible college professor was teaching a class of 125 students in OT history. When he came to teach on the sheep and shepherd theme of Scripture he decided to ask whether or not anyone had direct encounters with sheep in their past or knew much about them. He says only 3 of that whole group had ever had any amount of contact with living sheep up-close. One of the students said the main acquaintance 'with sheep is traced to childhood, when I was forced to master "Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep." Another observation made it clear that we had some basic work to do before examining sheep and shepherd relationships [as another student replied] "Well, I never did know a whole lot about living sheep, but I do remember that we always got mint jelly when they served lamb chops ... is that significant?"⁵

Maybe you've been closer to live sheep at a petting zoo and a few of you have told me you once raised sheep, but most of us are not sheep experts. As I've researched and read on this, I've discovered four basic requirements or needs of sheep before they will lie down

- They must be Submitted
- They must be Secure
- They must be Stress-Free
- They must be Satisfied

Douglas MacMillan, a shepherd in Scotland for many years before he wrote *The Lord My Shepherd*, draws on his experience as a shepherd when he summarizes 4 hindrances to lying down: antagonism, fear, irritation, or hunger (others writing from other continents have made other very similar observations):

- Antagonism (ex: bully sheep, the sheep that wants to be #1 in the flock and antagonizes the rest) – *this goes with Submitted*, the sheep need to be submitted with the shepherd as #1, not them.
- Fearful (of threats around them) – *this goes with Secure*
- Irritation (flies and insects annoy sheep and keep them moving) – *this goes with Stress-free*. Human anxieties and annoyances may be different than animal ones, but the same principle interferes
- Hunger (if you see sheep lying down, they are satisfied, not afraid, not annoyed, and not antagonizing each other) – it takes a good shepherd to create the right conditions that will allow the sheep to lie down. This last one goes with *Satisfied*.

Iain Campbell writes: ‘So it is with us. There are many things that make us afraid and antagonize us. It can take just one wrong word, said by someone out of turn, to bring all kinds of thoughts into our minds and make us restless; then our stillness is gone. But here is a Shepherd who can deal with all of these things. He can deal with the things that make us afraid. He can put all the bully sheep into perspective for us. He can deal with all ... the things that annoy his sheep. He can so fill the hungry soul that he can make his sheep lie down. [Campbell says] When I used to help my grandfather with his sheep, I could never make the sheep lie down. I would come along and the sheep would be up and running; but a true shepherd can do it. A shepherd can create the conditions that will enable his sheep to rest. So the Shepherd makes me lie down. Sometimes, I don’t think I need to lie down, but he makes me rest. Maybe there are things that he has brought into our lives that have forced us into times of stillness and quietness. He took away from us the opportunity to be out and about as normal, and afterwards we realized that he was creating the very best life for us. Who would not want to be led by such a Shepherd as this?’⁶

3. How the Shepherd’s Grace Makes Us Sheep to Lie Down

Psalm 23:2 says “*He [the Lord] makes me lie down*” (causative in Hebrew), v. 3 has Him *causing me to be gently led*? How does He?

GRACIOUS HELPS TO BE SUBMITTED TO THIS SHEPHERD:

1. Consider the greatness of our Shepherd (Eze 34:11-16)

Hebrews 13:20 is the verse that calls Jesus “*the Great Shepherd of the sheep*” and it says He will “*equip you in every good thing to do His will...*” Everything we need to do His will and submit our will to His, the Shepherd promises to provide.

Ezekiel 34:12 ***As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day.***¹³ ***“I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land.***¹⁴ ***“I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.***¹⁵ ***“I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest” ...***

Consider the greatness of the Shepherd of Israel caring for them in all their history of disobedience and what He promises to do in the future, despite their sin. Consider He is *my* Shepherd, too (Ps 23:1)

2. Consider the greatness of our Shepherd's condescension

Staying in Ezekiel 34, just remind yourself that shepherds were the lowest of the low in many biblical societies through much of their history. Consider how great a condescension it is for the Lord of the universe to reveal Himself here and many places as a shepherd!

John Calvin: 'God, in the Scripture, frequently takes to himself the name, and puts on the character of a shepherd, and this is no [small] token of his tender love towards us. As this is a lowly and homely manner of speaking, He who does not disdain to stoop so low for our sake, must bear a singularly strong affection towards us. It is therefore wonderful, that when he invites us to himself with such gentleness and familiarity, we are ... drawn or allured to him, that we may rest in safety and peace under his guardianship. But it should be observed, that God is a shepherd only to those who, touched with a sense of their own weakness ... feel their need of his protection, and who willingly abide in his sheepfold, and surrender themselves to be governed by him. David, who excelled both in power and riches, nevertheless frankly confessed himself to be a poor sheep, that he might have God for his shepherd. Who is there, then, amongst us, who would exempt himself from this necessity, seeing our own weakness sufficiently shows that we are more than miserable if we do not live under the protection of this shepherd? We ought to bear in mind, that our happiness consists in this, that his hand is stretched forth to govern us, that we live under his shadow, and ... his providence keeps watch ... over our welfare ... his providence alone is sufficient to supply all our necessities ... David, therefore, declares that he is not afraid of [lacking] any thing, because God is his Shepherd.'⁷

3. Consider what Jesus submitted Himself to for you

- Jesus left the glories of heaven, angels submitting to Him in adoring worship since creation, to come to earth in submission to the Father's will in covenant love's plan of redemption, Jesus came to earth and shepherded disciples who were far from angels!
- Jesus willing submissively humbled Himself all the way down to our level to bring us up to His!
- Jesus took on the form of a servant/slave, so those who serve Him can be adopted sons, joint heirs!
- Jesus came to earth so we can go to heaven, He died so we can live, if we're in Him by grace thru faith
- Jesus subjected Himself to human weakness so we can be strong in the Lord and strength of His might
- He suffers hunger to satisfy spiritual hunger forever
- He made Himself subject to the law to fulfill the law and to free us from the guilt it convicts us of
- He was bound by soldiers so we can be set free
- He was pierced so that we might be made whole
- He was wounded *for sin* so we can be healed *of sin*

- He let Himself be led to His death like a sheep to slaughter, opening not His mouth – for us! How can we not let such a One lead us (covering our mouth)?

GRACIOUS HELPS TO BE *SECURE* IN THIS SHEPHERD

1. The Peace He gives

Ezekiel 34:25 *“I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods [NIV “in safety”]*

2. The Protection He gives

²⁸*“They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid.*

3. The Provision He gives

²⁹*“I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land ...*

God’s faithfulness to Israel is also extended to all His sheep. The same faithfulness that provided daily bread in the wilderness for 40 years (manna), and enough extra each Friday so they could rest each Sabbath, is the same Lord who we can pray to for our daily bread, and who promises to supply all our needs, including our need to lie down in rest, physically and spiritually, to rest in Him.

A story is told of children after World War II that the allied armies gathered up, many hungry, homeless orphaned children who were placed in large camps. There the children were abundantly fed and cared for. However, at night they did not sleep well. They seemed restless and afraid. Finally, someone hit on a solution. After the children were put to bed, they each received a slice of bread to hold. If they wanted more to eat, more was provided, but this particular slice was not to be eaten—it was just to hold. The slice of bread produced marvelous results. The child would go to sleep, subconsciously feeling it would have something to eat tomorrow. That assurance gave the child a calm and peaceful rest.⁸

John Newton (whose hymn we sang earlier) summed this point up well: ‘A sheep is a weak, defenseless ... creature; prone to wander, and if once astray, is seldom known to return of its own accord. A sheep has neither strength to fight with the wolf, nor speed to escape from him; nor has it the foresight of [other creatures] to provide its own sustenance. Such is our character, and our situation: unable to take care of ourselves, prone to wander from our resting-place, exposed to enemies which we can neither withstand nor avoid, without resource in ourselves, and taught, by daily experience, the insufficiency of every thing around us. Yet, if this Shepherd be our Shepherd, weak and helpless as we are, we may be of good courage. If we can say with David, "The Lord is my Shepherd," we may make the same inferences which he did, "Therefore I shall not want: therefore I need not fear."⁹

- Jesus told His disciples *‘fear not, little flock’* (familiar OT theme)

- Zephaniah 3:13 says the flock of Israel *“shall graze and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.”*

- Job 11:19: *You will lie down, and none will make you afraid ...*

- Isaiah also speaks of “*flocks, which will lie down, and none will make them afraid*” (17:2) and a time when “*Those who are most helpless will eat, And the needy will lie down in security...*” (14:30)

- David said it best in Psalm 4:8 “*In peace I will both lie down and sleep, For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety.*”

GRACIOUS HELPS TO BE STRESS-FREE WITH OUR SHEPHERD

1. Focus on your Shepherd not sinners or circumstances

Phillip Keller, who shepherded sheep in America for 8 years and grew up around shepherds in East Africa (similar to Middle East):

‘Because of the social behavior within a flock sheep will not lie down unless they are free from friction with others of their kind. If tormented by flies or parasites, sheep will not lie down. Only when free of these pests can they relax ... The unique aspect of this picture is that is only the [shepherd] himself who can provide release from these anxieties ... [but the greatest dangers are from within the flock, not outside pests and bugs but the pests and bugs within the flock; just as a church’s greatest danger is in its own member butting heads and biting and bleating complaints] ... Because of this rivalry, tension, and competition for status and self-assertion, there is friction in a flock. The sheep cannot lie down and rest in contentment ... continuous conflict and jealousy within the flock can [make] ... sheep become edgy, tense, discontented and restless. They lose weight and become irritable [some humans want to lose weight, but that’s a different thing] ... the less aggressive sheep were often more contented, quiet and restful ... there were definite advantages of being “bottom sheep.”

... But one point that always interested me very much was that whenever I came into view [Keller the shepherd] and my presence attracted their attention, the sheep quickly forgot their foolish rivalries and stopped their fighting. The shepherd’s presence made all the difference in their behavior ... that put an end to all rivalry. And in our human relationships when we become acutely aware of being in the presence of Christ, our foolish, selfish snobbery and rivalry will end. It is the humble heart walking quietly and contentedly in the close and intimate companionship of Christ that is at rest, that can relax, simply glad to lie down and let the world go by. When my eyes are on [Christ] they are not on those around me. This is the place of peace.’¹⁰

2. Focus on the Shepherd’s sovereignty and grace

He has ordained and orchestrated every detail in your life from the hairs on your head to the pains in your neck (in your physical body or your church body). He has a purpose in the aggravating people in your life and the annoying problems in your life, and it is a good purpose (Romans 8:28-30, to conform us more to Christ Jesus).

GRACIOUS HELPS TO BE SATISFIED WITH THIS SHEPHERD

We’ll look at this more next week in the 2nd half of Psalm 23:2 (the still waters and the soul-restoration in v. 3) but if the Lord supplies and satisfies our every need, as our text clearly teaches, why would we look anywhere else for satisfaction?

The greatest motive I can leave you with is Christ, the all-sufficient all-satisfying Lord who said “*I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger*”

Isaiah 55 cries out:² “*Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for **what does not satisfy?** Listen carefully **to Me**, and **eat what is good**, And **delight yourself in abundance**.*”

Octavius Winslow said there’s plenty for all: the ‘lambs may feed in their way,’ and the sheep in yet richer pasture. Here are gracious invitations for the sin-laden; precious promises for the sorely tried; real consolation for the bereaved mourner; a glorious hope for the most deeply depressed and most profoundly despairing sinner; a balm that heals every wound, a hand that dries every tear.¹¹

Our wonderful Shepherd cares for us spiritually and physically:

Mark 6:31 (NIV) *Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he [Jesus] said to them, “Come with me by yourselves **to a quiet place and get some rest.**” ...³³ But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them.³⁴ When Jesus ... saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because **they were like sheep without a shepherd**. So he began teaching them many things [spiritual feeding was the chief task of the shepherd, but our Good Shepherd also cares for physical needs and it was on this occasion that Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000] ...³⁹ Then Jesus directed them to have all the people **sit down in groups on the green grass** ...⁴² **They all ate and were satisfied** ...*

Green grass there indicates comfort – and Jesus in ministering as a shepherd to these lost sheep not only feeds them His teaching, but He makes them sit down in green pastures to be comfortable and to eat and be satisfied. Jesus is the same Shepherd as in Psalm 23:2. He cared for His disciples and called them to find rest with Him.

Augustine’s *Confessions* begin praying: ‘Thou made us for Thyself and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.’”

Jesus said: “*Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest ... I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11:28-29)

1 John J. Davis, *The Perfect Shepherd*, 65-66, 70-72.

2 *KJV Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 1010.

3 Timothy Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart*, Intervarsity Press, 2006, Illinois, p. 54-55.

4 J. L. Porter, A.M., in "The Giant Cities of Bashan", 1867.

5 Davis, p. 55

6 Iain Campbell, *In the Care of the Good Shepherd*, Day One Publications, p. 33.

7 John Calvin. *Commentary on Psalms - Volume 1* (257).

8 Adapted from the booklet *The Healing Power of Psalm 23*, by Charles Allen.

9 John Newton. *The Works of John Newton - Volume IV*.

10 Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at the 23rd Psalm*, p. 28-33.

11 Octavius Winslow. *The Nightingale Song of David*.