

Welcome to one of the most beautiful songs.

We have read this probably so many times before. But this passage still warms our heart whenever we read through. There is something about it that just refreshes our soul. As we look through Psalm 23, Let us delve in with our imagination and senses and learn something new about our God; and at the same time be reminded of things we already know.

We must read between the lines because the more we think we know it well, the less we pay attention to it.

The Lord is my shepherd I shall not be in want.

This verse is the title of Psalm 23. This is the most powerful proclamation in the whole Bible that God is all we need. And our God is more than we need. So often we are living just as if God is not enough. When we come to learn that we are so content in God alone, however, our God would be most glorified in us. As the apostle Paul wrote once in one of his letters, "I have learnt the secret of being content in any and every situation." (Phil 4:12)

The author of Ps.23 is David the King of Israel. David was born as a son of a shepherd and was appointed by God to be the shepherd of Israel while shepherding sincerely the flock on the field. When David confessed that the Lord is his shepherd, he actually showed the knowledge of God learned in his whole life as an anonymous shepherd in the field and also as a famous shepherd in the country: 'a king of Israel.' His God is our God also, so we can learn about who our God is in one of the most beautiful song in the Scripture.

Before we begin to meditate carefully on the verses, we have to understand the following points:

(1) David is confessing his own experienced God.

David was saying "My shepherd," while king Saul had never regarded God as His own God. Who is your own God? How can you express our own God?

(2) David is confessing with his own familiar language.

We had better confess God with no other's language but our own experienced terms. We have to learn to express our own God in the most familiar way to ourselves. Who is your own God in your most familiar terms?

(3) David had learned to rule over the country with the heart of a shepherd.

There have come and gone so many kings in the country, but it is David that served the country with the mind of a shepherd. David had learned to see

each one of his people as a weak lamb that is in need. Do our leaders have like that heart? Are they really concerned about the real need of the people? Are we that sort of people?

(4) David is saying the intimate relationship with God.

The most important thing is not that God belongs to me but that I belong to God. From the viewpoint that I am his precious possession, I can come to confess that I shall not be in any want. The vital key to live a victorious life in every day is to know and believe that kind of a special relationship with God. Why could I belong to God? That's just because He created me and redeemed me in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Whenever we remind of the fact that we belong to Him and became His own possession, we can experience a true spiritual freedom. Do you believe you are just His' own? Do you see that in every situation of your life? Then you can confess just like David did: "I shall not be in want."

(5) David shows us that the real contentment comes from the knowledge of a very special relationship between me and God.

It depends not upon the material but upon the understanding of the friendship. True contentment comes from the intimacy with God. Without any consciousness of the intimacy with God, there's no true contentment. Nowadays, so many people are just seeking a true contentment though material. Yet the key to success and happiness lies in consciousness of an intimacy with God. What do you need in your life? Know your real need is only God Himself.

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides quiet waters;

Phillip Keller said that four things are needed for a lamb to lie down.

- (1) The lamb is so full of fear that they cannot lie down until they believe there is no danger around them.
- (2) The lamb is seldom lying down because they fight with each other.
- (3) The lamb is seldom lying down because of their pain caused by parasitic worms deep inside their ruffled hair.
- (4) The lamb is seldom lying down because they are hungry.

This is just what the people of God feel today. There is no wonder the Bible likes to depict the people of God just as the lamb. The prophet Isaiah told us exactly that we all like sheep have gone astray each of us has turned to his own way and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa.53:6).

The most important truth that this verse is trying to show us is that our God is doing His best to make us lie down pouring His own peace. To help the sheep lie down is one of the most difficult skills for a skillful shepherd to be equipped with. Our God desires more to give peace than we can think. If it is the case, what does our Lord try to help us lie down?

(1) To overcome fear.

Do you remember that our Lord Jesus could have a very deep sleep in the midst of a severe storm just because He overcame the fear with the intimate presence of God.(Mt.8) King David also sang a song in Psalm 4: "I will lie down and sleep in peace for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." What is that you are scared of? Just lift up and look at the face of the Lord. He will help you to fight it back.

(2) To protect fighting each other.

In any of an animal's life, you can see some fight so often just because they want power and authority in order to protect themselves from others. With no grace from our God, we are just no more than an animal. When we look at each other's life and begin to compare with each other, we can help but fight with each other. Let us see the face of our Lord. And Let us not fight with each other. Let us not compare with each other. That is the start we can experience the peace of God.

(3) To cure our disease.

All the sheep are suffering from the pain caused by some dangerous insects. We also carry so many worries which take away our focus on the Lord in our life. But Jesus wants us to lay down our burdens onto His cross so that we might lie down. Jesus promises to you, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."(Mt.11:28-30) Jesus Christ is a rest-giving savior. If you need peace, just look at your savior Jesus Christ and confess like this, "My Lord, please help me to find your peace."

(4) To feed with a spiritual food.

Jesus Himself came to us as the living bread of the world. He knows our real need in soul and does His best to find out where the green pastures are. Remember that He is anxious more than we are. He is much more than we are when we are weak and need a proper help desperately. He is the only one who can give us a true peace to make us lie down in green pasture.

He restores my soul.

The sheep can slip so easily just because their legs are so short. Once a sheep fell down, it cannot stand alone by itself. Without any appropriate help, it can't help waiting to die. It takes just a couple of hours to die. And that is just the same situation happened to the depressed prophet Elijah who lied down waiting to die in a desert. If you are one of those, call upon the name of the Lord and be saved. Salvation comes to those who can cry out the Lord's name desperately. Even King David desperately sang a song like an overturned sheep: "Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God."(Ps.42:11) Even the anointed king David and the most

powerful prophet Elijah and the most sincere disciple Peter got into that kind of slump. What about you? You are no exception. If you are in that situation, it is urgent for you to cry out the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. Hearing our moan of pain, He would run to rescue you. He is our Savior. He can save you in whatever circumstances. Just cry out His name and wait upon His coming to your life. How a precious Savior have we!

A skilful shepherd knows well where the sheep fell down so easily. Where do they so easily slip?

(1) a pit or a dent.

It refers to living with no care or leading an idle life. Many people seek that kind of life without knowing it is the most dangerous place. When does a spiritual crisis visit? It comes to us when we indulge into indolence feeling no problem in living at all. We can slip when we feel no need for the grace of the Lord. We should be careful not to fall in the pit named "idleness." The Bible also warns us of it saying, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.(Lk.21:34)"

(2) a thornbush.

The sheep have a lot of hair so they can slip and fell down easily. What does that mean spiritually in our life? If we should walk on the thorny path of life, we would be easily caught in discouragement. Jesus depicts some of them as seeds fell among thorns which grew up and choked the plants. Jesus says they are like "the one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful."(Mt.13:22) We also fell down just because of old character, old habits, and old mind-sets. That is why a very skilled shepherd cut the hair. When Jesus cuts away our old things from us, we should welcome it and give thanks to God even though we would feel so painful. See the judge Samson forced to be shaved off the seven braids of his hair and got his strength left him.(Jug.16:20) Even though Samson lost all his power, his hair on his head began to grow again after it had been shaved, which refers to that he began to recover his lost relationship with God. That is why King David said, "It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.(Ps.119:71)" This is just your story. God wants you to restore something most valuable that you happened to get lost.

(3) a stout sheep is most likely to fell down.

To be fattened is to be fallen down easily. What if some merely eat and do not exercise? We need proper exercises. What does it mean to exercise? It means to follow the will of God. We need balance to keep our health. Every disease comes from being short of balance. We have not only to listen to the words of God but also to do what it says. The Bible warns us saying "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says"(Jas.1:

22) In some case, to be fattened is good, which means even a good Christian would fall in a trap. See the prophet Elijah and the king David and the apostle Peter! Even more exposed to the grace of God, much more vulnerable to collapsing. Those who find contentment in material richness, however, cannot fall down so easily. Therefore, do not be ashamed of being fallen in the path. You don't have to spare time analyzing the cause of my situation. You need salvation. Expect the good shepherd to come and rescue you instead. Jesus Christ can save you in whatever situation you're.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The sheep is the most habitual animal in the world. Just left alone, they are just trying to keep on their own ways, which only results in the devastation of the land because the sheep devour all the roots of the plant. And that's why a wise shepherd is trying to guide them into a new land not allowing them to remain in one place for a long time. That is what the Lord is trying not to allow us to live a comfortable life but to lead a peaceful life even in the midst of a storm. Look at our Lord Jesus! He didn't live a comfortable life. He said He was just like a fox without a dent. But He lived a life with full of a perfect peace with God. Let us see inside our heart! Are we seeking the peace with God or a comfortable life in the world? If it is the latter one, we are actually devastating our own land to die at last. Our Lord Jesus wants us to go for a new path with venture of faith. He wants to lead us into a new road that we might live. If so in your life, welcome it and be ready to follow Jesus with a great joy. Please do not stick to old things; old country, old people, old households and old ways of thinking (Gen.12:1). You have to put them aside to follow the good shepherd. And remember to put a new wine into a new wine skin in order that you may be ready to follow. That's the way you could live. Paul the apostle put it well: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."(Phil.3:12-14)

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

When we meditate on the every verses of Psalm 23, we had better keep in mind a wonderful picture of a good shepherd having a long journey together with his loving sheep, which consists of four seasons. Verse 1 is the title of the psalm. And from verse 2, we can see the good shepherd set out on a journey with his loving sheep (season of the spring). The shepherd's desire is to give some peace and rest to his loving sheep. And verse 3 shows us that something could be happened in the path (in season of the earlier summer). Some fell down and get turned over and get hurt, but the good shepherd can rescue them immediately and guide his sheep in new paths of righteous. The

path is actually not that of the sheep's but that of the good shepherd's. That journey is not for our name's sake but for His holy name's sake. And verse 4 shows us the most dangerous path that every sheep must go through.(in season of the late summer) And verse 5 reveals us the most beautiful secret of the journey that the good shepherd would cure and restore his loving sheep on top of a mountain.(in season of autumn) Final verse represents us an unforgettable picture that there would be an eternal resting place designed for all of his loving sheep after returning from the journey.(in season of winter) The whole picture is like a wonderful drama symbolizing all the path of the believers. In a sense, Psalm 23 shows us the divine order of the saints' salvation and sanctification in their own lives. How dramatic and wonderful plan for each one of us has the Lord Jesus in His heart!! We should live to thank Him just for that reason!!

To understand this verse, we have to keep in mind the background of the Palestine ground, which consists of plains and valleys. Every shepherd could understand the necessity of climbing up to the top of a mountain before the hottest season strikes the land. There are so good pastures unfolded on top of a mountain which can be seen as a wonderful table with full of delicious foods to the eyes of the sheep. The thing is, they have to go through the most dangerous valley in order to enjoy the table. On top of a mountain, they could pass the hottest season with plentiful food supplied by the good shepherd. Each one of the sheep would be cured and given nutritious food by the good shepherd. And it is not until the chilly season visit them that they all return home to have an everlasting rest with the good shepherd. So Psalm 23 shows us all the seasons that symbolize all the spiritual experiences of all the believers.

King David knew this journey better than any other persons. When the prophet Samuel sought to anoint him as king of Israel, he was not at home but with his loving sheep in the field. David, as a shepherd, had a good idea of the path from the dangerous valley to the top of the mountain. He also knew well the reason and necessity that every sheep must pass through the dark valley. He could remember that he had to fight with fierce animals like a bear, a wolf, a snake or a lion to protect his loving sheep. Even more than those threats, he had to fight against a possible landslide or a flood. If he had not been a very skillful shepherd, he could not have guided the flock pass through the valley.

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to us as the good shepherd. Only Jesus Christ could prosecute the job for all the human beings to be saved. Jesus the great shepherd said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life and only a few find it."(Mt.7:13-14) We must know that the way to salvation is a narrow one, so many are unwilling to enter. But we have to see the final end of the narrow way: The way the great shepherd invites us to go ends up with

an eternal life. We must cast away the naive thought that the way to the heaven is so easy to go through. Not that way any more! Jesus showed us how difficult the way is! So Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."(Lk.9:23) "And anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me."(Mt.10:37) Are you worthy of Him? Can you make it sure that you are so worthy of Him by proving you follow Him even through the valley of the shadow of death?

I will fear no evil for you are with me

Then, what is the reason that we do not have to be afraid of walking in such a dangerous valley? That is just because we know that the good shepherd is trying to guide us into the valley of darkness and death with some purposes. If so, why does He try to show us into it? There are two reasons we have to keep in mind.

(1) We must pass through the valley in order to enter the highest level of intimacy with God.

Without the cross, there is no glory. Jesus wants us to pass through the dangerous valley so that we meet the intimate relationship with our God. Jesus showed us the way before He could guide us. If there is anyone who finds himself wandering in the dark valley, look at the Lord walking ahead of you to help you to follow after him. The apostle Peter put it well: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps."(1Pet.2:21) So we must welcome the dark valley not just because we would enjoy the wonderful table prepared for us but also because the mighty one comes near to allow us to enjoy the most intimate relationship with Him in the valley of the shadow.

(2) We must pass through the valley in order to experience the cold water which runs through it.

Every animal needs water to live on. To drink cold water, we must not hesitate following after the good shepherd guiding us into the dark valley, because the water runs through the valley. It is very ironical that we can experience the most graceful thing while passing through the most dangerous valley. Why so? It's just because the good shepherd is with us. It is in time of straining at the oars against the wind in the evening that the disciples saw Jesus walking on the lake.(Mk.6:48f.) Our Jesus is the same yesterday and today and forever.(Heb.13:8) When we pass through the valley of the shadow, therefore, we can also see Him walking on the stormy waters to come near. When we are weak, we can experience the good shepherd coming close with his power. When we pass through the darkest valley, we can see the most powerful hand of the Lord holding in His loving arms. If you want to become strong, you had better learn to follow after the good shepherd into the darkest valley. It is in this valley that we could see His glorious presence more clearly than any moments before.

I want to share with you one of the secret of Jack Hyles' preaching with power even in the most difficult situation. (He was the senior pastor of Harmond Baptist Church in the United States) Whenever he prepared a sermon, he is said to have tried to think over the grace of God he experienced in the most difficult time of his life. He told that's the secret of his powerful preaching every Sunday morning service. Just try to think the most difficult time of your life. What have you experienced in such a hard time? How have you learned more about your own God? This is the secret you should know: Just in the darkest valley, you can experience the power of God and can be strong. It is not until we feel so weak that we can experience the most powerful help of the Lord. And remember this thing. This is just part of the good shepherd's plan for your health and wealth. And this is just a tunnel that has an end. It means that you must exit some day. And the more important thing is that it's just more than that. You would be surprised at the table prepared for you.

Your rod and staff they comfort me.

When we are weak, we can know two kinds of the good shepherd's power shown to us. One is a rod, and the other is a staff. Both are the wonderful tools of a shepherd's to protect the sheep from the ferocious animals in the valley. Both symbolize the word of God.

(1) A rod.

A rod is a long and slim stick with the curved end like a ring. This is to hold and guide a roaming lamb in paths of righteous. This rod symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit. Jesus promises the new counselor whom the Father would send in Jesus name and teach and remind all the disciples of everything Jesus had said to them.(Jn13:26) The Holy Spirit draws us near to the intimate relationship with God. He also draws us to keep on going in the path of righteousness. He also draws us to realize that Jesus is with us. He also teaches us to understand that we belong not to this world but to Jesus. He also instructs us how to love God and love one another. He also shows us which way to go when we get astray and wander in a desert or in a dark valley. This is what we are supposed to experience when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. And that's why we can confess we would fear no evil. Do you think you walk through the valley? Congratulations! You are getting closer to the good shepherd than any one else! Sooner or later, you can see the good shepherd's rod and staff to comfort you. It is in the valley of the shadow of death that you can experience the work of the Holy Spirit.

(2) A staff.

A staff is a shorter one than a rod. A rod is used to rescue or guide a wandering lamb, while a staff is used to attack the beast. It looks like a hammer. A good shepherd throws a staff at a beast trying to attack a lamb.

This staff symbolizes the power of the word of God. The Lord declares through the prophet Jeremiah, "Is not my word like fire, and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"(Jer.23:29) The word of God is like a strong hammer. As the apostle Paul put it, the word of God is like the sword of God. With this sword, we can take our stand against the devil's schemes. Do not let the sword of God just be lying to be rusted in your closet. See to it that the sword must be in your hands all the time! How so? Study hard and meditate sincerely the word of God. Unless the word of God lies deep in our heart, we are not ready to use it properly. We must learn about how to use the sword of God appropriately. Remember! You should use it against the devil's scheme not against the saints. Now, do you have your own sword or staff you can use when you come across a beast? Or, don't you just have a rusted sword in the drawer?

You prepare a table before me

At the end of the valley of the shadow of death, the sheep can see to be surprised at the unfolding scenery before the eyes of the lamb. Quite different to the narrow and dangerous valley, the sheep can see a wide plain with a green pastures. Just look at that in the sight of a lamb! What a wonderful table for a lamb to enjoy it! The word 'table' refers that the good shepherd has already prepared the place so long time ago! The good shepherd had prepared the plain long before He began to travel with the sheep. It is on this highland that the sheep can fall in love once again with their good shepherd!

Who is the Lord Jesus we all trust in? He is a preparing God! He prepared our path long time ago even before we are born. This is the kind Savior all about. Jesus our Savior already explored our path. The Bible says, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold on firmly to faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."(Heb.4:14-16) Our God is a preparing God! He prepared first, and then orders us to follow! So do not worry about your failure of following Him! The price He paid for us is so priceless that you do not have to be concerned about the price you have to pay to follow Him! Cast away all the worries because Jesus our good Shepherd gave his word to us; "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."(Jn.14:1-3) So, do not hesitate on following Him! He is your good shepherd! Once you follow Him to the end of the valley of the shadow of death, you don't fail to see and the table He prepared for you to enjoy! And

you can also see the resting house He prepared for you! Remember! He prepared first and then orders you to follow!

In the presence of my enemies!

This is the way the good shepherd shows his love for us! He likes to make us have a pride of the good shepherd's grace and power against our enemy. You might have so far experienced the attack of your enemies until you finish your journey through the dark valley of death. But now it's the good shepherd's turn to lift you up in front of your enemy! This is a time of a reversion. Our God is the greatest player who could make a turnabout in your life however hard you may be. In this surprising way, God will show His love for you. Don't be frustrated! Jesus your good shepherd is preparing something wonderful for you! He first explored and prepared and tells you to: "Come and follow me!" When we see what He has prepared for us, we would forget all things that have troubled us in our lifetime.

One thing the good shepherd has to do on top of the mountain is to anoint my head with oil so that my cup might overflow. To anoint means to cure and recover! It is a time of healing that every sheep finish their dangerous journey. It is in this place that you do not remember what you have suffered! You wouldn't have any more suffering from any of the past problems. When you get anointed by the good shepherd, you would forget all troubles you suffered from. Anointing! We must desire for that grace from our Lord Jesus Christ so that we may confess "You're more than enough to me," or, "My cup overflows!" This is just what the apostle Paul said as he heard the voice of the Lord: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."(2Cor.12:9) So that's why Paul delighted in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong! We need that anointing desperately!

Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.

What a wonderful confession is it! Those who believe in Jesus as their own good shepherd could gladly agree with the Bible saying: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.(Rom.8:28)" We are sure to say that our life is so full of His goodness and love in whatever situation we are just because we come to realize that Jesus Christ is our good and perfect shepherd. We come to know through the Gospel about all that He has done for us when we have been gone astray turning to our own way. We come to know that "God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us,(Rom.5:8) and there is nothing that could separate us from the love of Christ our good shepherd.(Rom.8:31-39) " That is the reason why we surely proclaim that His goodness and love will follow us all the days of our lives. We can confess His goodness in every situation of our

lives and also can be joyful always giving thanks to Him even in the desert!

I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

All saints have a blessed hope of having a rest in the house of the Lord. We all will make it home! We all will dwell with Jesus forever! We all will see Him face to face! This hope is so worth it! Perfect love, perfect joy, perfect peace awaits us! Not anymore death and tears! The Bible says, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is."(1Jn.3:2) The apostle Paul put the hope in this way: "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, and eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling."(2Cor.5:1.2) "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know. I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body."(Phil.1:21-24) And the Book of Hebrews says also; "Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."(Heb.11:16) As Jesus promised to all of us, God is preparing a proper room for us to rest at the house of the Lord forever.(Jn.14:1-3) Where is your homeland? What is your final goal to reach? Where are you supposed to have a destination? Do you have a living hope given to us through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead?(1Pet.3.4) "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you."

Can you show that living hope to this world? Can you confess that I shall not in want in every situation of our lives? Only if you know our good shepherd, you are sure to say like this: AMEN!! And you are ready to confess just like Paul did: "I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength."(Phil.4:11-13) Surely the apostle Paul knew very well Jesus as his good shepherd. And now the most important question I would like to ask of you is this: Do you know the good shepherd? If you know that, you are sure to confess just like David did. "I shall not be in want."

Jesus is my good shepherd!

Jesus Christ is the so long time awaited shepherd who God the Father promised to give. It has been a God's long time lamentation that there

could be no searching a good shepherd in the world. The Lord says, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock? You eat the curds, clothe yourselves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock. You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord: This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouth, and it will no longer be food for them. For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness. I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice."(Eze.34:1-16) Can you read the heart of God?

So was just fulfilled what was said through the prophets when Jesus presented one of the most challenging proclamation to all of us, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away when the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me--just as the Father knows me and I know the Father--and I lay down my life for the sheep.(Jn.10:11-15)" Can you tell the differences between the good shepherd and the hire hand? The thing is that only the

good shepherd could lay down his life for the sheep. It is a hire hand that runs away when a wolf attacks the sheep. Has there so far been anyone who

had promised to lay his life down for all of us in the whole human history? Is there anyone who can keep close at hand when we should meet the wolf in our life? It's Jesus Christ that could stand at your side. Jesus Christ is our only trustworthy shepherd. The cross shows us an unquestionable proof that He becomes the good shepherd.

Psalms 23 is in fact a story of the good shepherd! It is our Lord Jesus' graceful story. Jesus is the only one worthy to be praised. We should see the wonderful journey designed and implemented by our good shepherd. Superficially, this psalm shows us a year span's duty of a shepherd. But it shows us exactly the entire process of the journey all the believers must take in their lives. The plan had begun even longer before we knew the good shepherd. We can learn about Him more and more in every situation of our lives. We don't have to be frustrated in any circumstances because His goodness and love is sure to follow us all the days of our lives. And finally we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever and ever. At last, the cold season will hit all people, but the thing is that we must be resting in the good shepherd's house for evermore! We do not have to be worried about the future. We are safe absolutely and forevermore!

Do you have your own trustworthy shepherd?

In summary, I would like to arrange the time-line of the most loved psalm. In season of the spring, the good shepherd alone explore to the top of a mountain to prepare the pasture suitable for His loving sheep to enjoy it; e.g. to take out weeds, to sow seeds, or to watch out where beasts are, etc. And He begins to travel with his loving sheep. He begins with trying to make his flock lie down in green pastures and lead them besides quiet waters. But this is just the start. The good shepherd's purpose is to guide them to go through the path of righteousness. Just before a hot season strikes, the good shepherd begins to encourage the flock to continue their journey into the valley of the shadow of death. It is in this time that the good shepherd gets nerves with highest tense to watch out and protect his flock from any kind of danger. After all, the flock could see the table prepared by the shepherd. All the flock would forget all the troubles they suffered and begin to enjoy the food. It is in this time that the shepherd begins to cure the flock. They all spend the season of the summer and the fall on the top of the plain, falling in love with each other. Not until the chilly season comes to them, they once again start travelling to the house of the good shepherd to spend the day and night of the winter. Which season are you in at the moment? One thing I want to share with you is the truth that Jesus Christ came as your own trustworthy shepherd. I want you to know that you can meet your own shepherd in any season of your life. In Him you can lead the most wonderful life of yours! The following could be your hope, your confession and your life:

Never again will they hunger;

*Never again will they thirst.
The sun will not beat upon them,
Nor any scorching heat.
For the Lamb at the center of the throne
Will be their shepherd;
He will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
(Rev.7:16-17)*

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Psalm 23



*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters,
He restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; My cup overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.*