

THE ETERNAL HOUSEGUEST - Psalm 23

INTRODUCTION:

A. When you read the 23rd Psalm do you think of Jesus the good shepherd? Do you think of God's love? Do you think of God's providence? Or his comfort? Or us being his sheep?

B. Have you ever thought of hospitality when you read that Psalm? Hospitality was certainly not the first thing that came to my mind in connection with Psalm 23.

C. As I thought of hospitality and Psalm 23, I began reading it. The first line says, "the Lord is my shepherd" that means I am his sheep. If the shepherd shows hospitality to a guest it's often by serving a lamb from his flock. That's not a pleasant thought.

D. As I looked more closely at Psalm 23 I noticed that the shepherd is being hospitable to the sheep. The sheep in this Psalm are more than the shepherd's livelihood They are his guests.

Lead statement - Let's turn our attention to...

I. HOW WE DEFINE AND PRACTICE HOSPITALITY

A. Buying someone dinner.

B. Inviting someone to a fellowship meal.

C. Inviting someone over for dinner.

D. Giving a family member a bed for the night.

E. Giving a fellow Christian a bed for the night.

F. Calling to book the hotel for a visiting preacher, as long as the church pays for it.

G. Benjamin Franklin said, "fish and guests both stink after three days". This is the epitome of the American attitude toward hospitality. This bad attitude toward hospitality often works its way into the church as well.

II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE PSALM

A. At first glance it may seem like only the end of Psalm 23 has anything to do with hospitality. Preparing a table and dwelling in the Lord's house make us think of hospitality, but the rest may not. However, the entire Psalm deals with God's hospitality toward us.

B. We may be tempted to divide this Psalm in half because of the use of the third person pronouns in the first part and the second person pronouns in the latter half. It is more likely that this difference is simply a distinction of two separate verses within the Psalm. Even though we may have six verses in the Psalm the psalmist did not write it with six verses as we have them. We have many songs in our

songbook that use different personal pronouns in different sections of the song or indifferent verses. "Far and Near" for example: the 2nd verse speaks of sending them, the 3rd verse addresses the one being sent as thou, and the chorus addresses the Lord of harvest himself.

III. HOW GOD DEFINES AND PRACTICES HOSPITALITY

Introductory statement - A good host provides...

A. For all needs- I shall not want- Philippians 4:19

B. Rest- makes me lie down

C. The best- green pasture

D. For the first of his guest- still waters- Jesus provided living water, John 4:14

E. Spiritually as well as physically- restores my soul - Philemon 1:20, Acts 3:19

F. A godly example to follow- leads in paths of righteousness - John 13:15

G. Protection- fear no evil - Psalm 94:22, Zechariah 12:8

H. Companionship- thou art with me - Matthew 28:20

I. Structure, stability and help- Rod and staff comfort me, the rod was used to defend and discipline the sheep. The staff was used to help the sheep out of difficult situations, when the sheep fell in a pit the crook of the staff could be used to lift the lamb out.

J. Physical nourishment and service- prepare a table - Genesis 18:8, Abraham serves

K. Comfort in the midst of discomfort- in the presence of my enemies - Revelation 3:9

L. For the good health and hygiene of guests- anoint my head with oil - Luke 7:46

M. Generously- cup runs over

N. Some for the road- goodness and mercy shall follow me - Ephesians 2:4-5

O. Beyond expectations- dwell in house for ever - Jn. 14:1-3

CONCLUSION:

A. Remember Ben Franklin's quote? It's a very different attitude from God's. The Christians hospitality should be more like God's and less like Ben Franklin's attitude.

B. II Sam 12:1-4, Nathan describes a man who treats his lamb like a child. God treats us this way. His sheep are part of his family.

C. What changes do we need to make to be hospitable more like God?