

- However David's description of the Lord as his shepherd has an even greater significance
- In ancient times, kings were often referred as the shepherds of their people
- And throughout the Old Testament, Israel's kings were considered the shepherds of God's people
- David himself was referred as both a shepherd and king
 - **2 Samuel 5:2** – *In the past, while Saul was king over us, you were the one who led Israel on their military campaigns. And the LORD said to you, 'You will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.'*

- And so here's David ... the shepherd and king of Israel, referring to the Lord as **his** shepherd and king
- And so David knows ...
 - the one who is shepherd is sovereign
 - the one who is sovereign is shepherd

- And David knows that because the Lord is his shepherd ... then he shall not want
 - The meaning here is not that David won't desire or want anything ...
 - The meaning is that he won't be **left** wanting
 - We're being told that the Lord's sheep are not lacking anything

- But how is this true?
 - We don't even have to leave Psalm 23 to see that the Lord's sheep do indeed lack things
 - In what sense then, can it be said that God's sheep shall not lack anything?
- John Piper is helpful here ... he says
 - "What David means is that God's sheep never lack anything that the Shepherd thinks is good for them." (repeat)

- And we see that in the next verse, for David says
 - He makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside quiet waters
 - What else do sheep want!
 - Nice green grass to munch on and nice clean, still water to drink

- Over the couple of weeks, I've numerous conversations with people who are going through hard times
- It struck me how relevant Psalm 23 is to us today
 - There will always be things that make life hard ...
 - There will always be time when we go through dark days
- Whether it be
 - Suffering
 - Persecution
 - Anxiety
 - Grief
 - Betrayal
 - Guilt
 - Hardship

- Often when we go through difficult times like these we yearn for comfort to take our mind of it and ease our pain
- It might be the comfort of
 - Alcohol
 - Intimacy and sex
 - Shopping
 - Food
 - Gaming
 - Drugs
- And if you've ever turned to those things to escape the pain of what you are going through ... you'll know
 - they never satisfy
 - they'll often leave you feeling worse
 - and even if they do satisfy for a time ... it's all short lived, because as soon as your time of comfort ends ... the pain and darkness is still there

- But what Psalm 23 points us to is ... is the **real** comfort we have is in Christ and his assured presence with us
- That is in Christ ... you shall not want
 - For ... all we truly need is found in him
 - Love and intimacy that no one can match
 - A restoring of the soul that no holiday can provide
 - A peace of mind that no drug can give us
- For in those moments of darkness ... true comfort is knowing the Shepherd-King is walking right beside you

3. Comfort for the future

- The Lord's presence not only brings us comfort for the here and now ... but Lord's presence also brings us comfort for the future
- And David recognised this in v5-6
- For in these verses he speaks of the great blessing that comes to those who follow the good shepherd ...
 - The picture is of a guest being welcomed into a king's palace for a great banquet ...
 - Where all manner of choice foods have been prepared
 - Where they are given hair gel to fix up their hair
 - Where the Penfolds Grange never runs out
- These metaphors of a great banquet ... anointing with oil ... and an overflowing cup ... give us the picture of the wonderful welcome and lavish provision God pours out on those who come to him
 - Banquet
 - As in most cultures, being invited to eat with someone, especially invited to a banquet is a mark of fellowship and friendship
 - In addition, throughout the NT, heaven is portrayed like a great banquet
 - Parable of Great banquet (Luke 14:16ff)
 - Parable of Lost Son (Luke 15:24-32)
 - To eat with the Lord is to be in fellowship and covenant with the Lord (e.g. like the disciples at the Last Supper)
 - So to be a guest at the Lord's table is to be more than an acquaintance invited for the day, it is to live with him
 - Anointing with oil
 - Anointing the head with oil was a customary way of welcoming honoured guests
 - Overflowing Cup
 - In the OT ... the cup often described in two ways
 - First is as a cup of wrath poured out on those who are God's enemies
 - Second way, which fits the context of Ps 23 ... is it is a cup of blessing or the cup salvation²
 - Here David says this cup the Lord gives him is overflowing ...
 - overflowing with blessing and
 - overflowing with salvation

²Psalm 116:13

- There is NOTHING in all creation ... NOT EVEN DEATH ... can separate us from God ... for those who call upon Jesus as Lord

PRAY