

Pastor's Corner

Lying Down In Green Pastures

March 12, 2008

Dear Friend,

This morning I was reading in Psalm 23 and spent some time studying that phrase: "He makes me lie down in green pastures." This phrase of the psalm has been quoted many times as if it were a promise of plenty to the man who lives a righteous life. But most of us are aware of the fact that life is not organized on that principle. Goodness is no guarantee of prosperity, and righteousness does not ensure ease. The picture that the psalmist is trying to paint here is of an entirely different situation.

In the Bible lands just as the sun is coming up the shepherd takes his flock to a find some grass to eat. They usually graze all morning long, and just a little after noon the sheep are apt to stop grazing. Even the greenest grass holds no attraction for them. The summer sun has been beating down mercilessly for hours on their woolly little heads, and they're ready for a break. So the shepherd heads off down the dusty trail, looking for water, with the sheep closely following. He leads them to a grassy place near a well or the stream; and, with a call which they well recognize, they all lie down and are quiet. With green grass all around them, they do not graze, but dreamily chew their cud and rest awhile before being watered. They cannot drink when they are over heated. So they rest in the green pastures. And it's a rest that they *must* have in order to survive.



This is the picture that King David was trying to paint for us when he says that the Lord makes me lie down in green pastures. He has known the refreshing experience of rest. He knows the value of that quiet time in increased spiritual as well as physical energy. It has been at such times as these that his prayers have risen highest; and now, in this psalm, he is re-creating the mood of sensitivity through which God has been accustomed to speak to him.

There comes a time in every day for every person when the most important thing to be done is to take the time out for rest, meditation, and prayer. No activity is so important nor so productive as the quiet time. When John Wesley had a particularly heavy day ahead of him, he was accustomed to rise a half hour earlier than usual in order to pray and calm his soul in anticipation of his burden. It was the best possible preparation he could make for his day's work, and he was at all times ready to sacrifice any physical comfort in order to gather up his spiritual resources.

I think it's pretty significant that every great word that God has ever spoken to man has been given to him during some time of meditation and silence. Moses was in Midian, far from the noisy labor camps and spectacles of Egypt, alone with his flocks, when God spoke to him and called him to the great task of delivering the children of Israel. It's pretty significant, isn't it, that when Moses wanted to train the fugitives he took them out to the very wilderness in which he had found his great inspiration? It was as if he hoped that God might speak to the nation as He had spoken to their leader. Isaiah was alone when he saw the Lord, high and lifted up, with the train of His robe filling the temple. John the Baptist, that great messenger that people flocked to from all over Palestine, spent years in the empty silence of the wilderness before bringing his message to the people.

Just as David said that the Good Shepherd makes us lie down in green pastures, so Jesus said to His disciples, "Come apart and rest awhile." And He invites each of us, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest." Have you spent some time today in the green pastures of the Shepherd?

I'm praying for you!

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