

Core 52 Week 11 - The Good Shepherd Series

Contributed by Lanny Smith on Mar 19, 2020

Scripture: Psalms 23

Denomination: Christian/Church Of Christ

Summary: How we handle threats? People tend toward two very different responses to a threat. Our current cultural focus is on the threat of COVID-19. Some want to completely downplay it and ignore it and others are running around with their hair on fire. What is the Christian response to this current event?

You can hear the sermon on my podcast <https://pastorlanny.buzzsprout.com/>

Intro:

- How we handle threats - rather like my paternal grandfather contrasted to my mother during thunderstorms.
 - o Growing up in SW Oklahoma - "tornado alley" in the 60's. No early warning, no radar on phones. Sirens went off when someone actually saw a tornado.
 - o Grandpa would say something to the effect of "if that **** storm wants me, it can ***** come and get me." And he would go back to sleep.
 - o Mom, on the other hand, would take me and my little brother to the storm cellar if there was so much as a white cloud in the sky.
- Two very different responses to a threat. We find ourselves facing threats of varying intensity all the time. Our current cultural focus is on the threat of COVID-19 - commonly called the coronavirus.
 - o Just like my family's varied response to the threat of tornados, our social response to this virus has been to each extreme. Some want to completely downplay it and ignore it and others are running around with their hair on fire.
- We often explore scripture here with a question in mind: What is the Christian response to this current event? What guidance can we take from the Holy Spirit and the Word?
- Core 52 review and direction for this week is Psalm 23. This is an excellent time to bring this word into our minds and hearts. To let David's beautiful imagery transform our thinking and actions when we face trials, struggles, threats.

- David packs a lot of punch into six short verses about how we should face any threat in life.
- Let's review the whole psalm together:

Psalm 23 The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

We Need a Shepherd

Psalm 23:1–2 The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams.

- David moves from the “basics” to how we walk through life:

Psalm 23:3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

- Then we hear how we should face life's struggles. It's not that we are immune to trouble, calamity, crisis. We simply know to trust our shepherd.

Psalm 23:4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me.

- Then, by addressing the good shepherd, David asks us to imagine how much God desires to bless us even in crisis.

[SLIDE] Psalm 23:5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings.

- Finally, no matter what life throws at us, we have the ultimate expectation and hope that God will guide us to peace and rest.

Psalm 23:6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

- We can recognize that this psalm applies to any and all of our circumstances.

o In grief, anxiety over finances, health troubles, relationship issues, even coronavirus, we have a good shepherd to trust.

- Now let's turn our attention to the question I posed earlier: How do we respond in our world to events like coronavirus? Strengthened by the firm conviction that we are guided and protected by our shepherd, what do we do?

- Take our "natural" reaction and either hide away or go to the other extreme and run around buying up all the TP and hand sanitizer we can find?

We Follow Our Shepherd's Lead

First, Remember Who We Are

Psalm 23:1 The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

Proverbs 24:10 If you fail under pressure, your strength is too small.

Matthew 6:33–34 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. 34 "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

- Practically, we can ask the question every day, "What do you want me to remember about you right now and how do you want me to trust you?"

Second, Practice Proactive Love

Psalm 23:3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name.

- This has to do with our internal and external character. It's a fundamental part of loving ourselves and one another.

- Love your neighbor

Psalm 37:3 Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper.

1 John 3:16–18 We know what real love is because Jesus gave up his life for us. So we also ought to give up our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 If someone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need but shows no compassion—how can God's love be in that person? 18 Dear children, let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.

Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

- Balanced with caution. Don't panic!

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent person foresees danger and takes precautions. The simpleton goes blindly on and suffers the consequences.

- What is prudence? Treat this pandemic with respect and take precautions.

Finally, Remember to Share Hope

Psalm 23:6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the LORD forever.

Daniel 3:16–17 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego replied, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you. 17 If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God whom we serve is able to save us. He will rescue us from your power, Your Majesty.

1 Peter 3:15 Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it.

Conclusion:

- No matter the threat, we have shepherd to follow.
- We can be confident that he will meet all our needs, guide our actions and always protect us.