

Psalms 23, passage

by Troy DeFeo

Psalms 23:5- “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

Look how David goes back to the day when he was shepherd boy. As I shared last week, the sheep was now expected to leave everything behind (the safe pastures) and walk among the new valley during that day in the summer picked out by their shepherd. But what the sheep do not know, is that the Good Shepherd has something much better than eaten up pastures and digging for roots no longer good for the sheep.

As the shepherd takes the sheep in this “new territory of life” we something profound in the imagery from David’s writing. He begins to write these words, “**You prepare a table before me.**” What a great reminder of the responsibility and love our good shepherd has shown us.

In much of the world, the high plateaus that sheep pasture on are called Mesas. In Spanish, it means “table.” King David is calling his pasture land of life, his table.

The table/land- 1) shepherds take their sheep into from the valley, they must be very careful. Ideally, when the land is flat, the shepherds will take huge amounts of salt and minerals to distribute over the land to prepare the field. He will decide at that time also where his camp will be located and start checking the vegetation for his sheep.

2) Shepherds also during this day in time would go out in the middle of the day surveying the land. He would be checking for poisonous plants, look for water sources, checking on tracks for wild predators that may attack; but also checking for small holes in the ground. Why? One of the continuous problems sheep have to face going through the valley of the shadow of death was snakes (Adder’s). These are approx. 3 ft that live in the holes and will literally bite the noses of the sheep. They will create severe infections and some times death if not treated quickly. So as a defense, the shepherds when surveying the land and taking preventive measures, the shepherds will literally circle the inside and the outer parts of the holes with oil making it very slippery for them to get out.

Spiritually speaking— how can we shed some light on this for us?

Matthew 14:12-15 _____

Jesus prepare the table for His followers:

Look who did the preparing? _____ Arranged the guide to lead?

Look who reserved the room? _____ Furnished the room?

Who followed Jesus and listened to His voice? _____
And at that very night, Jesus had to deal with the snake at the table? _____
Notice Judas showed up for the meal, but he never got to finish eating from the table where His true followers sat. Jn. 13:27 _____

So here we see Jesus “prepared the table in the presence of his enemy”. He also prepared the the table for us to illustrate the love and forgiveness for each of our sins....this table is set daily in our life.

vs. 5 continues.... “You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”

In ancient Israel the shepherds would use the oil not just for the snakes, but also in three other personal ways that David identified with.

- 1) David had to experience the frustration his sheep carried with them in the hot summer days as the insects were just horrible. Mosquitoes and gnats were bad, but they said the flies were there worse of all. The flies would be terrible because they would fly around the nose of the sheep and look for the damp and dark parts inside and they would lay their eggs in there. They would hatch to form a small-worm-like larvae that crawl around and cause the worse aggravation to the sheep. Just to get some kind of relief, they would deliberately beat their heads against the trees, rocks, and brush to try and get them out. Some would be in so much distress, they would accidentally take their own life by causing such a deadly blow to their head. So oil in the nose, eyes, and ears was used constantly to help the sheep.



- 2) Oil was also used to help sheep. This seems funny, but sheep would fight each other. One to show dominance or protecting from each others. Sheep would literally eat the wool from the others. Also, during mating season, the males would often fight and push other males off cliffs to win the rights to mate with the ewe. So the oil softened the blow from each other to slide off.
- 3) The oil was used to heal the wounds. Rubbing down the face with the oil— almost like a vapor rub to a child from his/her mom; the shepherd knew it would help the sheep even if they understand the healing purposes.

Psalms 100:3- great reminder _____

Now, look at the picture again above: In order for the sheep to be anointed with oil, they must be willing to stand still, lower its head and the the Good Shepherd do his work. Again, sheep do not understand how the oil repels insects, heals wounds, protects from predators, or keeps himself from hurting itself or others—it just trust and lives. Over time it can rely on the same patterns as before (trusting God) that whatever the Shepherd is doing...its for his own good. Something is different in the presence of Him.

Let me ask you today, are you needing oil poured out on you today? For what?

In Scripture, we see the anointing of oil as the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is the true source for all anointing—— power, peace, conviction, counsel, discernment, wisdom, love, faith, and truth. Break down each of those and you have something beautiful pouring all over you to help a fallen lamb.

Jesus tends to his sheep: Healed the blind man, he touched the leper, his power flowed the to bleeding girl, healed miles away to a rich man son, it brought Lazarus back from the dead, and a small girl, he touched the heart of Nicodemus, and opened the heart Zacchaeus. he reminded Mary Magdalene what was most important, and helped the confused heart of Cleopas. Stubborn Paul was meant head on, Peter’s denial was met head on, and doubting Thomas was met head on. All three was converted and used by God. Jesus tends to his sheep because that is what a Good Shepherd does.

David would trust his wounds to no other person but God. **Psalms 147:3** _____

Are you taking your worries, disappointments, troubles to God to to other people you trust? _____ Don't forget— **James 5:13**

Remember, the sheep to get its oil would lower his head.

The sheep had to first go to the right person _____

The sheep next had to have the right posture _____

1 Peter 5:6 _____

Luke 18:7 _____

Psalms 25:1-2 _____

Go _____

Bow _____

Trust _____!