

St. Paul's Dorking Small Groups. November 12th 2006

Keys to the Kingdom : the Banquet Psalm 23



Word: Key points from Sunday's sermon

The Lord is my Shepherd :

Protector :i) *The nature of the shepherd's care* lies in the protection he gives to His sheep . His rod and staff symbolise his presence, protection and guidance and they summarize the shepherd's role, Rod= to club down animals/staff = to keep the sheep in control

ii) the effect of HIS care : 'I shall not be in want'.. 'I will fear no evil'. 'I will find rest and restoration for my soul' The sheep has time to rest.. they are provided for. They are led by quiet waters, in green pastures. They are best restored in a place of quiet and stillness. Quiet waters = a place where we can drink without being rushed Is 32:18

Promise: i) of Presence You are *with* me. In the worst of places at the worst of times. (the valley of the shadow of death)

ii) of a future, and inheritance: surely goodness and mercy *shall follow* me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever .. NO longer do I find my enemy following me, I find it is God's goodness. What ever my enemy it can be overcome by the presence and leading of God. Whether this be habits and attitudes, or the tangible enemy of one who despises you. The works of the enemy cannot last, but the effect of God's goodness will do. See Christians imprisoned of their faith who know God's presence with them in the prison cells.. nothing can separate them from the love of God.. he is right there with them. God's goodness has followed them into the darkest of places. God's presence gives hope.

iii) home : 'I shall dwell' can be rendered 'return continually' as well as remaining. The message is 'this is where I need to be.' with my host, the Lord, My shepherd.

Party : A *banquet* is being prepared for you his child. The Lord is host at a banquet.. prepared for his child : a table laden with food and drink. Before entering the hall the host would anoint his guest with oil;(45:7; 92:10; 133:2 Amos 6:6 Luke 7:46)oil made by adding perfumes to olive oil. It is an extravagant affair, given with all God's generosity : 'You have richly bathed my head with oil'.. the root word for 'anoint' is the same as that for 'rich'. Some Manuscripts e.g. LXX suggest that the cup as being filled with 'good' wine. Overflowing picture of the Lord as giving the best to his child.

In the gospels we discover the Kingdom of God is like a banquet to which many are invited but few come, Luke 14:7-23



Witness: Questions to discuss

- 1 .Read Luke 14: 7-23 what can we learn about the Kingdom from the image of a banquet ? Why do you think people refuse the invitation o the party ? How is the command to be like a little child helpful here?
- 2.Hope : in what ways is hope expressed in psalm 23 ? How might the image of the banquet inspire perseverance in this psalm? What does it mean to have the feast given it the face of your enemies ?
- 3.What tools are given us in the psalm to persevere ? How might the Shepherd use his rod and staff to give you strength for the journey ?
4. How have you found stillness and quiet in your spiritual journey?
5. How might you imitate the Shepherd to help bring reconciliation to others ?