

Psalm 23

Lesson 12

I Will Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever

Participant Guide

A Bible Study to Accompany “A Shepherd Looks At Psalm 23” by Phillip Keller

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Lesson 12, Psalm 23, A Psalm of David

"I Will Dwell In The House Of The Lord Forever"

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. *Psalm 27:4*

Prayers

Luther's Morning Prayer

Thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Psalm 23

- ¹ The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
- ² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.
- ³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Introduction

As we close our study of Psalm 23, we reflect on God's goodness and care for us through all the seasons of our lives. God provided for our needs in green pastures and good waters; He has been our shepherd through the valleys and on the mountaintop. There is yet another promise he makes to us: we are to dwell in his presence forever. God created us to dwell with him forever.

In this lesson, we will focus on death, resurrection, and eternal life.

If you are grieving the death of a loved one, "Walking the Mourner's Path" is a valuable ministry offered through our church that provides valuable insight and comfort while you are grieving.

Discussion

1. David closes his Psalm reflecting on dwelling with God forever, the hope of every Christian. What would you tell someone who asked, "Why do you want to live in the house of the LORD forever?"
2. In David's time, the House of the Lord was a tent where God's glorious presence resided. It was the same tabernacle Moses and the Israelite artisans built during the Exodus. Read Psalm 27 and discuss David's desire to live in the House of the LORD.

Ps 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation — whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid?

Ps 27:2 When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall.

Ps 27:3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

Ps 27:4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Ps 27:5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.

Ps 27:6 Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.

Ps 27:7 Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be merciful to me and answer me.

Ps 27:8 My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.

Ps 27:9 Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior.

Ps 27:10 Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me.

Ps 27:11 Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

Ps 27:12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up against me, breathing out violence.

Ps 27:13 I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

Ps 27:14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

- a. David's desire in verses 1-3, 5?
 - b. David's desire in verse 4?
 - c. David's desire in verse 8
 - d. David's desire in verse 11
 - e. David's desire in verse 13
3. How did your reasons for dwelling with God forever compare to David's? What did David's reasons for wanting to dwell with God reveal about his heart?
4. During a sermon, our Pastor illustrated the idea of "forever" with a measuring tape. On his measuring tape, each year of our life was measured by one inch. If we lived 100 years, our life would be one hundred inches long, 8.3 feet long. The 150-foot length of our sanctuary represented our time in heaven. If we were in heaven for 5,000 years, our earthly lives would only look 3 feet long on the measuring tape. As our time in heaven lengthens, our earthly lives appear to vanish. After 10,000 years in heaven (with no less days to sing God's praise), our earthly lives would look like 1.5 feet on the measuring tape. And after 100,000 years, our earthly life would only be a bit more than an inch.

When we live with eternity in view, we are more interested in storing treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33) than in our earthly life. Our prayer each morning can be, "Lord, thank you for another day. May I do something today that will have eternal significance."

What remains on your spiritual bucket list?

Reconcile relationships?

Service to others?

Share the gospel and praise God?

Defeat sin through the Holy Spirit?

Show love, faith, and wisdom to children/grandchildren?

Share wealth to benefit others?

5. On the night Jesus was betrayed and would be sentenced to die, Jesus comforted his disciples by telling them he would prepare a room for them in his Father's house.

Jn 14:1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me.

Jn 14:2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.

Jn 14:3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Jn 14:4 You know the way to the place where I am going."

- a. Thomas, a disciple of Jesus, said he did not know where Jesus was going (verse 4). What is Jesus talking about in these verses?
 - b. What assurance is Jesus giving his disciples?
 - c. Jesus gave his disciples other assurances on his night (below).
 - a. Which of these gives you great comfort?
 - b. What do you feel you still need to do as his disciple?
 - 1) John 13:31,32 His glory
 - 2) John 14:6-10 His oneness with the Father
 - 3) John 14:13-14 The power of prayer in Jesus' name to glorify the Father
 - 4) John 14:16-17, the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit
 - 5) John 14:26-27 His peace
 - 6) John 15:4-5 His abiding presence and their fruitful mission
 - 7) John 15:14-15 They are his friends
 - 8) John 15:16 They were chosen to go and be fruitful in their mission
6. David showed remarkable insight into eternal life. Isaiah (26:19) and Daniel (12:1-3) had not yet written of the resurrection of the dead. Ezekiel had not written of the resurrection of the dry bones of Israel, and Elijah had not yet been taken to heaven in the whirlwind. The sole reference to life without end would have been Enoch, "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away" Genesis 5:24. Even in Jesus' time, Jews were divided over whether there was life after death.

Read the following Psalms of David and discuss what his idea of dwelling with God forever may have been.

Ps 23:6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Ps 27:4 One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple.

Ps 16:9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

Ps 16:10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

Ps 16:11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

David's son Solomon writes, "Ecc 12:5 Then man goes to his eternal home and mourners go about the streets. ⁶ Remember him—before the silver cord is severed, or the golden bowl is broken; before the pitcher is shattered at the spring, or the wheel broken at the well, ⁷ and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it."

7. One of the most important teachings on death and resurrection comes from John 11, the death of Lazarus. Jesus knew his friend Lazarus was deathly sick but did not go to him when his sisters sent for him. Instead, Jesus waited three days after Lazarus' death before going to the family because he planned to raise him from the dead so that those who saw Lazarus die would put their faith in him as the Messiah. Read and discuss John 11:20-27.

Jn 11:20 When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

Jn 11:21 "Lord," Martha said to Jesus, "if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Jn 11:22 But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask."

Jn 11:23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Jn 11:24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jn 11:25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; ²⁶ and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Jn 11:27 "Yes, Lord," she told him, "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who was to come into the world."

- a. How does Martha's conversation change during her conversation with Jesus?
- b. What does Martha's conversation indicate about her faith in Jesus and her understanding of death?

8. Today, believers are also divided in their view of what happens after death. Some Bible verses indicate we are immediately joined with Christ in heaven. Other verses indicate that our bodies wait for the resurrection on the last day. How do you reconcile these views?

Lk 23:42 Then he [the criminal on the cross] said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Lk 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

Phil 1:21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

Phil 1:23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Phil 1:24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

1Th 4:13 Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope.

1Th 4:14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.

1Th 4:15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel^z and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Mt 22:31 **But about the resurrection of the dead—have you not read what God said to you,**

Mt 22:32 **'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."**

Mt 22:33 When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at his teaching.

9. Pastor Keller reflected on his years as a shepherd with his flock and their movement through the seasons from the lowlands, through the valleys, and to the high alpine pastures. He protected them from predators, rescued them from their wandering, treated their diseases, and anointed them to protect them from the irritation of insect pests. He led them to good pastures, clean water, and shelter in the storm. His flock and land flourished and were his source of immense pleasure and satisfaction. His sheep could not give him thanks or praise, but we are not like sheep in this respect; we can praise God for his overflowing blessings, care, and provision.

- a. What is your testimony of thanks and praise?

- b. In what ways do you share your love for Christ with your children, grandchildren, and neighbors?

10. Death is a transition that stands between us and our eternal home with our Lord. The thought of death can bring anxiety, grief, fear, guilt, or overwhelming sorrow. Just as Jesus shed tears and grieved for his dead friend Lazarus, our faith does not deny these feelings but offers us great assurance and comfort.

^{2Co 5:1} Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

^{2Co 5:2} Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling,

^{2Co 5:3} because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked.

^{2Co 5:4} For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

^{2Co 5:5} Now it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

^{2Co 5:6} Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord.

^{2Co 5:7} We live by faith, not by sight.

^{2Co 5:8} We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

^{2Co 5:9} So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it.

- a. What is the earthly tent Paul is referring to?
- b. What is the assurance Paul is offering in these verses?
- c. What is Paul's primary goal in life?

11. "Walking the Mourner's Path" is a ministry focused on people who have loved ones who have died. One way the ministry helps loved ones is to view death as a transition to our eternal home. Henry VanDyke, a pastor, ambassador, and professor, also expressed death in this way in the poem "The Ship."

A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the ocean blue. She is an object of beauty and strength, and I stand and watch her until at length she lands like a speck of white cloud just where the sea and the sky come down to meet each other. Then someone at my side says, "There, she is gone."

Gone where?

Gone from my sight, that is all.

She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side, and just as able to bear the load of living weights to its place of destination.

Her diminished size is in me, not in her and just at that moment when someone says, "There, she is gone," on that distant shore there are other eyes watching her coming and other voices ready to take up the glad shout.

"Here she comes," and such is dying. - Henry Van Dyke

Who is waiting on the far shore? A great cloud of witnesses awaits; ^{Heb 12:1} Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Closing

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.