

Psalm 23:6 (Part 8)

INTRODUCTION

We come to our final sermon in this glorious Psalm that we have been studying over the last few months. We have covered a lot of ground in a very short period of time and that is because that although this Psalm is very well known it has such a depth to it.

Now even though we have spent some time trying to dig the treasures out of this Psalm I still feel that I have only begin to explore its glorious message and truths. We now come to the climax of this Psalm as we come to this final verse. What we have here is not so much a continuation of the Shepherd theme but a summary or a conclusion for the whole Psalm It appears that David the Psalmist is trying to capture in one sentence the way God treats his people and so he concludes with this outstanding verse.

1. GOD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY/LOVE WILL FOLLOW US THROUGHOUT LIFE

It's difficult to think of two better words to describe God's dealings with his people than goodness and love/mercy. Now let me explain why some translations have the word 'mercy' and why some have the word 'love.' The Hebrew word means both and so sometimes the word is translated lovingkindness. It is a covenant word and demonstrates to us that God is totally committed to us and this is seen in the way he deals with us.

Our God will always act in ways that are always loving and in ways that are always merciful. So when I talk about God's love following us I am also talking about God's mercy doing likewise.

We know that God is good (Psalm 34:8) in fact He is not just good to his own people but he is good to the whole of his creation. His goodness goes out daily even to those who reject and oppose Him to those who do not even believe that he exists and to those who the bible calls unbelievers. God in his goodness sends sun and rain on those who are righteous and those who are unrighteous (Matthew 5:45).

Every day when we arise and look out our windows we can clearly see God's goodness to all mankind. Look at the hills and the valleys, the rain and snow and sunshine. Look at the birds of the air and the insects in the ground and remember that what you see is making a clear statement that God is good. We have such a wonderful kind and good God and if only we who are Christians took a little more time to think about this instead of taking God's goodness for granted then perhaps we would learn to be a little more thankful and as a result complain a little less. Think about your life at this moment of time, you have so much to be thankful for.

You can be thankful for your family, your job, and your financial security, good health your car and yes even old age. You know as we get older it is so easy to feel the frustration of being older, with all the pains and tiredness and limitations that age brings. But the fact that we are here tonight in spite of our limitations is a sign of God's goodness to us.

The bible only promises 70 years and yet many in our country are living much longer than that so therefore old age is indeed a sign of God's goodness to us. Then think again of those who have no time for God those who are hostile towards Him. There are some in this world who openly blaspheme God and what they fail to realise is that it is only the goodness of God that allows them to do so.

For God could deal with such people, ever so severely, yet he continues to bless them in many, many ways. He sustains their life every day and provides for them many good things in spite of their blasphemy.

There are many people who will never come into a service in this church or any other church for that matter. There are many people who will not listen when we as a church go out to them with the gospel. But such people fail to realise that it is the goodness of God that they are enjoying day after day without even thinking about it or acknowledging it.

It is God who gives us family and friends and Jobs and holidays etc. He does this not just for those people who are his children as a result of the new birth but also to those who hate Him, oppose Him and have no time for Him at all. That is the goodness of God in action day after day. Many people say to me that if there is a God why do so many bad things happen in this world?

But what those same people fail to understand is that things are not as bad as they could be because of God's restraining hand upon sinners. What such people need to understand is that each one of us deserves nothing from God except judgement because of our sin and rebellion. Yet God withholding his judgement from us or tempering his judgement with mercy is a mark of God's goodness to us. People often say why does God allow evil in our world? But the truth is that it is only the goodness of God to us that continues to permit evil in our world. Let me explain what I mean.

For God to stop evil in our world would mean that he would have to intervene and judge it. That would mean that he would have to judge us and as a result condemn us? So the fact that God withholds his judgement from us and continues to permit evil is actually a mark of God's goodness to this world. If He were to deal with sin and sinners, as we deserve then there would be none of us here today.

The reason why God is withholding his judgement and thus allowing evil to continue in our world is because he has promised that out of this sinful world he will save a people for himself. Therefore God is not only good but he is also loving /merciful as well. God grants to hell deserving sinners pardon for sin and new life in Jesus Christ. He comes to us in love and mercy and offers us pardon and a heavenly home when we deserve nothing but hell.

He shows his love and mercy to sinners by sending his Son Jesus into our world to pay the price of sin so that we can be set free and receive his grace.

Now does this last verse not capture beautifully all that God has been saying in the rest of this Psalm? For the Christian person here today we can rejoice that God's goodness and love/mercy will follow us right throughout our life because without it not one of us would be saved from sin and hell not one of us would be able to stand before God justified not one of us would have any hope.

Just take this verse and apply it to the rest of this Psalm and we will see why God's goodness and love and mercy are vital for every aspect of our lives. It is only because of God's goodness and love/mercy to us that anyone can ever say that the Lord is my Shepherd. If it were not for God's goodness and love/mercy then God would not have sent his son Jesus into our world to die for us in our place and for our sin.

It would not therefore be possible for us in our sinful condition to be able to know God as our own personal Shepherd.

Likewise if it was not for the goodness and love of God then we would have many needs physical, mental, emotional and spiritual and we would have no one to turn to no one to meet those needs. We would not be able to honestly say 'I shall not be in want.' It is only because God is good and loving and merciful towards us that he willingly meets our every need within our world. Likewise we wouldn't know any peace or serenity within our lives without God's goodness and love and mercy.

Our lives would be like a restless ocean if God in his goodness and love did not make us lie down in green pastures or lead us beside the quiet calm waters so that we can experience and enjoy His peace.

Again what happens when as God's children we wander from him and his truth, we are told in this Psalm that he goes after us and restores our soul. Why does he do that? Because his goodness and love/mercy follow us all the days of our lives. If that was not the case then none of us would stay believers for long for once we drifted then God would leave us to our own sinful ways. We would also be people of fear if it were not for the goodness of God.

We would fear death, but because he is good and loving /merciful towards us those who belong to Him do not need to fear death, death is only a shadow because we know that his goodness and love/mercy follow us all the days of our life even in death and right into eternity.

As Christian people we do not need to fear our enemies and we may have many of them but God will protect us and draw near to us when we are hurt by this sinful world, He will soothe our wounds why? Because his goodness and his love/mercy follow us all the days of our life. So I hope you can see how this final verse sums up well the rest of the Psalm.

Let's pause there and thank God for his goodness and mercy/love towards us personally and towards us collectively as a church. This phrase 'all the days of my life' is very comprehensive it covers everything doesn't it.

It covers the days when I am in a bad mood and not feeling much like a Christian. It covers the days when prayer is hard and cold. It covers the days when I neglect to read my bible or when I do, it appears to be dry and uninspiring. It covers the days when I am depressed and downcast of soul. It covers days when I am ill or confused or simply in a dilemma. In all moments of life God's goodness and love/mercy follows us he will not put his hand on us to destroy us but will kindly and lovingly deal with us and show us his goodness and kindness to us personally. It is a lovely experience when God treats us in ways we don't expect. Perhaps we have deserted him in our hearts and we know we deserve his wrath and judgement upon us and we may even expect it.

But then suddenly he deals with us gently in His goodness and love/mercy towards us. Finally we come to this last phrase.

2. THE FINAL DESTINATION FOR THE CHRISTIAN

Not only does God's goodness and love/mercy follow us all the days of our life while here on earth but also they follow us right into our final destination, which is described for us here in picture language as the house of the Lord. In other words goodness and love/mercy will follow us to our eternal home, which is with the Lord forever in heaven.

The Christian is on a journey, it starts at conversion and it continues throughout life but we are heading in a certain direction throughout life for we are heading for heaven we are heading to our home with God. And God makes sure that we get there by following us with his goodness and love/mercy; my dear friends are you a Christian? Have you doubts of not making it to heaven?

Then God in this Psalm assures all true believers that he will surround us with love mercy and goodness and will lead you to your heavenly destination, that's for certain. The phrase "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" is not just looking to heaven but for David it is about intimate fellowship with God.

The house of the Lord in the Old Testament whether Tabernacle or Temple is where God dwelt with his people. So to be in God's house is to be in God's presence. So not only will goodness and love/mercy follow us right into heaven but also it will enable us to enjoy God's presence every day. It is because of his goodness and love/mercy that we are able to know intimate fellowship with our Lord through Jesus His Son.

But perhaps you are here and you don't know if you are a Christian or you are not sure but you would love to know that God's goodness and love/mercy follow you for all your life and that it will follow you to the grave and beyond. Perhaps you long to be able to know that intimate relationship with the Lord every day. Then you can by coming to know the Lord as your Shepherd and you do that by trusting Jesus the Good Shepherd to save you from your sins.

He gave his life for his sheep so that you can be granted salvation but to receive that salvation you must seek it through repenting of your sins and believing with all your heart that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners. If you want to know more then please talk to me or someone else but it is very important that you get right with God and know his goodness and his love/mercy following you all the days of your life.

It's important to know his goodness and love/mercy in death and in eternity. So come to him, trust him as your Shepherd and then you will be able to say "the Lord is my shepherd."

Amen