HALLELUJAH, WHAT A SHEPHERD

**DATE: 10/27/2013 am**

**TEXT: Psalm 23:6 – *“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever”***

**INTRODUCTION**

For several weeks now, our Quest has been …

Learning how, to Face the Days Ahead

The **23rd Psalm** has been our source for finding that answer

As we come to the close of this Psalm,

We end up where we started ( w/ ***“The LORD”***)

Look at **v.1**, then **v.6**

From his Opening Words to his Closing Thought …

David has shared his secret to Facing the Days Ahead

He has given us more than -

A Manual of *How To’s* and a List of *Do’s and Don’t’s*

His philosophy Hasn’t Been, *“grin and bear it”* … or …

*“just tie a knot and hang out at the end of the rope”*

That Secret is ***“The LORD”***

When we think about our life, and the paths we’ve traveled

It makes us eternally grateful that we can say –

**- *“The LORD is my Shepherd”***

**- *“I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever”***

As for me, I am thankful that I Will Not have to face the Days Ahead alone

**Song:** J.P. Schofield wrote the song *Saved, Saved!* Aren’t you glad we can say with the hymn writer:  *“I’ve found a friend who is all to me. His love is every true; I love to tell how He lifted me, And what His grace can do for you”*

When we come to David’s final thoughts in the **23rd Psalm**

We find him thinking about what it has meant to have the Lord with him all the days of his life

David thinks of 3 things –

The Days ‘Behind’ Him, The Days ‘Before’ Him, and The Days ‘Beyond’ Him

As he does, I see him looking to heaven and saying –

***“Hallelujah! What a Shepherd!”***

As we come to the final verse of this Psalm,

We will look at the Past, the Present, and into the Future

And, as we look at ***“all the days of our lives” …***

We find ourselves joining David and saying –

***“Hallelujah! What a Shepherd!”***

Let’s pray and consider these final thoughts about –

**- *“all the days of my life”***

**- *“Dwelling in the House of the Lord forever”***

**~~~Prayer~~~**

As we Reflect with David, we first look Behind us

As we do, there should be a -

**I. “ADORATION”**

**Adoration** is *a feeling of great love and respect for someone*

A look Back should Fill us, with Adoration for God

As David looks Back, he sees something else

Throughout this Psalm he has portrayed the shepherd as always Leading him

But now, as he looks back,

He’s aware that ***“goodness and mercy”*** are also, Following him

***“Surely goodness and mercy … follow me …”***

**Quotes:** Someone spoke of these companions as *“The Rear Guard”* Another calls them *“heavenly escorts”*. Someone else likened ***“Goodness”*** and ***“Mercy”*** to sheepdogs.

They wrote: *“He (The Lord) is in front, and the sheepdogs behind, and we His sheep are happily sandwiched in between.”*

The Lord not only Leads us all the days of our life

But, these 2 sheepdogs have been Following us, as well

In ***“goodness”*** we see -

**A. The Lord’s ‘Control in All Things’**

The word ***“goodness”*** describes something *good*

It’s interesting because this Hebrew word is translated ***“best”*** or ***“better”*** at other times in the Bible

When David looks back, he sees that *“the Best”* has ***“followed him all the days of his life”***

He is stating the New Testament promise of –

**Romans 8:28 - *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose”***

I’m sure he had days that were Delightful,

But also days that were Distressful …

More often than not, many things were Disappointing, Discouraging, and Difficult

There had been many of those ***“valley”*** Experiences

Yet, as David Reflects on those days,

He realizes that everything that had happened …

… Had happened for his good

The Valleys had led to the Tableland

**Ill.** There is the story of the little boy telling his grandmother how “everything” was going wrong. Meanwhile, his grandmother was baking a cake. She asked, “Would you like to have a snack?” “Yes!” was his quick reply. “Here,” said the grandmother, “Have some cooking oil.” “Yuck,” said the little boy. “How about a couple of raw eggs,” asked the grandmother? “Would you like some flour? Or baking soda? “Grandma,” said the little boy, “all those things are yucky.” The Grandmother then replied, “Yes, all those things seem bad by themselves. But when they are put together in the right way, they make a wonderfully delicious cake.” She went on to explain how God takes the bad things in life and turns them into something good for us.

When we were going thru those Difficult experiences of life,

I’m sure, we did not see them as being Good or Beneficial

Yet, as we look back now, we see how God took those experiences …

… and has used them to bring untold Blessings and Benefits

- The days that were laden with the Heaviest Burdens,

- Have resulted in some of our Greatest Blessings

When Joseph revealed himself to his brethren, he said,

**Genesis 50:20 - *“But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive”***

In that; he reminded his brother’s of what they did

Yet, instead of looking back with Bitterness, he saw it as a Blessing,

Joseph looked back and recognized the control of God over all the Circumstances of Life

As we look back, we should see that ***“goodness”*** has followed us ***“all the days of our life”***

Our Lord has been in control of all that has happened,

And even though at the time, His Face was hidden,

Now we see His Handprint on it all

Nothing, absolutely nothing, has happened in our life that first was not filtered through God’s Love and God’s Plan

He is in Control of all things

***“Goodness”*** has followed us ***“all the days of our life”***

It may take several Months (yes, Years) to see it,

But we all can look back and see how ***“all things have worked together for our good”***

**The Lord’s ‘Control in All Things’**

Not only has ***“goodness”*** followed us ***“all the days of our life”***

But so has ***“mercy”***

In ***“mercy”*** we see -

**B. The Lord’s ‘Compassion at All Times’**

It has been suggested that David had far more to fear from his Past than he did his Future

There had not only been Difficulty in David’s life,

But there had also been Failure

His Failures are Well Marked and Well Known

(Even though he was a man after God’s own heart)

He had not lived squeaky-clean

There were some Dark and Dirty stains left over

Don’t you think that David often recalled his past sins?

Don’t you think he Recalled them with Shame and Sorrow?

He confessed in **Psalm 51** that ***“his sin was ever before him”*** (**v.3**)

No doubt, more than once, David had said to himself,

*- “Why did I do that?”*

*- “How could I have been so stupid”*

*- “What was I thinking?”*

Yet, as he looks back he sees that ***“mercy”*** has …

***“followed him all the days of his life”***

When he Failed God, God did not Fail him

God did not say - *“Oh, rebellious, straying lamb. You can no longer be a part of my flock”*

When David wandered, did God leave him and turn His back?

No, ten thousand times no!

Instead, he found ***“mercy”***

No doubt he had prayed many times the prayer of **Psalm 25:7 –**

***“Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord”***

And, as he reflected on his past,

He realized that ***“mercy”,*** had been there every time he turned around

I’m sure we all wish we could undo many things

Especially our Sins and Failures!

- How I wish there was a time machine that could take me back in order to get a second chance to relive those days

- Or a magical eraser that could remove those days from the calendar of my life

**Quote:** Someone once wrote, *“There is no “R” on the stick shift of life, no reverse. Time never moves backward, not an inch, not a step, never. The hands of the clock always move clockwise, and the pages of the calendar are torn off in one direction. Therefore a deed once done can never be undone. A word spoken can never be unsaid. An opportunity missed cannot be reclaimed in exactly the same way. As a result, all of us live with certain regrets."*

Even though we may not be able to get a second chance

(to live our lives)

Our God is the God of the second chance!

He’s a God of ***“mercy”***

When we look at the many times we Sinned and Failed the Lord,

Yet realize that He stills Leads us, Cares for us, Protects and Provides for us, and Loves us

We have to say, ***“mercy”*** has ***“followed us all the days of our life”***

In spite of our Failures …

The Lord has not Disowned, Forsaken, Abandoned, or Turn His Back on us

Instead, He showed us ***“mercy”***, and in His compassion brought us back to where He could bless and even use us

In David’s prayer of repentance in **Ps. 51** he prayed -

***“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions”***

David found the mercy he asked for, and God blotted out his transgressions

Therefore he could say in **Ps. 66:20 –**

***“Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me”***

Think of what David saw when he looked back

Think of the bitter memory of the Adultery and Murder

Any man with such a past could be filled with fear

What about your past?

I sometimes shudder when I think of my own sinful past

Yet when I turn to look at that past,

Between the Past and the Present, stands ***“Goodness”*** and ***“Mercy”***

That thought should fill our heart with **Adoration** …

… to see that ***“goodness and mercy”*** have ***“followed us all the days of our life”***

We can only lift our hands and bless the name of the Lord

He has been on Top of every aspect of our lives and has been Compassionate at all times

Before I move on, I must point out that the word ***“surely”*** literally means *only*

When we look back we see that ***“only goodness and mercy”*** have ***“followed us all the days of our lives”***

There has never been a moment or situation that ***“goodness and mercy”*** were not at work in our lives

- God has seen to it that all things have worked together for our *good*,

Thus only ***“goodness”*** has followed us

- God has always been *merciful*

His ***“mercy endureth forever,”*** (**Psa. 106:1**)

Therefore, only ***“mercy”*** has followed us

When we look back we see that heaven’s sheepdogs, ***“goodness and mercy”*** have been there all the time

***“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life”***

And for that we should have **“ADORATION”**

The second look I see David taking, in his closing words, is at the days before him

As we look with David at the days that are Before Us,

We should have an -

**II. “APPRECIATION”**

As David speaks of ***“goodness and mercy”***

He does not speak of this heavenly *Rear Guard* as just Companions of the Past

He does not say, ***“Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life,”***

But instead, ***“shall”*** follow him all the days of his life

***“Shall”*** – means *future events*

These blessed friends that had followed him in the past,

Would also follow him in the days to come

As David describes ***“goodness and mercy”*** following him

He speaks of how they will -

**A. ‘Consistently’ Follow Us**

How long will ***“goodness and mercy”*** follow us?

They will follow us ***“all the days of our life!”***

No matter what those days hold

***“Goodness” and “Mercy”*** never take a day off or go on vacation

**They ‘Consistently’ Follow Us**

Every day, all day, they will be following us

As well, we see that they will -

**B. ‘Persistently’ Follow Us**

David says these companions will ***“follow”*** us all the days of our life

The word ***“follow”*** is a very interesting word

It means *to pursue, to hunt*

Interesting … considering we looked at them as Sheep Dogs

It’s not just that ***“goodness and mercy”*** Are following us and Will follow us,

But also that they are looking for the chance to work on our behalf

**Quote:** It was that verse that gave Francis Thompson the ideal for his poem “The Hound of Heaven.” It is a lengthy poem, but the first 3 lines read:

I fled Him, down the night and down the days;

I fled Him, down the arches of the years;

I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways

This poem speaks of the seeking and redeeming love of God …

… That pursues sinners through the years, with the objective of rescuing and saving them

The sinner seeks to escape, but the love of God will not let him go, ever after Him are *the Hound of Heaven*

***“Goodness and mercy”*** are as the *hounds of heaven*,

Always pursing us, hunting us, seeking to bring into our lives their Blessing

As we Face the Days Ahead, ***“goodness and mercy”*** will not only follow us, but will pursue us!

This ought to fill our hearts with Gratitude and Appreciation

No matter what the future holds, the Lord will be in front of us,

And ***“goodness and mercy”*** will be behind us!

**They ‘Consistently’ and ‘Persistently’ Follow Us**

**“ADORATION”**

**“APPRECIATION”**

The final look we see David taking is at the days beyond him

As we look at the days Beyond Us,

We see a -

**III. “ANTICIPATION”**

**Anticipation** is *expectant waiting, the feeling of looking forward, usually excitedly or eagerly, to something that is going to happen*

**Humor:** A little boy was promised a new puppy for his 10th birthday. He was taken to the local pound and there were so many puppies that he had a hard time choosing which one he wanted. Finally he picked one of the shaggiest pups in the lot that was standing there wagging

his tail furiously. His mom asked, *“Why that one?”* He replied, *“I want the one with the happy ending.”*

You talk about a happy ending!

David’s closing thoughts takes him beyond the days of his present life

His closing thought is about on *another world*

He not only thinks about all the days of this life,

But also of the days of the life that is to come

He says - ***“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”***

David does not call it a tent or a temporary place of lodging

He calls it a ***“house”***

He sees the days that are beyond as the days when he gets *home*

Each year in the Holy land there comes a time when the weather conditions hindered the shepherd and sheep from staying out on the open range and in the temporary fold

When this time comes, the shepherd Leads his sheep back where they have their permanent home

The sheep would know they were home, and they would jump about and swish their tails with joy

One day, the ***“Chief Shepherd”*** will bring His sheep home!

What a glorious day that will be!

What kind of home will it be?

First, let me say, that right now, it’s -

**A. Our ‘Future’ Home**

David said - ***“I will dwell”***

He is looking ahead into the future and the day when he would ***“dwell in the house of the Lord”***

We think about this life, and all that this life often brings our way

This life, as we have repeatedly seen, is often marked by Dark and Difficult days

But there is coming a day when we will say goodbye to this life and all its troubles and trials, hurts and heartaches, suffering and sorrow …

And ***“will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”***

Thank God this life is not all there is!

There awaits, for every child of God, a Future Home

**Book:** In John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, he describes Christian and Hopeful as they came in view of the heavenly city. He writes: *“Drawing near to the city, they had yet a more perfect view thereof. It was built of pearls and precious stones, also the streets thereof were paved with gold; so that, by reason of the natural glory of the city, and the reflection of the sunbeams upon it, Christian with desire fell sick; Hopeful also had a fit or two of the same disease.”*

I believe that as David thought about the day when he would ***“dwell in the house of Lord”***

He had a *fit or two of the same disease*

I occasionally have *a fit* like that, myself!

When I think of how one day we will trade this world for a new one; trade this life for a far greater one,

How can we Not *fall sick with desire and occasionally have a fit or two of the same disease*?

Secondly, David also saw that his **‘Future’ Home** was -

One day going to be -

**B. Our ‘Final’ Home**

David said he would ***“dwell”*** in the house of the Lord ***“forever”***

That word ***“dwell”*** means, *to sit down and remain*

David was not talking about a place he would visit

He was talking about a place that he was going to move in and live – for how long? – ***“Forever!”***

**Quote:** One of greatest preachers of yesterday was a former slave, by the name of John Jasper. In one of his sermons he took his congregation on a tour of heaven as only he could: *“I loves to go down to the old muddy James, mighty red and muddy, it goes along so grand and quiet like it was tending to business. But that ain’t nothing to the river which flows by the throne. I longs for its crystal waves, and the trees on the banks, and all manners of fruits. This old head of mine often gets hot with fever and rolls on the pillow, and I has many times desired to cool it in that blessed stream as it kisses the banks of that upper Canaan. The thought of seeing that river, drinking its water and resting under those trees…Oh, to be there!” “After that, I’d stroll up them avenues where the children of God dwell, and view their mansions. Father Abraham, I’m sure he got a great palace. And David. And Paul, that mighty scholar who got struck down in the Damacsus Road, I want to see his mansion. Then I cut around to the back streets and looks for the little home where the Saviour set my mother up to housekeeping. I expect to know the house by the roses in the yard and vine on the porch.”* (At that point, Jasper dramatically jumped back, clapped his hands, and shouts) *“Look there! See that one! Hallelujah, it’s John Jasper’s. Said He was going to prepare a place for me. There it is! Too good for a poor sinner like me, but He built it for me, a turn-key job, and mine forever!”*

As we think about Facing the Days Ahead,

Let me remind you that no matter what the days ahead may hold,

There is a better day coming for those who are saved!

Can I ask you a question that I have asked several times over the past several weeks?

Can you say - ***“The Lord is my Shepherd?”***

If so, then you can be assured that all the days of your life, the Lord your Shepherd, will be with you and will take care of you

And, when we come to the end of our journey,

He will take us home and we –

***“shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever”***

The only thing I can think of as I come to the end is -

***“Hallelujah! What a Shepherd!”***

**“ADORATION”**

**“APPRECIATION”**

**“ANTICIPATION”**