



FEAR LESS

DAY 5: WORSHIPING THE GOOD SHEPHERD

INTRODUCTION

Start with prayer, then read...



READ: Micah 5:2–5a and John 10:11–14



REFLECTION QUESTION:

How does this passage describe Jesus as our shepherd?



REFLECTION QUESTION:

How is the strength of the shepherd connected the peace of the flock?

DIGGING DEEPER

***“Your rod and your staff, they comfort me... Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever”
– Psalm 23:4***

The “rod” in Psalm 23 is not the “rod of discipline,” but a rod of protection. A shepherd used his rod or his staff to protect his sheep from wild animals.

When he faced Goliath, David described how he had protected his flock from a lion and a bear using only his slingshot, his rod, and the strength of the Lord (1 Samuel 17:34–37).

Micah described a coming Messiah who will shepherd his flock with the strength of the Lord. Jesus described Himself as the good shepherd who lays down His own life defending the sheep.

Let that idea of God as your defender sink in. Shepherds regularly fight wolves, lions and bears. Caring for sheep is not for the faint of heart. Shepherds are tough and fearless, yet caring for tender. Our God is a fierce protector of His flock, yet He knows the needs of each of His sheep.

The Bible says God will never leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6). He will fight our battles for us (Exodus 14:14). His wisdom will protect us when we follow His Word (Proverbs 4:5–6). He will spread His protection over us when we take refuge in Him (Psalm 5:11).

So why doesn't God always protect His people from harm?

What about Jim Elliot, the faithful missionary who gave up his whole life to preach the gospel in the jungles of Ecuador and was killed by the very tribes he was trying to reach?

What about Kara Tippetts, a pastor's wife, mom, and blogger who wrote beautifully of God's grace in the midst of her suffering before she died of cancer?

Why isn't God protecting His people from this virus now?

We like to think of God's protection as a magic force field that keeps us from all harm. But sometimes God allows us— even the most faithful in His flock—to go through great suffering. Even though God is good, loving, mighty and sovereign, there is suffering all over the world every day. Natural disasters, sickness, poverty, death, disease, abuse—some of it brought on by human injustice and some of it just because the world is a broken place. Until Jesus returns and God's kingdom comes in all its fullness, we will have pain and suffering, death and disease. Not as divine punishment, but just as the reality of the fallen world we live in.

Micah prophesied in the northern kingdom of Israel in a time when Assyria was the superpower of the day. It wasn't a question of if they would conquer Israel, it was a matter of when. The Assyrians, the most violent army the ancient world had ever seen, committed unspeakable atrocities against the peoples they conquered. Into this terrifying situation, Micah said the Messiah would come in strength like a shepherd. He would be their peace when the Assyrians invaded. God's protection wasn't peace from the storm. It was peace through the storm. This is a hard truth, but one Scripture teaches over and over. God doesn't always protect us from physical harm. But He is always our peace through it.

APPLYING IT TO LIFE

In her book, *The Hardest Peace*, Kara Tippetts quoted Nancy Guthrie as saying,

"Trusting God when the miracle does not come, when the urgent prayer gets no answer, when there is only darkness—this is the kind of faith God values perhaps most of all. This is the kind of faith that can be developed and displayed only in the midst of difficult circumstances. This is the kind of faith that cannot be shaken because it is the result of having been shaken."

In the passage we looked at today, Micah described the Shepherd as strong and mighty. Isaiah did the same thing in another passage we looked at this week. But John 10 shows us that His greatest

¹ Nancy Guthrie, *Holding on to Hope: A Pathway through Suffering to the Heart* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2002).

protection comes from laying down His life for us. This is the protection the Shepherd offers us. Whether the Assyrians attack, whether the virus runs rampant, whether our economy collapses—whatever happens—Jesus laid down His life for us. We can have eternal life and eternal peace with God now and for all eternity in heaven.

Our hope is not in this world, our hope is in the God who created and rules sovereignly over the whole world.

When Peter wrote to the early Christians who faced persecution and death, he told them their hope was in the world to come (1 Peter 1:3–9). In prison and facing death for his faith, Paul rejoiced in his suffering because more people were coming to Christ through it; his hope was not in this world, so he could write, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:12–21).

The reality is that some of us will not be physically protected from this virus, but all of us can be eternally protected from eternal death through Jesus (John 3:16). Now, more than ever, is the time to put our hope in Jesus. Now, more than ever, is the time to share the gospel with friends and loved ones. Now, more than ever, is the time to share the message of hope in Jesus.



REFLECTION QUESTION:

Consider friends and family who don't know Jesus. How can you share the hope of the Gospel with them in this very serious difficult time without sounding too “doomsday-ish”?



REFLECTION QUESTION:

What would clinging to the hope of everlasting life with Jesus in a time of such uncertainty and fear look like for you?



REFLECTION QUESTION:

How can you find peace and hope on a daily basis? What are some practical things you can do?

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE: WORSHIP GOD

Worship should be our most natural response to the good news of the salvation through Jesus. God's greatest gift ever given should cause our hearts to leap with joy.

When we hear the word “worship,” most of us think of our corporate worship services, particularly the singing. When people say, “Worship was great today,” they typically mean they enjoyed music in the service, which may or may not have anything to do with whether the person was actually worshipping God.

In Scripture, worship is the adoration of God. The Old Testament words for worship all carry a posture of kneeling or bowing down in reverence. Our English word comes from the Old English for “worthiness” or “worth-ship,” meaning we rightly see God's worth and praise Him for it. We can worship through singing, but we can also worship through prayer, the way we talk about God to other people, even the way we live our lives. Paul said true spiritual worship is offering our whole lives to God (Romans 12:1–2). God Himself said worship isn't about our religious ritual; it's a matter of the heart (Amos 5:21–23).

In this pandemic, one of the hardest things for believers in Jesus is not being able to physically gather for corporate worship. But we can practice the spiritual discipline of worship individually, as a family, or even virtually together through a livestream or video chat. Nothing can stop us from worshiping God!

To spend time in worship today, write a list of reasons God is worthy of praise. This is like the gratitude journal you started yesterday, but each statement should start with I worship you, Lord, because... . You can praise Him in prayer aloud or in your mind. You can sing worship songs or just listen to them. Consider how you are spending your days, everything you do and say. Is your life bringing glory and honor to God during this time? Are you pointing to Him as your hope and living with trust in Him?

“But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise” – Psalm 79:13