

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 27 January 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian (via video)
Series: The Riches of Psalm 23
Passage: Psalm 23:
Title: Pursued by God

Outline

1. Not followed!
2. Home?

I'm tremendously grateful to a dear friend, Ken Chapman, who was to come this weekend and preach on this verse, for his inspiring preparation, some of which I've used word for word.

INTRODUCTION

- Ever sensed you're being **followed**?
- We can't imagine what that must have been like last week for Ailia Maasarwe... killed in Melbourne as she hopped off a tram... //
- And **usually** when we talk about being followed, there is something **sinister - not good** happening...
- But this **morning** we'll see the **opposite** - followed by '**goodness**' and '**love**' or '**goodness**' and '**mercy**'... //
- And have you ever sensed that in **this world** - you're not quite at **home**...? especially in recent years... that you don't quite **belong** in this world - in this **society**...? - so opposed to **God** and godly **values**?
- Well, we'll explore these things this morning as we come to the **last** of our summer sermon series on Psalm 23... and to this last verse - *surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*
- What David is doing in this **last** verse is bringing the **whole** Psalm **together**... //
- There was the opening introductory words "The Lord's my Shepherd, I lack nothing" which sets **up** the Psalm...
- ...that was fleshed out with the verses that followed - the **green pastures**, the **still waters**, the **right paths**.../
- ...then David made the point that even in **death** - all will be **well** - he feared no **evil** for the shepherd had faced death for us - the **Good shepherd** lays down his **life** for the **sheep** - therefore **we do not fear**... /
- And then at the **point of death - what** is in store for **us**? - we looked last week at the **table** in the presence of **enemies** - for we shall be reconciled to all those who also love Jesus - the picture of the end-time feast of eternity - and a cup **filled** with overflowing **joy**.
- So David's point has been that in both **life** and in **death** - the **Lord** is our **Shepherd** and we will lack **no good thing**!
- Now he **summarises**... restating that point - because in **life** - we shall know God's **goodness** and **mercy** - and in **death** - we shall dwell in **God's presence forever**!
- Two points:

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1. Not followed!

2. Home?

1. Not followed!

- *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life*
- First we need clarity on the words – is it ‘goodness’ and ‘**love**’ as we have it here? Or ‘goodness’ and ‘**mercy**’ as in the older versions (and if you’re old enough – an old **chorus** or **two!**)
- Well – goodness and **love** and goodness and **mercy** are both good translations... the **second** word is the one in question – and it means a **love** that **results in kindness**... hence some of the older translations had ‘**lovingkindness**’.
- ‘**Mercy**’ then is not a bad translation as it fleshes out the **nature** of the love spoken of.
- Goodness – in that we are given way beyond **anything** we deserve, and love or mercy in that God **withholds** from us that which we definitely **DQ** deserve...
- Reminds me of 1 Cor 13 – the love of God which is described as both **patient** and **kind**... //
- You’ll have no doubt heard of the little boy who was being followed to school by his neighbour Mrs Goodnest and her daughter Marcy...
- And his mate asks him – why are those two people following us? And he said ‘well every night mum and I say the Psalm 23 and it says ‘Shirley Goodnest and Marcy’ will follow me all the days of my life’... so I guess I’d better get used to it...!!
-but that brings us to the point of my heading – ‘**NOT following...**’
- Because the verb used is more **accurately** translated as ‘**pursue**’, not ‘**follow**’...
- And you may say to me “Mark – does it **matter** – ‘**follow**’ or ‘**pursue**’? What’s the **difference**? ”
- Actually it’s a **huge** difference....
- **Pursuit** is **active**... it’s **deliberate**... there’s a desire not just to **follow** – but to **catch**!!
- Story of a man on the freeway being chased by a police car... for some reason in a brain snap and instead of pulling over, he put his foot down... eventually when the policeman did catch him... the officer said he was not just following but **pursing**, because the driver had left his **wallet** behind at the coffee shop where they had both picked up takeaways and the café owner asked the policemen to pursue the driver and give him his **wallet**!!
- David actually **expects** to be **overtaken** by the pursuit of God’s **goodness and mercy**.
- Same word in Exodus when Pharaoh **pursues** the **Israelites** into the Red Sea.
- Most scholars believe that David likely wrote this psalm later in his life at the time he had been overthrown by **Absalom** his son... and he had been forced to **flee** from Jerusalem by the **armies** of his **rebellious son**.
- David was actually being **pursued to death**... he had been **forced** to flee his **palace** // ...he was in **hiding**.
- But... David says, at the very same time, God’s **goodness and mercy** will **have** me, **they** are **chasing** me, **hunting** me **down** and **overcoming** me!
- Because **God** is the **hunter**, I cannot **outrun** **Him**, I cannot **escape** **Him**

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- He will **catch** me and **tackle** me // and because of that, I shall **dwell** in the house of the Lord **forever**. //
- The end of the goodness and mercy, hunting you down, not **once**, not **twice**, not **some** of the time, not a good **portion** of the time, but **hunting** you down - **chasing** you down **all** the days of your life... is so that you will **dwell** in the **house** of the Lord **forever**.
- Jesus the **good shepherd** will **pursue** you, **chase** you and **hunt** you **down** to **win** you to **himself!**
- Don't you just want to fall on your knees and say "**thank you Lord**"? //
- many of us get this **wrong**... we think that the Christian life is - the life of faith consists of - me pursuing God's **goodness** and eventually I'll maybe manage to **catch up with** it.
- David is saying you've got it exactly the **wrong way round**.
- It might be true in **some** sense that you're pursuing His goodness, but... more importantly - God's **goodness** is pursuing **you**. //
- God's not our **lapdog** or our **shadow**, no... we are **fleeing** and God is **pursuing**!
- **This** is the accurate **picture**.
- God's **goodness and mercy** are like two **hounds of heaven**, **pursuing us**, **chasing us**, never **giving up**.
- There is an **intensity of love** in the heart of God for His **people**... and David had discovered that it wasn't worth fighting **against the love of God**!.
- Oh, he had **tried**!
- Of **all** the Old Testament greats, there are few like David!
- He had broken every **commandment** in the **book**. He **coveted**, he **stole**, he **lied**, he **conspired**, he **murdered**, he committed **adultery**, he **blasphemed** the Lord...
- ...I doubt **anyone** here this morning has racked up a list like **that**... / but we **are** all familiar - if we are honest with ourselves - of running **away** from God, away from His **love**! //
- Maybe you are **still running**. //
- David says I too **ran** away from Him and all that was involved in **submitting** to His Love.
- But he recognised that God **relentlessly** kept **pursuing** him. And in repentance and sorrow, turned back. //
- How do you respond to the idea that the God who created the **universe** has His **signature** on your **soul** -and is **pursuing** you?
- It's an overwhelming **thought** isn't it, that God who created the immense **universe**, has **me** in His sights...! /. No **wonder** our natural inclination is to **flee**!
- Here is the reminder from Romans 8:31-32 - *If God is for us, who can be against us?*³² *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*
- Remember – while we were **enemies**, Christ **died** for us...
- Yes, **pursued** by his **goodness** and **mercy**... until we are all the way (and this is my second point)... :

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2. **Home!**

- From a very old Christian song, comes the words – “*this world is not my home – I’m just passing through*”.
- I wonder if you have grasped **hold of that**...
- Everything we **know** in life – all we can see **around us** / is **temporary**...
- A man from our Tewantin congregation died this week – Gareth aged just 61.
- Where is he **now**?
- Well his body is down at the funeral place... but Gareth himself has gone **HOME**... //
- There is a dear old lady from 730am congregation languishing in Oz Care - nursing home near Noosa Junction... my prayer – her husband’s prayer – is that the Lord will come and take her **home**...
- Not home to her place in **Noosaville**... but home to **him!** - in eternity!
- Jesus said – *in my Father’s place are many rooms and I am going to prepare a place for you...*
- And what he meant by ‘go to prepare a place for you’ was not a **building project** that has taken **2,000 years** – no, he prepared a place for us by his **death and resurrection**... that with our sin **dealt with** we may be **fit** to be in the **presence of God** for eternity! //
- It’s **right** that you should feel **less and less at home here...!!**
- **Abortion** at full term permitted in New York state – and celebrated at that? Let alone the abortion laws passed in our own state at the end of the last years – and celebrated in parliament!
- **Christians taken off the street in China** never to be seen again....? North Korea is the most dangerous place on the planet for Christians... illegal to own a Bible
- With the start of the new school year – inevitable that people get up in arms re **Scripture in schools** and **chaplains in state schools**...
- Religious **freedom** under question which may limit what I can teach from the Bible here in **church** and how **Christian** schools can teach and operate as **uniquely Christian**...
- We **ARE aliens** and **exiles** here...! //
- But we have a **HOME...!**
- This psalm declares that there is an **eternity**: “I will live in the house of the Lord forever”...
- can we **trust** God?
- Do we **believe** him?... and so live in the **light** of that promise and expectation **today**?
- With all the **uncertainty**, the **disappointment**, the **suffering** and **brokenness of life**.. how can we live **confidently**, knowing that our **future is secure**? //
- The truth is we can’t make any sense of the Christian life **without** eternity.
- This is the whole argument of **1 Corinthians 15**.
- If Christ is proclaimed as **raised** from the **dead**... **how** can you say there is **no resurrection**... God asks?
- but **thanks** be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ...!

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- You see we have a God who loves **each** of us **individually**...
- ...who **knows** each of us **through and through**...
- ...all our **fears**, all our **pain**, all our **weaknesses**, all our **longings**, and most importantly, our deepest **needs**.
- Yes, we can **trust** this God, we can trust in God's **goodness**, and in God's **mercy**, and God's **faithfulness**, and God's **compassion**, and God's **love**...
- ...and the reason we can trust God is because He did not spare His own **Son**, but **gave him up for us all**... //
- ...and He calls out to **you** and **me**... // to trust Him.
- I don't think David wrote this on an Australia Day long weekend when everything was looking **magnificent** and going well for him...!
- It comes after the anguish of **Psalm 22**... and perhaps David wrote this – through **tears** – hanging on to the truth as it were by his **fingernails**... through the pain of **unbelief**... through the **struggle** of a season of his life which was anything **but comfortable** or **peaceful** or **happy**... //
- David is doing exactly what **we** need to do when we are facing unbearable **trial** or ongoing **difficulty** ...facing **darkness** which seems **impenetrable**, and fear that grips to the **bottom** of your **soul**.
- He is preaching to himself God's **truth**, possibly through **gritted teeth**, he's saying "even though I fear I am in **terrible danger**, and I am **lost**, I **trust** that you will be my **shepherd**."
- He is saying even though I walk through the darkest alley and I am scared **witless**, I will **trust** that you will be my **comfort** and **guide**, that your **rod** and **staff** will **protect** and **comfort** me...
- Even though my body is **beaten** and **broken** and I have no **rest**... I will **trust** that you will give me **peace**...
-even though I have no **hope** in **myself** and I am **terrified** I will be overwhelmed by **disaster**... I will **trust** that your **goodness** and **mercy** will **pursue** me **relentlessly** and I am trusting that **YOU** won't flag in your **pursuit** of **me**!
- I am trusting that even when I have no more strength and I am crying out like a lost sheep in the wilderness, you'll **find** me; you'll **pick** me up, you'll **carry** me and you'll wipe **away** all my **tears**.
-and that you'll **never give up** on me, you'll be my **strength**... and in the end pursued by your goodness and love, you **will bring me home**. //
- It's an astonishing example, isn't it of putting faith not in what we **see** or **feel**, or what might be our daily **terrible affliction** or **difficulty**, but rather what we **have** in God's **promises**/// ...in what is **unseen** and yet **mysteriously, wonderfully true**.

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- Well let's see where we've come through these summer weeks spent on Psalm 23...
 - The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing... because all my needs are met in relationship with Jesus the Good Shepherd, as I **run** to him, keep my **eyes on him**, **follow** him, **trust** him.
 - Whether in **life**... or in **death**... whether **now** or at the **end**... he has **everything covered**...

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- And he will radically **pursue** me with his **goodness and love**, until I'm finally **home!**
- Let me close this series off this way:
- Imagine life **without** a shepherd like ours:

1 The LORD is NOT my shepherd; I lack **everything**
2 I have nowhere to lie down in green **pastures**,
...**no** quiet waters,
3 my soul is in **anguish** // I have no clue where I'm going
4 When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I am absolutely petrified and know no comfort
5 I have **no** hope for the **future**
And **no** prospect for **joy**
6 I have no **goodness** nor **love** in my **life**
and no assurance for **eternity**...
I am utterly **lost**...

Are you here among us this morning and **don't** know the Lord **Jesus** as your **Good Shepherd**??
Perhaps he is hounding **you** today with his goodness and love... /
I **trust** so... // **come** to him.. **run** to him... **repent** of your life lived **fleeing** him... and turn to him as **your shepherd**...!
Or if you've known him as your shepherd for a long time... here's in invitation this morning, to renew you trust in him... to see again his promises... to turn to him again in the midst of today's challenges... and to rest in his goodness and love...
The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing
Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.