

## A Shepherd for the Sheep

Father's Day, Psalm 78:1-72

### Introduction

- The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in June has been celebrated as Father's Day since President Richard Nixon signed it into law in 1972. But did you know that Father's Day is celebrated at different times & in different ways around the world?
  - It's celebrated in Thailand on Dec. 5 in conjunction with a well-loved king's birthday. Thais give their fathers canna flowers, a symbol of masculinity.
  - In Germany, Father's Day is called *Vatertag*. It's celebrated 40 days after Easter with hiking, nature, and lots of local food.
  - In Mexico, it's also celebrated on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in June and sometimes the family wakes their father up with rousing version of the song *Las Man-anitas*. (Did anyone get woken up this morning with a song?)
- Whatever traditions you have, this holiday tends to be pretty sentimental.
  - We may think about the impact (or lack of) of our fathers on our lives?
  - As a father, you may wonder about the influence you've have had?
- The Bible is clear about the importance of fathers and fatherhood.
  - There's a whole genre (category) of Scripture that is focused on fathers passing down their wisdom to their sons - Wisdom Literature.
  - Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, & SOS are considered Wisdom Literature.
  - The book of Psalms includes a lot of poetry and wisdom writings, including Psalm 78, which I would like to share with you today.
    - It's the 2<sup>nd</sup>-longest Psalm, so we'll have to be selective in our focus.
    - It's part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> section of Psalms (73-89), which follows the loose theme of remembrance. (Read v. 1-8)
- This opening has the "flavor" of wisdom literature.
  - It has the inviting crust of knowledge that is important for life. (v. 1-2)
  - It has the seasoning and smoke of the command to pass that knowledge down to up-and-coming generations. (v. 4-5)
  - It has the juiciness of a moral problem – to not be like the Israelites who tested God in 3 specific ways. (v. 7-8)
    - They refused to trust Him.
    - They forgot His works.
    - They rejected His word.
  - This problem provides the basis for the major thrust of this portion of Scripture: **We must teach the next generation about the wonders of God, or they will wander away like lost sheep.**
- The majority of this psalm is organized around 3 episodes where Israel tested God. The failure of God's people in each season highlights another "wonder" of God as the ultimate Good Shepherd.
- I'd like to share those with you first, before exploring what it means to teach the next generation as fathers and mothers today.

### Body

#### I. GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS SHEEP. (v. 9-33)

- A. The Israelites tested God by refusing to trust His character. (v. 17-20)
  1. They questioned whether He could provide water or meat.
  2. They demanded the food that they craved. (v. 18)
- B. The Lord was angry, and yet He provided food for Israel. (v. 21-24, 27)
  1. He had gone to great lengths to rescue them from slavery.
  2. And yet, they did not trust in Him or His ability to take care of them.
- C. The Good Shepherd made them "lie down in green pastures" & pass by streams of "quiet water." (Ps. 23:2)
- D. It can be quite an "aha moment" when a child learns that everything in their lives comes from their parents – their food, clothing, & the roof over their head. As grown-ups, we know that all our resources, including our spiritual resources, come from the Hand of God.

#### II. GOD GUIDES HIS SHEEP. (v. 34-53)

- A. The Israelites tested God again by forgetting His works in Egypt. (v. 40-43)
  1. The writer mentions 6 of the 10 plagues, including the final plague.
  2. He vented His anger on their adversaries, the Egyptians.
- B. Eastern herding practices from the West. In the West, the shepherd drives the animals from behind, and in the East, the shepherd leads the animals from the front with his presence & His voice. This is the practice that is illustrated here.

#### III. GOD PROTECTS HIS SHEEP. (v. 54-64)

- A. The Israelites tested God again by rejecting His words. (v. 54-58)
  1. They did not keep the covenant that God had given them.
  2. They broke the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> commandments by worshipping other gods.
- B. This was probably written during David's reign; there's no mention of the Exile.

### Conclusion

- The closing links together the time of Joshua & David with today. (v. 66-72)
  - God chose David (Judah) over Joshua (Ephraim) & Jerusalem over Shiloh.
  - God empowered David, a shepherd, to lead His people as king.
  - That shepherd foreshadows another, Jesus, who will lead God's people.
- Going all the way back to the opening: **We must teach the next generation about the wonders of God, or they will wander away like lost sheep.**
- Mothers are frequent partners in passing down wisdom, too! (Prov. 1:8)
- So, as Christian fathers and mothers today, we must teach in 3 ways.
  - We must teach as those who are being shepherded by Jesus Christ.
  - We must teach as a shepherd would teach - providing, guiding, & protecting.
  - We must teach the next generation – There's no one else to do it!
- The average life expectancy for men in the U.S. is 77 years. That means the average man will celebrate 77 Father's Days, some as a son & some as a father & grandfather. That may not sound like a lot, but it's 28,105 days or 674,520 hours. What kind of impact could you have for the Lord with that much time?