

Further up, Further in

Resources for Continued Study



LOOKOUT
MOUNTAIN
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH

"THE KING'S MISSION"

For individual study or group discussion

The life and ministry of Jim and Elisabeth Elliot is a familiar story to most. Meeting for the first time as undergraduates at Wheaton College, both Jim and Elisabeth felt God's call upon their lives to be missionaries. After marrying, they were commissioned to serve the Auca people of Ecuador. Not long thereafter, tragedy struck when Jim and four of his missionary friends were met with opposition and died while trying to make contact with the Huaorani tribesmen. Despite such adversity, Elisabeth, along with her young daughter, moved into the Auca village, and for two more years she ministered to the people who had killed her husband. Later in life Elisabeth spoke of God's provision during her loss and the time spent among the Auca people, stating that "God knows the way through the wilderness."

In today's passage, Luke 9:1-17, we encounter a weary crowd in the wilderness near Bethsaida (v. 12), and witness Jesus empowering his disciples to engage in the King's mission by spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God (vv. 1-6). The disciples are commissioned by Christ with God-given power to declare the Gospel (vv. 1-6), while having to endure growing opposition from kingdom rivals (vv. 7-9), and all the while participating in God's abundant provision for needy people.

- How does our study illustrate that God indeed "knows the way through the wilderness" as he commissions and instructs the twelve disciples?
- Have you taken up God's call to proclaim the transformational message of the Gospel, despite opposition, trusting in his abundant provision?

After the disciples are commissioned, Luke interrupts the story with an account of King Herod. From parallel passages, we learn that Herod Antipas had just beheaded John the Baptist at the request of Herodias during his drunken birthday bash. Luke tells his readers that Herod is "perplexed" about the identity of Jesus (v. 7). He is hearing stories of his miracles and is concerned that Jesus might become a threat to his reign, for he too was a Jewish leader. According to author and professor Kenneth E. Bailey, as a Jewish leader Herod would have been considered a "shepherd of the flock." In the Mark 6:14-29 account, Herod "had just demonstrated some of the worst characteristics of the bad shepherds described in Ezekiel 34:1-10."¹ In contrast, Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd as he exhibits compassion for the crowds who are pressing in on him. And rather than turning them away, he instructs them to sit on the green grass and spreads a feast before the weary and hungry souls who have come to hear him. (cf. Mark 6:30-44; Matthew 14:13-21)

- Read Ezekiel 34:1-16. Describe differences between the bad shepherds of verses 1-10 and the good shepherd of verses 11-16.
- What types of opposition from "false shepherds" are churches facing today?

As the crowds follow Jesus and his disciples up the mountainside (cf. John 6:3), the Good Shepherd has compassion on them and begins to "speak to them of the Kingdom of God and cure those who had need of healing" (Luke 9:11). It's not hard to recognize echoes of Psalm 23 beginning to develop, especially as we read through Mark's account (Mark 6:30-44). The disciples act as under-shepherds as they engage in the feeding of the 5,000. They entrust the needs of the people to Christ and his abundant provision.

Read and compare Psalm 23 with Mark 6:7-52:²

- "The Lord is my shepherd" (v. 34)
- "He makes me lie down in green pastures" (v. 39)
- "He leads me in the paths of righteousness" (v. 34)
- "I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death" (v. 24-29)
- "...your staff comforts me" (v. 8)

DATE: May 29, 2022

SPEAKER: Brian/Chad

SERIES: Gospel of Luke

PASSAGE: Luke 9:1-17

Family Dinner Table

In the August 2018 issue of *Tabletalk*, the magazine features an article entitled, *He Makes Me Lie Down in Green Pastures; He Leads Me beside Still Waters*, by Reformed Theological Seminary professor Dr. Michael McKelvey. In the article, Dr. McKelvey unpacks *Psalm 23* as a metaphor for God's abundant provision for his people: "*Psalm 23 provides us with a wonderful example of God's care and protection in imagery that engages the imagination. But for the contemporary mind, the background of this imagery may be unknown to many. The shepherd imagery is actually a metaphor for kingship in the ancient Near East. So for David to say, 'Yahweh is my shepherd,' implies more than a lovely pastoral metaphor; he is saying, 'Yahweh is my [shepherd-] king.' Thus, David sings in this psalm of the divine King who guides and sustains him, and this is initially seen in verse 2. Using the pastoral metaphor, David notes what God does for him: 'He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.' As we look closely at the language of this verse, it becomes clear that God's care for His people is extensive and all encompassing.*"³

- Discuss as a family all the things that God has provided for you. Think of specific examples where you have seen his provision.
- Are there current circumstances or situations that cause you to despair or worry? Find ways to see God's goodness and mercy following you into those valleys.

PRAY FOR HOME MISSIONS

Covenant College, denominational partner ministry

PRAY FOR WORLD MISSIONS

Amina and Phil, supported missionary partners, serving in a sensitive area, developing church congregations and training seminary students.

¹Bailey, Kenneth E. *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014. 166, 175

³McKelvey, Michael G. *He Makes Me Lie Down in Green Pastures; He Leads Me beside Still Waters*. *Tabletalk Magazine*, August 2018. <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2018/08/he-makes-me-lie-down-in-green-pastures-he-leads-me-beside-still-waters/>