

Series: Isaiah

Title: Christ our Covenant-Shepherd Text: Isaiah 49: 9-12

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The 49th chapter of Isaiah is such a rich, rich pasture of scripture for the Lord's sheep. I don't want us to miss one sprig in this fertile field. So we will graze here a little longer before moving on.

We have seen how that Christ is the Covenant of God's elect people.

Isaiah 49: 8: Thus saith the LORD,...I will give THEE for a COVEANANT of THE PEOPLE, to establish the earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages.

God gave his Son to be the Mediator of the everlasting covenant of grace. As God the Son he satisfied justice so God remains just in showing mercy. And because Christ is God the Son, God is also the Justifier—just and Justifier of his people. Because Christ is also Man it means he fulfilled every dot and dash of the law in precept for his people. Then Christ paid the wages of sin for his people by laying down his life.

Through faith in Christ believers have established the law in precept and penalty. Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to all who believe. Christ is our Righteousness. We are dead to the law as far as penalty goes and we have kept the law as far as precept goes. Christ is the Righteousness of every believer.

God gave his Son to be the Messenger of the Covenant.

Isaiah 49: 9: That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Shew yourselves.

All God's covenant people, while unconverted, are prisoners: dead in sins, in bondage under the law, in bondage to our sin nature, under Satan's power. But Christ our Covenant Redeemer, the Messenger of the Covenant, through the Gospel, through God the Holy Spirit, enters in to each of his prisoners and gives us life and liberty in the new birth. Now, each believer is on our pilgrimage to that heavenly city of which God our Savior himself is the Builder and Maker.

Today, our subject is: **Christ our Covenant-Shepherd.**

Isaiah 49: 9:...They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10: They shall not hunger nor thirst; neither shall the heat nor sun smite them: for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them. 11: And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted. 12: Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

Proposition: Every believer has the promise of continual grace from Christ our Covenant-Shepherd as he leads us through this world to the eternal city of God.

Divisions: There are five things the believer really wants as we pass through this life: provision, protection, refreshment, direction and fellowship.

I. CHRIST OUR SHEPHERD PROMISES US PROVISION.

Isaiah 49: 9:...They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places. 10: They shall not hunger nor thirst;...

This Provision is Christ

This provision is far more important than temporal food and water. Our covenant God shall provide us with all temporal blessings we need. But this is food more needful than daily bread. Hear the Master:

Luke 12: 28: If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? 29 And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. 30 For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. 31 **BUT RATHER** seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. 32 Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. 34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 35 Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; 36 And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. 37 Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. 38 And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.

John 6: 35: And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

Christ told the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well: "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John 4:13, 14.)

The psalmist cried out, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

This provision is Christ's continual presence. He is our Provision—even when we don't comprehend his nearness to us.

Christ Feeds Us in the Ways

Try to understand that in all the path ways we are travelling in this life, Christ is feeding us—**they shall feed in the ways**

Illustration: When we are travelling to a restaurant, we think of the streets we travel as only the ways to get us to that place where we can eat. But with Christ our Shepherd "the ways" in which are travelling every day of our lives is where he is feeding us all along: **"they shall feed in the ways."**

Application: Brethren, let's not spend our lives waiting to get to greener pasture before we enjoy the blessings of Christ, these are the ways God has placed us in and these are the ways in which he is feeding us right now. Try to enjoy his blessings in every step of the way. Christ feeds his people in the ways.

Christ Feeds Us in Trials

Christ is feeding us in places we least expect it, **"and their pastures shall be in all high places."**

The high places are mountains. Green, fertile, pastures are not found on barren, rocky mountains. This world—this whole life—is a barren, rocky place where no spiritual food or rest is to be found, apart from Christ. But Christ promises our **pasture shall be in all high places.**

Illustration: The tree in my backyard.

Illustration: Mountain laurel is a beautiful flowering plant that thrives in rocky places where other flowers won't grow. So it is that sheep laurel is given to us in the rocky paths throughout this life—even the most sorrowful paths.

What heart-blessings does Christ give us in rocky afflictions? He makes us to know more intimately, with a more real assurance, that his love and grace is as unchanging and everlasting as our great Shepherd—all our sufficiency. That is a flower that blooms nowhere else like it blooms in the rocky path of affliction. We don't realize how real our salvation is until he forces us and turns our affection from this path below to him! That is what we want!

Believer's, once delivered from prison, given a new nature, hunger and thirst after Christ our Righteousness. We want living apprehensions of our interest in Christ, to know the power of his resurrection, to be made conformable unto his death, to walk more by faith, less by sight, more love for Christ and less love for this world, more purity of heart and less affection for these defiling, perishing things, more joy in him—to cease foolishly attempting to find joy in the barren desert of this world.

Illustration: You can convince me a life preserver will preserve me in a flood, but put me in the flood with only that preserver to save me then I will know it.

THAT IS WHAT CHRIST IS FEEDING US IN "THE WAYS", THAT'S THE PASTURE **HE IS** TO US IN ALL THESE ROCKY PLACES. Christ IS our Covenant-Shepherd by faith, but he makes himself ours more abundantly by making us to experience that he ALONE is our Life.

Christ uses even the smallest daily incidents to bring to us into the reality of his abiding presence. I truly believe that the more we face every day looking for Christ the more we 'shall feed in the ways.' Do you hunger and thirst after Christ? He said,

Matthew 5:6: Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

II. WE WANT PROTECTION

Isaiah 49: 10: neither shall the heat nor sun smite them:...

Nothing Shall Separate Us from Christ

The heat and the sun represent all the things that would separate us from Christ—all the fiery darts of the wicked.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

By the almighty power of our Justifier, by the sovereign hand of our great Shepherd, remember, all providence is his providence. He alone raises up and puts down; he alone defeats every evil purpose; he alone restrains the malice of all who would separate us from him.

Romans 8: 35: Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? 36 As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. 37 Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, 39 Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

III. WE WANT REFRESHMENT

Isaiah 49: 10:...for he that hath mercy on them shall lead them, even by the springs of water shall he guide them.

Illustration: Try to imagine what springs of water meant to the Jews delivered out of Babylonian captivity as they travelled through that dry, hot desert on their way to Jerusalem. It's really not that hard to imagine living in this world in our day. That is the refreshment Christ promises and that Christ is to his people.

Christ's Abiding Presence

Christ our Covenant Shepherd promises us we have his abiding presence. He shall keep us refreshed with the word of his gospel in spirit and in truth by the Holy Spirit of truth. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly (or heart) shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit." (John 7:37-39.)

Psalm 63:1: 1: O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; 2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

Note the connection "**for he that hath mercy on them** shall lead them to these springs" If we ever find ourselves cast down in doubt and fears, just think of the mercy he has already shown us. We were the dry, barren, desert—with no life within us. Left to ourselves that's all we are in this old man of flesh. But he sent forth the Spirit into our hearts and drew us to Christ, giving us eternal life where there was only dry death! He shall continue to refresh us by God the Holy Spirit.

Isaiah 44: 2:...Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen. 3 For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: 4 And they shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses.

IV. WE WANT CLEAR DIRECTION

Isaiah 49: 11: And I will make all my mountains a way, and my highways shall be exalted.

His Mountains and He is the Way

Our Shepherd does not remove the mountains. We face many, many mountains, trials of many different kinds which cause us many tears. At first, we usually think the mountains only prohibit our progress. But notice, he says they are "**my mountains**". He puts them in our path.

They remind us of our total weakness. But our Shepherd promises for his sorrowful, little lambs, "**I will make all my mountains a way.**" By doing so, he makes us to know his unceasing love and unceasing care

for us—then we find his mountains were not obstacles at all, but the ways in which he exalts himself in our hearts then--**my high-ways shall be exalted.**

Application: Let's try to help each other to look for Christ at the foot of every one of his mountains. He promises he is there. Note the certainty and the comprehensiveness of this promise. **“I WILL make ALL my mountains a way.”**

Just look at the mountains of mercy he has already made into a way for us. He took our nature into union with his; he took our sins as his own; he took our judgment as his own; he made atonement for our sin; he brought the good news to us; he created us anew, delivering us from the prison of sin's dominion over us. Believer, he has already conquered, sin, Satan, the world, death and hell for us. Is anything too hard for the Lord?

Habakkuk 3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places.

V. WE WANT FELLOWSHIP

Isaiah 49: 12 Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.

Illustration: Family walking home from the hunt.

The Church Gathered Together

We meet in the same place each week but we are moving nearer and nearer. He has brought our paths together already. He may bring others. But eventually all his elect together shall converge in that eternal city. Abraham looked for that city and is there just as the Lord promised; Moses forsook Egypt to suffer with the Lord's people and he is there now just as the Lord promised; ladies, Sarah, Rebecca, Naomi, they all continued and they are there. Believers are arriving there every day. And it will not be very long that we shall too.

Our religion is not superficial—not outward, not what appears on the surface.

Illustration: I like to watch animals in the woods, especially in the winter. They dig down deep under the outer, winter layer because underneath they know there is food.

Christ leads us in these ways to teach us our life is not found on the surface. Our sustenance is buried deep, safe and sure in the depths of his grace, in the depths of his love, in the depths of his unchanging grace. Christ feeds us the greenest pasture where the natural eye only sees a barren rocky surface.

The less we find provision, protection, refreshment, direction or fellowship in worldly things the more abundantly we find Christ is All and in all. Our Life is in God's holy mountain where Christ sits. The grace promised here to all who believe is the foretaste of heaven.

Revelation 7: 9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;...13: And one of the elders answered, saying unto me,

What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? 14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Amen!