David, A Shepherd King Over All Israel

II Samuel 4:1-5:5

Key Verse: 5:2b “And the LORD said to you, ‘you will shepherd my people Israel, and you will become their ruler.’”

Once, a certain man asked a question to a wise man. What kind of king would be the best king? The wise man said, “There are three kinds of kings, Level I, II, and III and the Level I is the lowest level and level III is the highest.” He continued, Level I is the king who rules over his people with military power. That king will squeeze his people for his benefits and the people exist for the sake of the king.

Level II is the king who takes good care of the people. He tries to protect his people and feed them with good things. So people under that king live peacefully and are thankful to the king. Then the man said, “Isn’t he the best king? Who else could be better than that king?”

Then, the wise man said, “There is another king who takes care of his people even at the risk of his life. But the most important thing is that, while people enjoy their lives under the king’s rule, they don’t even notice that there is a king over them.”

  Is there any example of such a king in human history? The answer is ‘No’, there was no such king in human history. But the answer also can be ‘yes’, and the answer is Our God. God takes care of everything for us. God gave us life to live, warmth of sunlight, fresh air to breathe, and crops to eat. However, many people don't even notice or recognize our God, while enjoying all the benefits that God has given to them.

1. **Good sheep Vs. Good shepherd**

I think that a shepherd king is a level III king. When everything is provided, sheep do not notice the presence of the shepherd. They just peacefully eat and take rest. God presents himself as a shepherd for his people in the Old Testament. Jesus identified himself as the good shepherd, saying, ***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (Jn 10:11)”*** Was shepherd King David a level III king? Maybe not. He might be regarded as a level II king, but we call him a shepherd King. Jesus never asked his disciples to become a good shepherd, instead he said “I am the good shepherd.” David did not acknowledge himself as a good shepherd, rather he recognized that he was a sheep.

Here, I agree that God wants us to grow to be like good shepherds. However, I realize that we do not need to try to be good shepherds by studying about the characteristics of a good shepherd. Instead, we should just try to be good sheep. I would say that we should be genuine sheep of God in order to be a good shepherd to others. There were a group of people during Jesus’ time who thought themselves to be good leaders, but they were not really. They were religious leaders in Jesus’ time. They were not good shepherds, because they were not good followers of God due to their self-righteousness. They rejected Jesus and His teaching due to their own thoughts. David was such a genuine follower of his Shepherd King. That led him to be a shepherd king over Israel. So I want to talk about how we can be a genuine follower of our Shepherd King, the LORD.

**II. The LORD is my Shepherd.**

In Psalm 23, David confessed, “***V1.The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. V2.He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. V4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”***

This Psalm teaches us David’s exceptional quality as a genuine follower of God.

**First: In green pastures**. Do you know what a sheep does all day long? They keep eating grass whenever they have the chance. They spend several hours a day regurgitating the cud. Eating and regurgitating is the main activity of a healthy sheep. Likewise, as a good sheep, David loved to read and meditate on the words of God. He expressed his spiritual hunger for the words of God in many places throughout his writing. ***“Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long (Psalm 119:97)” “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth. (119:103)”*** when we eat rice, we do not taste sweetness at first. However, if we keep chewing, we can feel the sweetness in our mouth. We need to meditate on the word of God to taste its sweetness. ***“My eyes stay open through the watches of the night that I may meditate on your promises. (119:148)”*** These days, I spend more time meditating on Youtube than the words of God. May God help me turn around from this habit. Without eating and meditating on the words of God daily, we cannot have strength to obey God’s words.

**Second: He makes me lie down.** Did you know that not many animals could lie down when they take a rest? The lion and tiger can lie down showing their bellies when they rest because no one can harm them. But small and weak herbivores like deer, rabbits, and sheep cannot do that. When the alert sound is detected, deer look at the epicenter of the alert and begin to run because they are able to run fast enough. However, more vulnerable animals like rabbits run first without seeing and only later try to see what’s going on. (in Korean, 보고 뛰는놈, 뛰고 보는놈) Which one is the sheep, the animal that ‘*run first and see later’* or ‘*see first and run later’*? Sheep are the most vulnerable animal. They can do neither. They have bad eyesight and no sense of direction. Then, how could sheep lie down unless they feel suicidal? It is only because they trust in the shepherd. When they believe in the power and protection of the shepherd, they could lie down. David is saying, **“I am a sheep, but I lie down because the LORD is my shepherd**.” We can also say, “This world is filled with troubles. I do not know what will happen tomorrow. But I can relax and sleep with sweet dreams because the LORD is my shepherd.” Do we really believe that God is our shepherd?

People believe in the power of money. We know that if we have money, most of our worries would be gone instantly, without putting in our effort because we really believe in the power of money naturally. (For example, If you have $10 million cash, most worries would disappear.) Do we trust in God more than in money? How much money is ‘your trust in God’ worth?  Faith is real. No one takes away our faith unless we give it up. Faith is our true estate and treasure. Through faith, we can invite numerous blessings from God. May God bless us to seek faith and be rich in faith! Let’s confess that “The LORD is my shepherd. That’s why I lie down in peace in the midst of daily troubles.”

**Third: Fear No Evil.** One of the most repeated phrases in the Bible is ***“Do not be afraid.”*** Even when an angel who brings good news appears, they start their greeting by saying, ***“Do not be afraid.”*** Why are we fearful? After Adam’s fall, fear stays in every man’s hearts due to our broken relationship with God. Fear is one of the major items, which Satan uses to take control over us. Since Adam’s fall, Satan has developed so many by-products of fear. These days, psychologists have developed more products of fear by adding the suffix ‘-phobia.’ Such as acrophobia, androphobia, aqua phobia, pantophobia… I could count around 167 phobias from the dictionary. We have so many reasons to be fearful.

However, David proclaims, ***“I will fear no evil.”*** In addition, he explains the reason by saying, “***For you are with me.”*** David was the one who had so many reasons to be fearful because he literally had walked through the valley of the shadow of death. For around 10 years, he was chased by King Saul who tried to kill him. But he refused to be fearful because he trusted in God’s promise of protection. How can we be good sheep? Good sheep are the ones who choose to trust in God, rather than being a victim of fear.

According to my experience during the last 60 years of life, I can categorize fear into two groups. One is fear that is related to the world, which everyone in the world has. Such as, fear of all kinds of failure, fear of losing a job, fear of sickness, fear of death and so many tiny worries of life.

The other one is the fears that are related to God. When we are convinced that God is alive through Bible studies, we might make a decision to live as a real Christian. However, when we try to make a commitment of our lives to God, fear comes into our hearts. I know that our HBF or college students might have negative impressions of God though they might not say it.

  The first negative impression might be “God is the one who makes me do what I don’t like to do.” A second one is that “God is the one who forces me not to do what I like to do.” Therefore, we strongly feel that following Jesus is good, but our lives would have no fun at all. Instead, we feel that Christian life would be filled with many obligations.

I had the same fear when I started the Christian life a long time ago. Yes, that was true. I had to give up a fun-seeking lifestyle. However, God rewarded me with another blessing. God gave me joy instead of fun. Fun and joy look similar, but they are different. Joy is a real blessing, but fun is a pseudo-blessing, which is a fake blessing. A fun-seeking life ends up in either addiction or emptiness. But Joy is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. God always gives us real blessings.

Another type of fear is the fear of loss. When we try to seek his kingdom and righteousness first, we feel that we would be a loser in this competitive world. When I was brought to UBF in 1979, which was in my first year of college, I was so happy that I finally found a group of Christians who live exactly according to the Bible’s teaching. However, soon I felt that I did not want to be like them because most of them were financially poor. They sacrificed almost everything to take care of their Bible students. So I hesitated for many months, thinking “should I follow Jesus or not.” Is there any other way that I could be successful in the world and at the same time remain as a disciple of Jesus? However, Jesus' answer was ‘No.’ I could not serve two masters at the same time.

Let me share with you one man’s experience. A man walked around a field and found a pit that was around 2 feet deep. He found several frogs inside the pit. The frogs went to the pit when there was water inside. But there was now no more water in the pit. The frogs would die soon when exposed to the strong sunlight. The man had pity on the frogs, so he tried to rescue them. He tried to catch the frogs to move them out of the pit. However, the frogs began to jump to escape from the man’s grip. The frogs, which were able to escape from the man’s hand, might have thought “*Hew! That was close; I was lucky today that I scarcely escaped from the grip of death.”*  However, the situation was the opposite. The frogs that were caught by the man stayed alive, not the others.

We act like the frogs in the pit. We struggle not to fall into the hand of God, without knowing that God’s hand is the hand of salvation. People who live according to their own understanding think that they are smart, not knowing they are heading to the way of destruction. Which is the smart move, living by my own wisdom or God’s wisdom? That is simple math. So I decided to live my life according to the words of God when I was young. I was a smart frog.

We were slaves of fear under Satan’s rule. However, when we are caught by the love of God, we begin to enjoy real peace***. I John 4:18a reads; “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.”*** “The LORD is my shepherd.” When David really loved God and trusted God as his shepherd, he could wait for God’s time, enduring all the desperate situations. He finally became king over all Israel. He became a shepherd king as a shadow of the real Shepherd King Jesus Christ.

David was thirty years old when he became king of Judea at Hebron. And now at the age of 37, he became the king over all Israel and reigned for thirty-three years.

**III. Righteous judgment of Shepherd King**

Let’s go back to Chapter 4. Ish-Bosheth heard that Abner had died in Hebron and he was shaken. He was Saul’s last son. Verse 4 is a description of Mephibosheth, Jonathan’s son.  He might be the one and only next candidate to be king in Saul’s family. However, Mephibosheth was crippled, showing that he couldn’t be the next king. The Bible writer suddenly talks about Mephibosheth to reveal to us that there are no more possible kings in Saul’s family. Chapter 4 describes how Ish-bosheth was removed from being a rival to David. But this passage also carries one important theme for us. The story goes like this.

There were two military captains in the army, named Baanah and Recab. They arrived at the hottest time of the day, just as Ish-bosheth was taking his afternoon nap. They entered the room where Ish-bosheth was asleep on his bed. They killed him and cut off his head, carrying it off as a trophy. They traveled all night long, around 60 miles. They presented the head of Ish-Bosheth to David at Hebron, telling David***, “Here’s the head of Ish-Bosheth son of Saul, your enemy. who tried to take your life, but God has given vengeance to my lord king.***(4:8b)

What they were saying is that they carried the will of God and God used them as His instrument. In a sense, what they said is right. And death of Ish-bosheth was good news to David. Finally, he could be a king over all Israel and God’s promise would be fulfilled.

However, what David saw was different. He was not fooled by their godly words. He didn’t even consider whether this event was beneficial to him or not. David was a man after God’s own heart. He saw the motive of their actions. He judged them by their motives. Their action revealed themselves opportunists and murderers. So David gave an order to his men, and they killed them.

When Jesus, the Son of David, comes again, he will sit on the judgment seat. What is the principle of his judgment? He will judge us by our motives. ***I Corinthians 4:5 read. “Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.***

***Jesus said in Matthew 7:21-23. “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and drive out demons in your name, and perform many miracles in your name? Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you; away from me, you evildoers!”***

Jesus will expose our motives. Therefore, we cannot be satisfied with simply focusing on doing and saying the right things. We need to look at our hearts. We can serve the work of God with wrong motives, such as seeking self-glory or satisfying selfish ambitions.

***Look at v. 9 “As surely as the Lord lives, who has delivered me out of all trouble. When a man told me, ‘Saul is dead’ and thought he was bringing good news, I seized him and put him to death in Ziklag. That was the reward I gave him for his news!***

Like that Amalekite, these brothers came to David thinking they had “good news” for David. But it was “good news” to the men who were accomplishing their own will, in their own way. David knew that what mattered was God, accomplishing His own will and in His own way. David learned this lesson out in the desert. He saw repeatedly that God redeemed his life out of every adversity in His way. David did not need a Recab or a Baanah to be his redeemer. David’s Redeemer did not accomplish true redemption in the way these men were claiming, by murdering the innocent man in his bed. David knew that “good news” of God’s redemption was God coming in His way and in His time.

Jesus brought us “Good news” of redemption through his cross. Even Jesus had to deny his own will to accept God’s will. David’s judgment was the shadow of the real Shepherd King Jesus.  Jesus delivers us from every adversity through that cross. Our heart should be purified from accomplishing my own will to God’s will. We need God’s grace to have changed hearts because our thought process is always me-centered.

In conclusion, if you become a genuine follower of God, who is our Shepherd, God may use us as a shepherd-like instrument to others. However, we should check ourselves first, especially our inner motives whenever we say any good words or engage in activities. Praise God who is our Shepherd King.