**Sunday, September 6th, 2020**

**2 Samuel 22:1-7**

David sang to the Lord the words of this song when the Lord

         delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.

He said: The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;

          my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,

          my shield and the horn of my salvation.

He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior —

          from violent people you save me.

I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise,

          and have been saved from my enemies.

The waves of death swirled about me;

          the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me.

The cords of the grave coiled around me;

          the snares of death confronted me.

In my distress I called to the Lord; I called out to my God.

From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came to his ears.

The Word of the Lord.   **Thanks be to God.**

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King David.

In the first 10 chapters of Second Samuel, he could do no wrong.

He was never defeated in battle.

Never wrong in judgment.

He began his reign in prayer, and continued in faith.

Enemies were subdued, the nation was unified, the capitol was secured,

          and the boundary extended from 6 thousand to 60 thousand square miles.

But that is the first 10 chapters.

Chapter eleven brings a change in King David's rule.

You know what happened.

On a lazy afternoon his wandering eyes found a forbidden maiden.

Temptation won.

He summoned her, slept with her, and then sent her home.

A rendezvous. So fast. So impulsive. So passionate. So pregnant.

Rather than repent, he connives, and lies, and leaves a soldier dead,

          and a widow weeping, and all of us wondering: is this the same David?

Is this the shepherd?

          Is this the boy of faith?

                    The man of prayer?

                              Is this the man after God's own heart?

With time, confession comes, and forgiveness is given.

Although the scars remain, David's relationship with God was restored.

Rulers of other nations could do whatever they wished,

          and no one would dare to criticize.

But even the king of the Israelites,

          had to answer to a higher authority: God himself.

Although David is praised as a faithful servant of God,

          he was not a perfect person.

Yet God forgives sinners, and uses them as servants.

Each time David wandered away from God,

          He turned back to God.

David was conscious of how unworthy he was,

          and how good God was to him, and the people he ruled.

No matter how far off David would stray,

          he always found his way back home to his Heavenly Father.

None of us are, nor will any of us ever be, perfect no matter how hard we try.

But our Heavenly Father is eagerly waiting for us to turn back to him.

Life is slippery, stressful, and full of obstacles.

But God is our Rock, our Fortress, our Deliverer, and our Shepherd.

When we see a flock of sheep, we see exactly that, a flock.

A rabble of wool. A herd of hooves.

We don't see a sheep. We see sheep.

          All alike. None different. That is what we see.

But not so with the Shepherd.

          To him every sheep is different.

                    Every face is special.

                              Every face has a story.

                                        And every sheep has a name.

The one with the sad eyes, that is Droopy.

The fellow with one ear up and the other down, call him Oscar.

And the small one with the black patch on his leg, call him Joseph.

The shepherd knows his sheep.                  He calls them by name.

When we see a crowd, we see exactly that, a crowd.

Filling a stadium, or flooding a mall.

When we see a crowd, we see people, not persons, but people.

A herd of humans. A flock of faces. That is what we see.

But not so with the Shepherd.

          To him every face is different.

                    Every face is a story.

                              Every face is a child.

                                        Every child has a name.

The one with the sad eyes, that is Sally.

The old fellow with one eyebrow up and the other down, Henry is his name.

And the young one with the limp? Call him Joey.

The Shepherd knows his sheep.

He knows each one by name.

The Shepherd knows you.

          He knows your name. and he will never forget it.

                    He has written your name on his hand, so he will never forget.

Quite a thought, isn't it?

          Your name on God's hand.

                    Your name on God's lips.

Your name, written on his hand.

          Spoken by his mouth. Whispered by his lips. Your name.

God cherishes us and delights in us.

Every time we wander away, he invites us back into his presence.

David knew God was with him.

That is why he could praise and thank God with his powerful song of praise.

And we can learn much from David.

God is our rock, our stronghold, our refuge.

In our distress we can called to God.

And from his temple he hears our voices.

Our cry comes to his ears, and he hears us, always.

AMEN