

01-08-12a Ecclesiastes

As we continue our worship this morning, turn with me for our scripture reading to the book of the Psalms, and once you've done that, then turn on over to Ezekiel. I had been a little wishy-washy on which scripture I was going to use for our reading, and I settled on Ezekiel chapter 34. When you see the content of Ezekiel 34, you can see why there are also many related passages in the Psalms.

Psalms 74, Psalm 95, Psalm 100 all mention this same concept in passing, but this is a great chapter that concentrates this particular metaphor for God's relationship with His people, as well as the means by which He feeds and pastures them. This is not a short chapter, but it is very full of content and it bears directly on something we're going to be looking at this morning in Ecclesiastes. In the New King James, chapter 34 of Ezekiel is subtitled, The Irresponsible Shepherds.

The word of the Lord came to me saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to them, Thus says the Lord God to the shepherds, Woe to the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool.

You slaughter the fatlings, but you do not feed the flock. The weak you have not strengthened, nor have you healed those who were sick, nor bound up the broken, nor brought back what was driven away, nor sought what was lost, but with force and cruelty you have ruled them. So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered.

My sheep wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill. Yes, my flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them. Therefore, you say, Lord God, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became food for every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, nor did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves and did not feed my flock.

Therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God, Behold, I am against the shepherds, and I will require my flock at their hand. I will cause them to cease feeding the sheep, and the shepherds shall feed themselves no more, for I will deliver my flock from their mouths, that they may no longer be food for them.

For thus says the Lord God, Indeed, I myself will search for my sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out my sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land.

I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, in the valleys and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in good pasture, and their folds shall be on the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie down in a good fold, and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel.

I will feed my flock, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord God. I will seek what was lost, and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken, and strengthen what was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong, and feed them in judgment.

And as for you, O my flock, thus says the Lord God, Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats. Is it too little for you to have eaten up the good pasture, that you must tread down with your feet the residue of your pasture, and to have drunk of the clear waters, that you must foul the residue with your feet? And as for my flock, they eat what you have trampled with your feet, and they drink what you have fouled with your feet. Therefore thus says the Lord God to them, Behold, I myself will judge between the fat and the lean sheep.

Because you have pushed with side and shoulder, butted all the weak ones with your horns, and scattered them abroad, therefore I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be a prey. And I will judge between sheep and sheep. I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, my servant David.

He shall feed them and be their shepherd, and I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them. I the Lord have spoken. I will make a covenant of peace with them, and cause wild beasts to cease from the land, and they will dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

I will make them and the places all around my hill a blessing, and I will cause showers to come down in their season. There shall be showers of blessing. Then the trees of the fields shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield her increase.

They shall be safe in their land, and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them, but they shall dwell safely, and no one shall make them afraid. I will raise up for them a garden of renown, and they shall no longer be consumed with hunger in the land, nor bear the shame of the Gentiles anymore.

Thus they shall know that I the Lord their God am with them, and they the house of Israel are my people, says the Lord God. You are my flock, the flock of my pasture. You are men, and I am your God, says the Lord." What an amazing chapter and a great prophetic statement about the coming shepherd, the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

Jesus will say hundreds of years later that he has come to seek and to save that which was lost. He stands up and reads from the book of Isaiah that he has come to bind up the wounded and to

heal the broken. And he, of course, is the fulfillment of this presence of David as the shepherd, as the greater son of David.

But in particular, the picture here of God's people as the sheep of his pasture, one of the things that we don't often stop to think about is, we know about Psalm 23, and the Lord is my shepherd, I'm a sheep, I'm beside the still waters, and in the paths of righteousness and so forth. But so often when the people of God are pictured as sheep, it doesn't just say we are his sheep. It says we are the sheep of his pasture.

And that added phrase reminds us over and over again of the fact that, what do sheep do all day long? They graze. They feed. They're in the pasture.

They are led into the green pastures and beside the still waters for intake. They are nourished. They are fed.

The indictment of the irresponsible shepherds in Ezekiel 34 is, you have not fed the sheep. You have instead fed yourselves on the sheep. You've slaughtered the fatlings and you have fed yourself.

And this is out of order. What is supposed to be happening is the shepherds are to ensure that the sheep are fed, primarily. They need to be protected from danger and so forth, but even when the fat sheep are indicted halfway through the chapter, what have they done? They have shouldered aside the weaker sheep and have muddied the water so that they can't eat and they can't drink.

They don't receive their nourishment. This is one of the main emphases of the picture of the people of God as sheep is that they be able to feed. Well, you can also see many echoes of this same problem today where there are those who are prominent.

You know, you think, well, who are the shepherds of Israel? Especially back in this day. You don't really have the Pharisees. You don't have the Sanhedrin per se.

What do you have back in Ezekiel's day that would qualify as the shepherds of Israel? Well, they are the spiritual leadership. They're the ones who are supposed to be teaching the Word of God, explaining the meaning of the ritual sacrifices, communicating the truth of God from the Bible as it then existed, the books of Moses and the writings and such prophecy as then existed. And that is not being done.

Instead, they are supporting themselves. They are raising themselves up. They are aggrandizing to themselves not only material goods but also status.

They are in some cases keeping to themselves things that belong to the people. You see this in the history of the Catholic Church where they would chain the Bible to the pulpit and would only operate in Latin, keep the Bible in Latin and not put it in the language of the common people,

keeping the food literally, the spiritual food to themselves and then dealing out little pittances here and there and spinning it in such a way that all of the gold comes into the coffers. You know, what spurred a lot of the early exploration of the Americas? It was the church financing expeditions to bring the gold of the Aztecs and a lot of other places back to the church.

Well, it's a little bit of a digression but the point here is sheep and the picture of God's people as sheep emphasizes the importance of our intake. But that is not an end in itself, is it? God just doesn't want fat little, you know, if sheep looked like chihuahuas and didn't have wool, just a bunch of fat little hairless animals out there, this wouldn't really fulfill the picture, would it? As the sheep graze, what happens? As a natural result of intake and processing of that green pasture nourishment, wool is produced. And the sheep is not destroyed to get the wool, is he? In fact, it's a relief when that heavy winter coat is sheared off and he gets to cool off in the summer season and start regrowing that wool.

The wool goes into the, ultimately, the coffers of the owner of the flock and it is to his benefit that the sheep are well fed and that the wool is generated. But the sheep doesn't have to do a whole lot of thinking to produce the wool. All he has to do is be in the green pastures and not get lost, not get separated, not become a prey for wild beasts, but is where he's supposed to be, doing what he's supposed to do, and his production is a natural result.

It's a wonderful picture of the life of God's people, both in the age of Israel and in the age of the church. We do not have to expend a lot of human energy trying to produce that which God would have our lives produce. We just have to focus on taking in the nourishment that God brings to us and not being diverted.

Well, that whole concept and picture is in view as we return now to our study in Ecclesiastes. We're right at the beginning of chapter 5. And as we began this section and moved through looking at the approach to the house of God that is described in verse 1 through verse 7, we backed ourselves up a little bit to see the last verse of chapter 4, because I had not done sufficient research on the phrase that is translated vanity and striving after wind in the New American Standard, and in particular the second portion of that. Hevel or Havel is the word translated vanity.

The word vapor, we've done quite a bit of work on that. But the second phrase, striving after wind, is a prime example of why this book cries out for being studied word by word and verse by verse. And I began taking you down the lexical trail that we followed to refine our understanding of this phrase last time.

The verb that is used here for striving, or is translated striving or chasing after the wind, is Raah, R-A-A-H, and it is spelled with an I-N rather than an Aleph, which distinguishes it, for example, from the verb to see, which is Raah with the Aleph. This is a noun that is derived from that root, and it comes in two forms. We studied the feminine last time, which is Ra'ut, and talked about the

fact that oftentimes when you want to take something and make it a concept in Hebrew, you take what is perhaps normally a masculine noun and put it in the feminine.

The example is the title of this book, Kohelet, from Kahal, which means to gather together. Solomon uses this as a title for himself. Well, he's obviously a man, but Kohelet, with that Tav on the end, the T, that's a feminine noun.

Why does he give himself a feminine title? Well, something that became the title for an office or something that referred to a concept would often be put in the feminine. However, what I didn't tell you last week is that this word occurs, the noun here from Ra'ah, occurs in both the masculine and the feminine here in this book. The feminine form that we talked about last time is the first use in the book.

Ecclesiastes 1.14 is the Ra'ut form. Also, chapter 2, verse 11, is the feminine form, verse 11 and verse 17. We have it most of the times that it occurs, and you find this, I can give you pretty much all of the occurrences if you want to make a note of them.

Ecclesiastes 1.14, Ecclesiastes 2.11. You remember 1.14, Solomon says, I have seen all the works which have been done under the sun, and behold, all is Hevel and Ra'ut Ruach. Ruach, of course, is variously translated as wind or spirit, depending on the context. The invisible, that it nevertheless is present and its effects can be seen, is the locus of meaning behind that, and so it was used for the spirit of God or the wind of God.

It's very interesting trying to figure out how the translation was arrived at in various passages. Jonah, I may have mentioned this to you before, but where he gets on the ship for Tarshish, which by the way is where later on Saul's family is going to be from, Saul of Tarsus. Tarsus and Tarshish are the same place, but Jonah is going to go to Tarshish.

He gets on, and remember the storm comes up? Well, in Hebrew when it talks about that, it says that God hurled a Ruach into the sea. Well, did He hurl a wind or a spirit? Was this an angelic type of supernatural storm, or did He simply use the wind to whip the sea into a tremendous froth? Well, it's an exegetical question one has to ask and answer when making a translation, and sometimes there's sort of a double entendre because it's really sort of both. In Revelation, angels are pictured at the four corners of the earth having the wind in their hands, and you get the idea that there are weather angels who control the winds.

But here, we initially thought, well, this is striving or chasing the wind, and it's another way of saying that it's a vain pursuit. When you grasp or strive after, these are all various translations. In fact, I'll give you a rundown of the different translations.

The King James took Ruach in the sense of spirit, and so if you go back to the old King James, it says this is vanity and vexation of spirit. Vexation of spirit for Rauch Ruach. Well, how do we get all of these? I mean, is it vexation or is it striving or is it chasing or is it grasping? The New

American Standard says striving after wind.

Striving after. The NIV says a chasing after the wind. There are some modern translations that say shepherding the wind.

A lot of commentators like the shepherding idea. The New King James that we have before us says grasping for the wind. The Tanakh published by the Jewish Publication Society, this is the modern English Bible that's used of the Old Testament that's used by the Jews when they go to synagogue.

Jewish Publication Society translates this as pursuit of wind. Interestingly though, if you remember our study from last week, the Amplified Bible, Amplified Old Testament, translates this as striving for the wind and feeding on it. And last week we came very close to what the Amplified has to say, and the basis for this is this root Ra-ah.

There's another little anomaly here I'm not sure I mentioned to you that I'll talk about in a second, but let me give you the rest of these passages. Ecclesiastes 1.14, Ecclesiastes 2.11, where thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted and behold all was Hevel and striving after wind and there was no prophet under the sun, no Yitron under the sun, Solomon says of his own work, and this is Ra-oot Ru-ah. In 2.11 you find it again a few verses down in verse 17, I hated life for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me because everything is, New American Standard says, futility and striving after wind.

Ra-oot Ru-ah. Then again in verse 26 of the same chapter, to a person who is good in his sight God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, while to the sinner he has given the answer, a grievous answer, gathering and collecting so that he may give to one who is good in God's sight. This latter, living your life this way, is Hevel and Ra-oot Ru-ah.

Then we find it again in chapter 4 verse 4, I have seen every labor and every skill which is done in competition between a man and his neighbor, this is Hevel and Ra-oot Ru-ah. We're going to see it again, we did see it again in chapter 4 verse 6, one handful of rest is better than two fists full of labor and Ra-oot Ru-ah. Of course you don't have two fists full of labor and striving after the wind doesn't really follow quite as well in that context as the translation we're going to adopt.

Then finally we see this construction with the feminine form in chapter 6 and verse 9 and we'll be coming to that in the not too distant future, where Solomon basically says what the eyes see is better than what the soul desires, this too is Hevel and Ra-oot Ru-ah. We'll refine that translation and cover that here shortly. But in three places we have this phrase and the masculine form of the noun is used which is Ra-yon, R-A-Y-O-N, rather than Ra-oot, Ra-yon, R-A-Y-O-N.

We had this in chapter 1 verse 17, remember our first use was in 1.14, you can always gain a lot by looking at the first use of a word or phrase by an author, Solomon said in 14, I've seen all the

works which have been done under the sun, they're all Hevel and Ra-oot Ru-ah. Then in 17, I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly, I realized that this also is Ra-yon Ru-ah. This is striving, chasing, grasping, whatever we decide the translation of this Ra-ah derived noun is.

Well, what we want to do is review just briefly the lexical evidence and in Brown, Driver and Briggs, which is the lexicographer's friend here, it's really the still the authoritative lexicon for Hebrew, I mentioned last time that we have three different Hebrew roots. Let me say before we go any further that, you know, this is word study and it can be a little bit dry, but it's important for us to go through this because I'm going to show you something about this that will help illustrate why this book has been so misunderstood. It goes back and supports some things that we covered in the introduction, so just bear with me.

If you can hang in there and just get through Ra-ah, it'll be like Perry Mason. I intend to tie it all together, Your Honor. Well, in Brown, Driver and Briggs, they list three separate listings for Ra-ah as a root.

And this does often happen. There are times when you have a word and it's got two distinct and separate roots, it's spelled exactly the same. But when that occurs, there will be biblical evidence and you can see from the context, that absolutely has to be a separate word with a different meaning.

It's just clear as the nose on your face. In fact, Lord willing, we'll get to one of those a little bit later this morning when we move forward. But in the case of Ra-ah, the first and oldest root that has cognates in Assyrian and Arabic and Ethiopic and so on, these are the related cognate languages, it primarily means to pasture a flock, to tend or to graze.

And the noun, the biggest noun that comes from that is Ra-eh, which is shepherd. That's the one that we read over and over again in Ezekiel 34, these shepherds, these Raim, that were unfaithful. But it comes from this verse, which means, what is the function of the shepherd? He's pasturing the sheep, he's tending them, he's making sure they get fed and that they are protected.

So that is the basis for the commentary saying, well maybe this should be shepherding the wind. It's like herding cats, you know, it's something that's just impossible to do. You're wasting your time trying to use a cane and a stick and get the wind to go where you want it to go.

And it's because they recognize that this is really the oldest and best root. But, and you have some related nouns that mean pasture or pasturage. It puts a maim in front of it.

I mentioned oftentimes you can put a maim in front of a verbal form and it sort of makes it a noun. But they have a whole second root, which means to associate with or to be the companion of. And we saw the use of that.

That was a relatively rare usage, but we saw it in Exodus where the women were given treasure by their companion, their Egyptian counterpart. And this means the maids were given gold and silver by their mistresses. And the men's servants were given, they might have been the butler or the house servant and the man whom they served.

So it wasn't like all the Egyptians came out and just started tossing out and random people got it. It was given, God gave them favor in the sight of the Egyptians. This means that suddenly the Egyptians were struck with a generosity of heart and their butler walked in and he said, let me give you this little coffer of gold coins or let me give you this bracelet or these earrings or this necklace.

They found favor in their sight and so they're associated person. The women got it from the women, the men got it from the men, type of thing. And that's a legitimate separate root.

But then there is a third root under which we find all of the passages in Ecclesiastes. And with a couple of exceptions, these are the only passages in the Old Testament that are cited under this third root. And this one is thought to have the meaning purpose or aim.

The verb that they look at here is to take pleasure in or to desire something. You're looking for something and this of course is where the striving idea, the pursuit and grasping, all of these come from the idea that you have a desire for this thing that's blowing away and you're wanting to go grab hold of it. Well, they don't list Assyrian and old cognate language evidence for this.

The evidence for this comes from Aramaic. They say, you know, over in the Aramaic we have this ra'a that means to take pleasure in and desire. And from this comes a later meaning in Aramaic also that an opinion or a thought or a disposition that you have, you have a leaning in one way or the other, this is your thought process, your conclusion that you draw.

Well, so from this they say, well if that's sort of the verbal meaning then the noun is going to mean this is my purpose or my aim, that these are my thoughts, I am disposed in this direction, or this is my longing and my striving. All of the scriptures that are cited under this, with a couple of exceptions, are Ecclesiastes. And all the Ecclesiastes passages are listed under this.

Hence, and why would they do this? Why would they say, well it's got to be this? Two reasons. First of all, they've already decided what hevel is, that it's vanity, that it's a waste of time, it's useless. And we saw that that, you can see how they arrive at that, that hevel as vapor means that the primary meaning is the temporary impermanent nature of something, not that it's a waste of time.

You know, the pain you feel when you're getting operated on or getting your tooth filled is temporary, but it's not useless. It's not a vain thing. Many things don't last very long, but most people wouldn't.

I mean, you can watch a movie, you can stand in line at Six Flags for an hour and get on a ride that lasts two and a half minutes, but people keep standing in line, so it must not be vain and worthless. It just doesn't last very long. It's there and it's gone.

There are many things. People tell a joke. Have you heard these jokes that go on and on and on, and they repeat themselves? Like, you know, the first guy comes into the bar and says this, then he leaves, and the second guy comes in and talks to the chihuahua, and he says this and leaves, and the third guy comes in.

You wade through this three and a half minute explanation to get to the punchline that somebody's going to chuckle at for like ten seconds, maybe, and then it's over. But, you know, people still tell humorous stories and jokes because they don't think it's pointless and vain and a waste of time. It's just temporary.

It's there and it's gone. If somebody else a day later starts to tell you the same joke, you say, oh, I've heard that. I got my temporary chuckle out of that yesterday, so don't waste my three and a half minutes here.

But because people came down on the side of vanity and waste of time type of thing for Hebel, well, naturally they're going to be looking for something in Ra'ah or in Ra'ut or in Rayon that is a parallel to that. And what is their other assumption? And this is the other, this is factor two that changed the translation here. The book is late.

The book is riddled with Aramaisms, and so if I have a choice between the Old Hebrew that I don't quite understand how pasturing and shepherding and all that would have anything to do with it, but here I've got a good Aramaic cognate, quote-unquote, that says it's an aim or a goal or a purpose, so this is a purpose of the wind or therefore striving after the wind. It's kind of a stretch, but you can kind of make it work and you say, well, it's vanity and striving after the wind. So 114, 211, 217, 226, 44, 69, 46, Ecclesiastes 117, 416, 222, all of these are listed under this, and the cognate is given from the Aramaic.

There are two other verses in the Old Testament, and only two where this same meaning is assigned. And I thought, hmm, well, I wonder if these are goofed up as well. Turn with me to Psalm 139.

Psalm 139. You will recognize this Psalm when you see it. It is subtitled for the chief musician, a Psalm of David.

O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You have known, or you know, my sitting down and my rising up. You understand my thought, a far-off.

You comprehend my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You have hedged me

behind and before and laid your hand upon me.

Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high. I cannot attain it.

Where can I go from your spirit, or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, you are there, and so on. Well, we find our root used in the passage I have just read, and I bet you would have difficulty spotting it.

We have to look back in the Hebrew to find where this is. But before we do that, let me ask you a question. What is the imagery here that you see when he says, you know my sitting down and my rising up? Think about Psalm 23.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. Well, if he's leading you beside the still waters, you're rising up and going to the still waters, then you're laying down in the green pastures. This has the, obviously, this is a metaphor for what's going on in your life, but it is pictured in terms of a sheep that rises up or lies down.

You think, well, this might just be a man, but the reason I know that this is sheep is because of this root. And in the Hebrew here of verse 2, which in Hebrew is verse 3, because the chief musician Psalm of David part is verse 1 in the Hebrew, it says, Arkei v'ribi zariat, which means, you know my sitting down and my rising up. In the next phrase, it says, you understand my thought afar off? Well, the word thought is our word.

It is from Ra'ah. He says, you comprehend my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Well, this knowing my thought afar off doesn't really match the sitting down and rising up, which are all physical things, and it's a picture of sitting down and rising up.

It's kind of like my going out or my coming in and that kind of thing. But then back in verse 3 here, it says, you comprehend my path and my lying down. We're back to a physical image.

It's all pictured in terms of physical movement. I lie down, I rise up, I go down the path, I stop going down the path, but then in the middle of it, it says, you comprehend my thought afar off? Well, thought is Ra'eh, which is the same root, and what it really means is, you comprehend my pasturing, my feeding. I rise up and I lay down.

What do I do in between? I feed, and you see it from far off. You know how the shepherds would sit on the side of the hill and watch the sheep? They didn't have to be right with the sheep every moment. They can even far away see that they're not near the woods, they're not in danger of falling into a ravine, they're grazing out there, and this is a shepherding picture.

David is probably out in the field when he composes this psalm, and he says, you know, I'm just like God's sheep. I see the sheep when they rise up. They settle down to rest for a while in the pasture.

They rise up and move around. They graze. They pasture, and so that meaning works perfectly well in this context.

It doesn't, and it's a very unusual, nowhere else in the Old Testament, all of the different psalms where David talks about God knowing his thoughts, never uses this word. This is the only place where this word is used and translated thought, but the imagery here is of the sheep rising up and moving and going along the path. When you go on to verse 3, which is 4 in the Hebrew, and it says you, the New American Standard has a little bit better, does better justice to the Hebrew verbs here.

It says you scrutinize my path and my lying down and are intimately acquainted with all my ways. Well, I wish we had time to go into these words in detail, but all of this has the idea that he is closely watching, just like we saw in Ezekiel 34. He is the good shepherd.

He sees. He is taking care. He has a very intimate knowledge and presence with the sheep, and he's going to move to talking about the omnipresence of God as we saw, but when you get down to verse 13, he talks about the knowledge of God, and he says, surely the darkness will overwhelm me.

The light around me will be night. The darkness is not dark to thee. The night is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are alike to thee, and in verse 13, he says, for you did form my inward parts. You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Marvelous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in secret and skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. That needs to be retranslated, but I can't do that this morning.

Your eyes saw my substance being yet unformed, and in your book they all were written. The days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them. Then it says in verse 17, how precious also are your thoughts to me, O God, how great is the sum of them.

Guess what the word is that's translated thoughts here? How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God? It's the very same word that we had up in verse 2. You see my thoughts from afar, or you see my pasturage where I feed from afar. Well guess what this says, and you know that you can see a correlation because God's thoughts that are in his word, and as we take in his word, I mean there's there's a conceptual, the concept doesn't suffer too greatly because this is mistranslated, but what it literally says is how precious also are your pastures, or your pasturage. This is the plural form of the same word we had up in verse 2. How great is the sum of them, if I should count them they would be more in number than the sand, and when I awake I am still with you wherever I graze, wherever I wander in the pasture and feed, when I lay down in the green pasture and wake up you're with me.

I can't, as long as I'm grazing in the pastures no matter where I go you're with me, and they're endless, and you think about the study of God's Word and the treasures that are there, they're endless, and David recognizes this and he says I can't even, there's so much there in your truth, because of course David doesn't have a real fat Bible, he's got five books, maybe Job, but he says even in the Pentateuch it's just endless, it's deep and wide, and so David is not claiming to be able to read the thoughts of God. You know the Bible says elsewhere that my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts are higher than your thoughts, and there is the idea that there are things that are inscrutable to man about God's thoughts, it's His Word, the expression of His thought to man that we can comprehend. God scales down and simplifies His thoughts into things that we can understand in His Word, but you look in vain to find other places in the Bible where somebody says, well I've got the thoughts of God, you know, if I should try to count your thoughts, well David doesn't claim to know God's thoughts, but what he does claim is to know His Word, to know the pasturage in which He feeds, and he's harking back to the earlier imagery.

Well I could take you many other places to explore this concept, but fundamentally there is nothing to justify creating a late Aramaic meaning for this word. You say, well does it really make a difference if it's chasing the wind or striving after the wind or feeding on the wind? Yes it does, it makes a big difference because the feeding concept is well documented in Scripture. Look at Ezekiel 34, look at all of the places where it says we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

We have a calling, we have an opportunity, which is not that different from the Old Testament saints, to be taking in the Word of God, to be feeding and being nourished up in His truth, and to be feeding on wind is to stuff yourself with an air bubble that's going to burst, and last week I ran off the end of the tape, but the very last thing we talked about there was that you get this temporary, that's why it's Hebel, that's why it's like a vapor, in some ways it's like a burp. You know you get a big air bubble in your stomach and you think you're full and then you burp and suddenly hey there's a lot more room. I didn't realize that I didn't have the nourishment I thought I had.

You can think that you're full and you're not. You're full of wind instead of full of sustenance, and that's really what Solomon is talking about. It's very important in the thought flow of the book, because to the extent that you constantly live for the moment, that you're pursuing temporary things, the vaporous things, you're stuffing yourself with wind.

You're feeding on wind. And where is the shepherd? Are you paying any attention to the shepherd that's trying to direct you into the green pastures? Are you paying any attention to the sustenance that God has provided for His Word? And when I say shepherd I'm not talking about hey listen to me. God uses many different ways of shepherding us.

He uses circumstances. He uses geographic location. He uses things that you might hear.

The point is to get into the pasture. The point is to get to the place where you're being fed. So that

is something for us to remember as we go through our day.

When we examine ourselves to see if we're in the faith, are we in the pasture? Are we taking in that nourishment? Are we concentrating on being fed? Or are we sucking wind? Are we feeding on wind? Well we're going to pause here and take a break. When we come back we're going to see how this flows naturally into the thought of chapter 5. And as we go back through that a little bit and move forward this morning, we're going to see that this concept lays the foundation for being careful when you direct your steps to the house of God. Let's pause here and take our break.