

Where is God in the Midst of the Coronavirus?

Psalm 23

Jeremy Cagle, March 22, 2020

Hello everyone, this is Pastor Jeremy here and we are now in our second week of separation from each other. You are in your homes watching this and again, I'm in my office up here on Promontory speaking to you on our online services. As you know, the government has asked us not to meet in groups of larger than 50 people or more. And to accommodate that this is what we're doing for the time being. Just to say a few words about that, if you've been watching the news, you'll know that the schools have recently closed here in BC. Also the borders as well. I've talked to a couple people from our church this past week, one who is stranded in Ohio and can't get home and other one is stranded in Mexico. Other things have happened as well. Airlines are canceling flights, there's been a declared state of emergency in the province of British Columbia along with Alberta, Ontario and Saskatchewan as well. All over again what is known as the Coronavirus or Covid-19 It's a respiratory disease that attacks the lungs causing shortness of breath and even death. It's a very serious thing.

And as I told you last time, I'm not qualified to talk about the medical side of that, not trained in that. I do want to encourage you that one of our elders, Dr. Quentin Smith, has recently recorded a wonderful devotional and also explanation of what's going on with this virus from the medical side of things. It's on our YouTube channel at Grace Fellowship Chilliwack. Please look that up; you'll be very blessed by that, but I can't talk about that angle of things. But I can say on the personal side, on the human side, this is a scary thing. It's a little unnerving to see the world sort of unravel like this so quickly. I've seen several things in my lifetime; seen 9/11, seen Hurricane Katrina, seen the war in Iraq, but I've never seen something on a global scale like this Coronavirus, and it raises a question. A question I want to talk to you about this morning. And that is "Where's God in the midst of all this?" Where's God? Where did He go? What's going on in heaven that He would allow a catastrophe like this to occur? And to answer that, I want to encourage you this morning to turn with me in your Bibles back to the book of Psalms. That's the book we're in this morning, we are going to be looking at the book of Psalms. There's a lot of places we could go to in a time like this. There's a lot of books we could study. But we have been going to the Psalms these past two weeks because the book of Psalms has been called the Medicine Chest of Scripture, or God's Comfort Box because it brings comfort to the soul. It's medicine for a wounded heart. And that's why we are going to turn there today.

As you're doing that it might encourage you to know that if you're asking this question, "Where did God go?" you're not alone. That question has been asked before in history, for instance, it was it was asked during the time of the black plague. People asked it in the 14th century when the world was attacked by another disease, much more violent known as the Black Plague or the Black Death. Just to give you a few highlights from that terrible event in history, it was also a

virus that attacked the respiratory system, causing shortness of breath, but it was more than that. For instance, it's got its name Black Death because it would blacken your extremities, it would kill the skin around your fingers, toes and nose right before you died leaving a gruesome sight. You literally looked like a ghost, you looked like death. Therefore, they call it the Black Death. It would also call cause bleeding from the mouth, and it would create large tumors to form under your armpits. It was a very painful way to die. very uncomfortable. Life expectancy varied once you contracted the Black Death. It was somewhere between one week and a few days because they had no cure for it. And so when this particular virus hit the world, 50 million people died or about 30% of the population. It didn't infect them. It killed them. Three out of every ten people died. In places like Europe, it was so drastic that it decimated their workforce causing nationwide starvation because the people couldn't grow crops. They couldn't grow enough food to eat, because they were too sick. It was transported by rats on trade ships that were called plague rats. And as the ships would dock the rats would disperse, and just infect everybody. They would spread this thing everywhere. And when it happened, as you can imagine, people ask the same question they're asking today. "Where's God in the midst of this? Where did God go in the midst of this plague? Why did He leave us? Why did he allow this horrible thing to happen to us?" This is nothing new in human history. This question has been asked before.

Maybe some of you are asking that this morning. Maybe some of you are looking around and you see some of the chaos, you feel the tension in the air and you're wondering what's going on. And to answer that question, I want to invite you to turn to Psalm 23. If you would, as you're in the book of Psalms, please open your Bible to Psalm 23. Because there is an answer to this question. There is a solution to the mystery. And it might surprise you. It might shock you to understand where God is right now, because Psalm 23 says He is shepherding His people. That's where God is right now. He is shepherding His people. In the midst of this He didn't leave, He didn't walk away, He didn't go somewhere else and just abandon us. He is caring for us like a shepherd would. I just want to read this to you and say a few words about it. But if you look in Psalm 23, it says this,

the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leaves me beside quiet waters, and he restores my soul guides me in the path of righteousness for his namesake. And even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies, you have anointed my head with oil and my cup overflows. Surely goodness and loving kindness will follow me all the days in my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

If you notice, as you read that, this is a Psalm of hope and you can just feel hope come off the page as you read Psalm 23. It's a Psalm of encouragement. And as such it may be one of the most

famous Psalms in the Bible. This is one of the most familiar chapters in God's Word. I can't see your hands raise as I ask you this question, but how many of you have read Psalm 23 before? I mean, how many of you have gone to this portion of God's Word in the midst of a trial? Why did you do that? Because it gives you hope. It gives you encouragement. I remember the first time I ever saw a corpse in someone's house. My next door neighbor knocked on my door on Saturday morning at about seven o'clock and asked me to come over and say a few words over their grandmother who just died. And I came over with my Bible in hand, not even knowing what to say. And the first thing I opened up to was Psalm 23. And I did that because it is full of hope. And the hope is this. You are not alone in a trial. That's the hope you find in Psalm 23. That's the encouragement You are not alone in your suffering. You're not alone in your pain. You're not alone in the Coronavirus because God is with you.

The entire chapter is one big reminder that and it's summed up in verse one, where it says, "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want." That means the Lord is my Shepherd now, right now, in a trial. David doesn't say, "The Lord was my Shepherd in the past, but He's forgotten me now. You know, He was really kind to me at some point and in the distant past now I don't know where He is." David doesn't say, "The Lord will be my Shepherd down the road." He says, "The Lord is my Shepherd now," right now, through this catastrophe. If you think about it, the Psalms use a lot of different words to describe the Lord. They use a lot of titles like my Deliverer or my Rock. They call Him, we saw last week in Psalm 27, they call Him my Fortress, my Stronghold; you see Him called a Sword and a Shield and all these things; but right here, He's called my Shepherd because this is a personal thing. Nothing personal about a sword or a shield or a fortress, but He's called this here in Psalm 23 to remind you that God is with you personally, intimately in a trial. He's there when you need him. He won't leave you. He won't disappear.

It's a very fitting thing to say because in David's day a shepherd knew all his sheep. You could call them by name. This was the days before corporate farming. This was the days before big farms, you know, thousands of sheep, that sort of thing. a shepherd only had just a handful of animals to care for and he had a personal relationship with each of them. He ate with them, slept with him, he was with him 24 hours a day. That's why some of the ancients if you read some of the literature, some of them despise shepherding because the idea of living with sheep was gross. David says God does that with us. He lives with us. Like a shepherd would because He loves us, because He cares.

Listen, I don't know about you, but I can get through anything if I know I'm not alone. I can get through anything if I know someone is watching out for me and that's what you read right here, in this wonderful portion of God's word. I don't have to tell you that it is a privilege to preach on this this morning. It is an honor to even have a chapter like this in the Bible. And it's especially an honor to do this in a time like this. We need a Shepherd right now, amen? We need someone

to come alongside us and care for us in a time of need like this, and we have one in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And to unpack this a little bit, to kind of show you what it says. David says, there are several benefits that come with understanding this. There are several advantages that come to knowing you have a Shepherd and he gives us five of them here. So if you're taking notes in Psalm 23, David says since the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want five things. This is our outline for today. Since the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want five things. And I think this is important. We need to understand this because we're living in a time right now when we feel like we're really wanting something, we're really missing out because we can't – the borders are closed, the schools are closed, and we can't go to the grocery store like we want and do what we want and go where we want. And David says, “Hold off for a minute. There's no reason to talk like this. You're not wanting anything. You're not missing anything. God has given you all you need right now today.” That's the hope you have in this passage. And he says if the Lord is your Shepherd, you don't want five things.

The first one is this. Since God is our Shepherd, David says the first thing you will not want or miss is provision. First thing you will not want is provision which means the Lord will provide for you. He'll take care of all your needs. That is a real concern right now in it. I mean, people are scared they're not going to have enough food to eat. We live in farmland and they're worried about that. David says you don't need to worry about that kind of thing. If you look in verses one through two of this Psalm it says this. David starts off again to read this to you. He says, “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leaves me beside quiet waters.”

Just to walk you through this a little bit in the land of Israel; green pastures were a seasonal thing. They only happened certain times of the year. In Chilliwack our grass is green most of the year because we live in a rain forest. It rains a lot. But it wasn't that way in Israel. In Israel, the grass was green in the winter, in the spring and the rest of the time it was brown. So, half the year the shepherds had to lead their sheep to greener pastures. They had to move around because sheep won't eat brown grass. Brown grass is dead; they had to find green grass.

He also had to help his sheep lie down. It's another important point David makes here, He had to help them go to sleep because sheep are kind of finicky about that. Philip Keller was a pastor in British Columbia in the Okanagan, who spent eight years working on a sheep farm. And he wrote about this in a book called *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. And in the book he said sheep don't lie down easily. They don't go to sleep because they have to feel safe first. And also, if they're getting eaten by bugs or they're too hot, they stay awake all night. They're just very sheepish if you'd say it that way. So that's where the term comes from. And so the green grass

pastures play into that as well. The shepherd has to find a place without any of that turmoil going on before the sheep can go to sleep.

Verse two also mentions another interesting phenomenon just to explain this passage to you. It says, “He leads me beside quiet waters,” in Hebrew that means “He leads me beside waters of rest,” which is important because sheep would not drink from fast moving water. They don't drink from a quick moving stream. It has to be slow. It has to be very cautious. It has to be very safe. And even then, when they do that they have to watch out because there's accounts of sheep being so weighed down with wool that when they come to drink on a hillside, their head leans over and they just kind of just keep going and going and going until they fall and drown. They land upside down and their wool gets wet, weighs them down, and they die. And so this is the kind of thing David is talking about here. This is the image he gives you. Sheep need waters of rest. And Davis says the Lord provides that for him. God gives him a place of rest. He takes him to the green pastures and the quiet waters and in doing that “He restores my soul,” David says. It gives him a feeling of comfort.

This is something to ask you at this time, but let me ask you, do you feel like this right now? Do you feel like you need some rest? Are you tired? Are you worn out? Do you feel like you can't go to sleep? I've talked to so many people that feel this way right now. They feel worn out because their mind is all over the place. They're just distracted. It's just go, go, go for them. It's just run, run, run, run, run. You know, we're told to stay at home and to not go out and what do we do? We run like mad men; run to the grocery store, run to the doctor, run to the park, run, run, run like a helpless, confused sheep. You can add to this, there's a certain tension in the air right now. I mentioned that earlier, but you just feel that. You go outside and you see people wearing masks and you see people with gloves on and they throw around terms like “pandemic” or “quarantine” like it's no big deal. And it's making people restless. There's a restlessness in the air right now.

David says for a believer, for someone who knows the Lord, it should not be that way. You should be able to rest because God has given you provision. He's giving you all that you need. You have a Good Shepherd. If you need food, He'll give you food; if you need water, He'll give you water; if you need peace and rest, you can have that; and it says you can have waters of it, floods of it, oceans of it more than you could ever want. Which brings us to another point in this passage, brings us to another thing we shall not want if God is our Shepherd, and that's peace.

Isn't peace a beautiful word? Isn't that a word that you just want to hear right now? Going right along with this other one David says that if God is your Shepherd, you shall not want peace. A feeling of safety, a feeling of comfort, a feeling that everything in the universe is okay. It's okay. You know a sheep would go to sleep at night because he would look at the shepherd and say,

“It's okay. Don't know what tomorrow holds. Don't know what's coming around the corner. Don't know what's out there on those hills, but I see the shepherd and I know it's okay.”

And if you look in verses one through three this is how David says this. It says, “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. He guides me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake.” You know the word “peace” is not mentioned in that passage, but the idea is all over the place. And to explain this, sheep are notorious for wandering off. They have a nasty reputation for getting lost because they have no sense of direction. They don't have any built in GPS, so someone has to guide them every step of the way.

You can tell a lot of stories about sheep. They're fascinating animals. But one story kind of sticks with me is of some Palestinian shepherds who fell asleep while they were supposed to be watching their sheep, and when they woke up, they were gone. And they didn't know where the herd went, where the flock went. They could hear the sheep but they couldn't see them. And so they followed the noise until they came to the edge of a cliff. And when they looked over, they saw to their horror that the flock had jumped off, one right after the other. And the noise they heard was the bleating of the sheep that landed on top of the soft wool of the other ones, ones that were crushed. That's what this verse is talking about. Sheep have a tendency to do that, they have a tendency to stray, especially during a trial, especially when the when things are hard for them. If a danger comes and they feel threatened, they panic and scatter and go in every conceivable direction, so they need a shepherd to take them down “paths of righteousness.” That phrase in verse three means paths that are good and right to be on. We all understand there are paths you shouldn't be on and there are paths you should be on. A shepherd leads you down paths you should be on, paths that don't lead to a cliff. And he does that because sheep can't find that on their own. They need help. They need the peace of knowing they're following someone who will save them.

You know, if you talk to people right now they'll tell you they don't feel this either. They don't feel like they know where to go. They need some guidance. They don't know which way to turn. Like I said, it's just go, go, go. It's just run, run, run. You know the Coronavirus hits and what do we do? We run to the grocery store and buy toilet paper. Toilet paper for a respiratory disease. What in the world! Why? Why do we do it, because we're sheep. We act like sheep. The Coronavirus hits and we go to Facebook for guidance. And we check it every five minutes as if that's going to help us survive this catastrophe. And we do that because we don't know where to go. We don't know what to do.

I would encourage you, if you're really concerned about this from the medical sides, listen to Dr. Smith's message on the medical side of that. But David says in the spiritual side, it shouldn't be this way. You don't have to be lost because you have a Shepherd. You don't have to jump off the

cliff with everybody else. You can be at peace; you can be at rest in your soul. You know, as a practical example of this, a real-life application of this. I was talking with a young man from our church this week who said, “You know, I don't know how this is going to affect my job. I don't know what's going to happen to my career right now. This is up in the air but I know that I have more time to spend with my family than I ever have, I know I have more time to spend with my wife and kids, so I'm going to invest in them. I'm going to take advantage of that right now. And you know what I'm not going to do, I'm not going to panic. I'm not going to freak out, because my trust is in the Lord.” See, that man understood what this passage is saying. Right now my trust is in the Lord. My trust is not in the economy. My trust is not in my job. My trust is not in the government figuring out what to do. My trust is in Him. And that gives me peace. That gives me an otherworldly peace. That gives me a permanent peace. A peace that doesn't shake every time the world shakes. A peace that lasts no matter what may come, you're following a God that takes you down paths of righteousness. You're following a God that always takes you to the right place, always. And you can trust in Him and be at peace. Isn't that encouraging? We could just say, “Amen” and close in prayer right there, couldn't we? But there are more points in this in this amazing passage.

Let me give you a third one here. Since the Lord is our Shepherd, this one may be the most important of all this is the climax of the passage, but David says we shall not want protection. Since the Lord is my shepherd, we shall not want provision, God will provide for us. We shall not want peace, He will take us down right paths. Which leads to this since the Lord is my shepherd, we shall not want protection. This is a big one right now, because this is on everyone's mind. This is really what's going on as well. All these things apply, but people don't feel protected, right? They don't feel safe. They're afraid they're gonna get sick. David says God will take care of you in this area as well.

If you look in verse four, this is probably the most memorable part of all this passage, David says, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.” If you notice, in the first few verses of this song, David talks about green pastures and quiet waters, a safe environment, a nice environment, everybody would want to be in Psalm 23:1-3. But then you get into verse four, and it's a different direction now. You don't want to be in the valley of the shadow of death. This is the bad place in the Psalm.

That phrase, “shadow of death,” it's one word in Hebrew *tsalmaveth*, which can mean several things. In the book of Job it means Hades or the place you go when you die, frightful place. Job 28:3, it refers to a mineshaft that goes down into the earth way, way down where you don't see the sunlight. Jeremiah 2:6, it means an uninhabited desert. But in all these terms, however you translate it, the idea is always the same. This is the place you don't want to go to. This is the place of danger and unrest. Everybody wants to go to the green pastures. Nobody wants to go

here. But David says, even when you're here, God is with you. Even when you're in the valley, the low places of life He is protecting you. We live in a city with valleys, right? We're in a Big Valley. And you look up on the tall mountains and there's the beautiful view and kind of the safety of being up there all by yourself and you go down in the valley, and it can look kind of scary. God is protecting you in the valley, in the low places of life.

You know, this is another one of David's phrases in here that has a lot of really rich details because as I mentioned, In Israel, shepherds had to search for green pastures at certain times of the year, they had to move around, and so to do that, they would go through valleys with high canyons. We have some of that here in Chilliwack, maybe not so much as they would in Israel. Our Valley doesn't look as scary, our valley is out in the sunlight, but the valleys in Israel would be covered in shadows. The shepherds had to go through there to get to the green pastures and they would go into these deep ravines where wild animals lived, and canyon walls would cast shadows on the valley floor, and they looked like death. It looked terrifying because you didn't know what was beyond the shadows. And David says in the midst of that, "I fear no evil." Doesn't say there'll be no evil. He doesn't say evil won't come or the Coronavirus won't come. He says "I won't fear it because your rod and staff they comfort me." A shepherd's rod was used to drive wild animals away and his staff was used to corral the sheep and bring them in. You've probably seen pictures of a long wooden stick with a hook on it. That was his staff and the rod was just a long wooden stick essentially. And the idea is one would attack enemies and one would console the sheep. One would drive away the danger, and the other one would make you feel safe. And David says the Lord knows how to use both which comforts me. It gives me hope in times like this.

You know, it might be worth mentioning here that God leads us to greener pastures. He leads us to good places, but He often takes us through dark valleys to get there, doesn't He? He often takes us through trials like what we're going through right now. You know, sometimes you can only get sunshine after the rain. You don't get it before. You get beauty after the ashes. Some of you have heard the name Joni Erickson Tada before, but when Joni Erickson Tada was 17 years old she broke her neck in a diving accident leaving her paralyzed for life. She became a quadriplegic instantly which meant she couldn't use her arms or her hands or feet or legs. And when it first happened, she says that she did everything she could to get healed. She went to several healing crusades, and she sat there with 40 people in wheelchairs waiting for a miracle. And when it didn't come, she thought God abandoned her. She asked the question "Where is God in the midst of this?" Today she travels the world telling people about Jesus and how He changed her life. But she says she never would have met Jesus at all if her accident had not occurred. She said she wouldn't be saved if she was not paralyzed. It was her dark valley. It was her *tsalmaveth*. God took her there first, and in her own words Joni says this, "My weakness, my paralysis is my greatest asset because it forces me into the arms of Jesus every single morning because I have no other choice. I can't walk. I can't use my arms. He's the only One I can turn to." My friends, we

need to take a cue from that this morning. We need to take a lesson from this because God does this. He uses trials this way to remind us to turn to him. He is our protection and no one else.

You know, some of you may be thinking you're suffering right now because God has abandoned you. You think you're going through the Coronavirus trial because He doesn't care. But can I remind you of something? He cares. God cares. He's just teaching you to trust Him. He's just taking you through the shadows to get to the pastures. He hasn't left you. He is a good, good God. You know they say, you can't see God's staff until He's swinging. And you can't see His rod until He's using it to protect you. And that's what David says He's doing here, which leads us to the next point.

The fourth thing, we shall not want since God is our Shepherd, I'll go through this one quickly, and that is we shall not want plenty. We shall not want plenty, which means we have all that we need. This is something David repeats over and over again in this passage to remind us God is taking care of everything. If you look in verse five of Psalm 23. David goes on and he says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You have anointed my head with oil, and my cup overflows." A few things about this, soldiers rarely ate in the presence of their enemies. It wasn't safe to do that. If they did, it was usually something small, little snack or something. David says here the Lord puts an entire table before him in the presence of his enemies. He kind of shifts metaphors for a minute, from a shepherd to a sheep to a soldier just momentarily. And the idea here could be the Lord does this in the valley with all the wild animals prowling around, or it could be that He does this on the other side. But David's point is that God gives him plenty. Even in the trial, even in the valleys, He gives me more than enough.

Verse five also says, "He anoints my head with oil, and my cup overflows." That idea of anointing someone's head. That's kind of going back to the sheep metaphor. He bounces back and forth a little bit here; but when a shepherd anointed sheep with oil, the idea was he was disinfecting it. He would anoint their head with oil to keep ticks and parasites off of them. We're hearing a lot about that nowadays, a lot about disinfectants and things like this. And this is what a shepherd would do to disinfect the sheep. And David's point is that God has given him plenty of this, plenty of everything. Plenty of food, plenty of oil, plenty of disinfectant. He's given him more than enough. And I'd like to say more about that. But we need to get to one more point we see here in Psalm 23.

The last thing that we shall not want since God is our Shepherd, but just to review these other ones. First, David says, since the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not want provision, which means God will provide for you. You don't have to worry about that. You don't have to fret. He will give you all you need. Second, he says He will give you peace as well. You shall not want peace. You can sleep at night, knowing that God will keep you from falling off a cliff. You can have rest. Third, He will give you protection. Fourth, He will give you plenty, and that word

“plenty” in verse five really puts this all together. It kind of sums this up because the point of Psalm 23 is that you will have more, more, more than you need in a trial, you will have all, all, all you need. God will take care of you. You don't have to fear because He is your shepherd. He's thought of everything. God has an infinite mind, and He's been there since the beginning. He was here long before you were here. He'll be here long after you're here. And there's nothing He's forgotten about in your life. You're not going to wake up tomorrow morning and God is going to go, “Oh no, I didn't remember that,” doesn't happen. Which brings us to one more point in all of this. One more thing you shall not want since God is your shepherd. And this one brings it to a climax, brings it to a close and that is paradise.

David says, since the Lord is our Shepherd, in verse six, fifth and finally, we shall not want paradise, which is another way of saying heaven. It's another way of saying glory. If God is with you through verses one through five, all of this, David says, He'll be with you in verse six, and He'll take you home to glory. Verse six says this, “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Psalm 23 ends on the same note it started out with, it ends with the same key figure and that is the Lord. It starts out with, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” and it ends with “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” It begins with God and it ends with God. It begins with God taking me out like a shepherd wood and it ends with God bringing me home. Don't you want to go home? You know, there's a lot of wonderful things about this world, but in times like this it makes me just want to go home. David says God will take you home one day.

You know, the Old Testament didn't have a lot to say about heaven. It was explained a lot more in the New Testament, but it did say quite a bit. So for instance, here it calls heaven the house of the Lord, because it's the place where God lives. Heaven is His house. David also says he will dwell there forever. He will dwell in the house of the Lord forever, which is a reference to eternity, the place where you'll never die. And that's how the Psalm ends. This is how it finishes up, with the idea of heaven. It finishes on the idea of a better place because nothing should encourage us like that. Nothing should give us hope in a trial and joy, like the fact that we're going to have better place. This world is not our home. You're just passing through. You're a pilgrim. You're a stranger. The New Testament says you're an alien, and you can find joy in that reminder. Listen friend, sickness is going to come. Trials are going to come. things like the Coronavirus, the Bubonic Plague – the Black Death, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, these horrible things are going to come from time to time. But the Bible says if you're a believer, there is hoping that. If you're a Christian there is joy in the trial, and the joy is that God will see you through to a better place. He'll take you to the other side. I can get through anything knowing I'm not alone and I can get through anything knowing it's not going to last forever. This world's not going to last forever. We could say it this way, there is no Coronavirus in heaven. Amen? There are no masks there. There are no protective gloves there. It's not necessary. There's no such thing as social distancing in Heaven, no long lines at the grocery store because it's a perfect world of

bliss. And the good news is you can go there because you have a Savior. The good news is you can enjoy all of this because you have a Shepherd who knows the way. In your flesh, by yourself, you don't know the way to heaven. You weren't born with that. You're like a sheep. You get lost, jump off a cliff, do all kinds of foolish things. So God has come to be your Shepherd to take you to the other side, to take you to heaven every step of the way. He doesn't just come when you were saved and then leave you until you die, He is with you every step of the way, morning, noon and night.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life for the sheep." That means I give everything for them. Jesus said, "I hold nothing back from my sheep." He also said, "I'm the Good Shepherd. I know my own and my own know me." and that means there's a personal connection there. There's a personal relationship you have with the Lord Jesus Christ. The question you have to answer this morning is do you have that? The most important thing I could leave with you is do you have that personal connection with Him? Are you one of the sheep? Can you say, "This is my shepherd?" Can you look at this man on the cross and say, "This is my Savior?" I ask you that because if you can't, then I want to encourage you that you can do that today. I want to encourage you that if you're not one of the sheep right now, you can be today, right now, this moment If you will acknowledge that you've sinned. If you acknowledge that you've broken the law, God's law, and you can't get to heaven on your own, you don't know the way. If you can admit all those things, turn to the cross, give your life over to Him in faith and repentance, you will be saved. And you can go to heaven through Him. This can all be yours. Will you do that? Today?

The story is told of the time the actor Richard Burton was asked to recite Psalm 23 at a party. He was asked to quote the 23rd Psalm and he did that to thunderous applause. The audience just loved it because of his diction and perfect elocution and wonderful voice. And then afterwards, they asked an old preacher to do it, a kind of a broken-down old man who was at the party and he did it. His voice cracked and he didn't pronounce everything accurately, but at the end of his recitation, the whole audience was in tears. People were weeping. And they asked Richard Burton "Why?" What was the difference between the two? Richard Burton said this, "I know the Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd."

My friends let me ask you today, do you know the shepherd? Not the Psalm, not the words we just read. Do you know what the words are about? Do you know the one David is describing in this chapter? If you do, He will take you to heaven. And if you don't, I want to encourage you. You can now, right now, you can know this wonderful Shepherd if you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. And I can think of no better way to end than to pray for you to do that if you haven't, and say God bless you. Let's close in a word of prayer.

Father, as we did last week, our hearts are heavy at the subject that we've talked about this morning. It's sobering thing to live in a time like this. At the same time, though, we are also humbled and overjoyed to remember that You've not left us alone. You are our Shepherd, You are our Savior. You have sent the Lord Jesus Christ to die on a cross and to be raised from the grave to bring us to heaven. All these things remind us of Your goodness in the midst of a trial. Lord, I pray for those who have been listening this morning that they would realize that in their hearts. This would not be a scholastic discussion or an academic discussion, this would be a heart discussion, a soul discussion.

I pray that our church family, maybe some unbelievers that are watching, that they would wrestle with where their hearts are at in this time, and they would place their hearts in Your hands. Lord thank You for passages like this in the Bible. These are the things that get us through the tough times. Thank You Lord that You go with us every step of the way. We rejoice in that this morning. Lord, I pray for Grace Fellowship Chilliwack in this time when we're not able to be together, we grieve over that. Lord we love one another, and we want to see each other's faces. At the same time, Father, may we take a lesson from the things we've talked about today, and draw hope and joy in the reminder that You are with us wherever we are, and the church can be gathered universally wherever we are because of You. Lord we worship You and love You and thank You for the things we've learned in Your Word this morning today. May we go and apply them in our lives this week. Would you be glorified and honored as we scatter to tell the world about our Shepherd and our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we pray this all in His name. Amen.

Well, thank you for being with us this morning. I just want to let you know that we are planning on meeting online also next week due to the government's request to not meet with over 50 people or more, and we will be back in the book of Ephesians next Sunday, so be ready for that. We'll be back in Ephesians 2. Until then the Lord bless you. Have a Good morning.