

I Shall Not Want

July 11, 2021

Text: Psalm 23

Welcome to Crossroads! My name is Christy, and I'm one of the pastors on staff. We're glad you're here. No matter what your faith background is, whether you have been to church all your life or today is your first time, we welcome you!

A little bit of my faith background. I grew up in church, but I didn't always know or serve Jesus. When I was a little kid, I used to go to a thing called Bible Club after school. Each week, I would ride the bus there after school. It was at Bible Club that we learned to memorize scripture. The scriptures I learned there are still in my head! I was about 8. Psalm 23, a familiar passage, is one of those. (NKJV has "I shall not want.")

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever. I have all kinds of scriptures that float around in my head. But this one -- this is a passage for life.

This passage I memorized as a child shows us the gentle, loving, kind character of God. But somehow my picture of God was different. By my teens, I thought I had an understanding of God. In my late teens and very early 20s, I thought He was this sterile, angry God who was never satisfied. My picture of God was this stern person in the sky who had all these expectations of me. If I could, I would go back and ask myself, "project much?" Maybe that described me or someone I knew, but it certainly does not describe God. I had no idea who He was back then.

When you walk through a valley, and you allow the Good Shepherd to lead you, you begin to know who He is. Psalm 23 paints a picture of God who pursues us, loves us, serves us, gives to us, and is okay with the fact that sometimes, left to our own devices, we just aren't that smart. Psalm 23 invites us into this place where we see the character of God for who He truly is. And it puts us in our place. I don't know about you, but sometimes, I just need to be checked!

If the Lord is our shepherd, we are the sheep. Sheep are a little useful, but not really. My sister married a guy who had a hobby farm in the country. He would help people out who needed a tractor fixed or whatever. And what's funny is that it wasn't uncommon for his payment to be in the form of a live sheep or lamb. Looking out into his pasture, he would say, "See all those sheep? Those are little \$100 bills." And he didn't mean that he was going to get \$100. He meant they cost him \$100 to feed them and care for them. **A Good Shepherd knows there is a price to keeping sheep.**

1 Corinthians 6:20a (NIV) says, *you were bought with a price.* We cost Him something. We are valuable to Him. The author of this Psalm, a guy named David, was a person who got very real with God. As a matter of fact, it seems like most of His

Psalms are complaints and questions. In **Psalm 22**, he begins by asking God, *why are you forsaking me?* But in **Psalm 23**, David describes the goodness of God. *The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

David knew the job of a Shepherd was to care for the sheep at all costs. If you have read about him, David was a warrior and a king, but first he was a shepherd. He knew what the relationship was like between a good shepherd and the sheep. The sheep needed cared for. The sheep needed led to water -- still water that wouldn't overtake them. The sheep needed protected from danger. The sheep needed prompted to rest. The sheep needed food. The sheep were valuable.

It is always funny to me when I hear people calling folks "sheeple" as an insult. It's meant to be derogatory, but that's exactly what David is calling himself, a sheeple who follows after the Good Shepherd. As a shepherd, David took care of his sheep. His sheep could trust him to protect them. His sheep could rest knowing that David was keeping watch. And because the psalmist had this familiarity of what it was like to be a good shepherd, he draws a picture that helps us discover what God is really like. This psalm has us focus on the character of our Creator. When we focus on the character of our Creator, we can be at peace knowing that he is aware of what we need. **With God as our Shepherd, we can know our needs will be met!**

David was making a powerful statement when he said, "I shall not want!" He wasn't saying that he had everything he wanted. He wasn't even saying that life would be easy or without pain. But the statement is powerful because He is saying, "I follow the Creator of the Universe. He cares for me. He will meet my needs." David was making a statement that he would slay his desire to "want." That he would crush it.

Anybody here ever want something really bad? Just me? I have had things in life I wanted that I didn't get. I'm glad I had a Good Shepherd who was looking out for me and said no or closed doors -- speaking from a hindsight perspective. At the time, it doesn't always feel good to have a door closed.

- A job I didn't get for my own good.
- An ex-husband I wanted to reconcile with who didn't love me back.
- Not getting the promotion when you thought you should have.
- Wanting to be part of a crowd that didn't want you in it.

And in these times of redirection, if we do not realize that God will use it for our good, it can leave us "wanting."

- If I just had more money, I would be happy.
- If I just had a different job, I would be respected.
- If I just got these grades, people would think I'm smart.
- If I just get into this college, I'll get a good job.
- If I could change my nose, change my hair, change my height, change my shape.... you name it!

When "want" in our life goes unchecked, it becomes a danger to us. Consumerism is gaining ground. It's at an all-time high. Not just materialism or buying stuff either. We are on information overload, and entertainment overload, and always on a quest for something more. "Want" is like an itch we can't seem to scratch! Marketers know that if they can get you to believe you're not part of this special identification of society, they can get you to buy. Their messages are telling you:

Want...because you aren't enough.

Want...because you can be better than you are.

Want...because people will admire you.

Want...because you can be prettier.

Want...because you can be smarter.

Want...because you can have more, and you deserve more.

When we are in “want” of things, we are vulnerable to the lies that the enemy of our soul tells us. Having stuff isn’t wrong. But as followers of Jesus, we have to be vigilant about “want.” ***Want is the place where the enemy can work!*** If we aren’t careful, it can even creep into our church experience. We can get to the place where we go to worship and want the service experience more than we want to experience the presence of the Good Shepherd. Wanting is this longing for some elusive thing that we really can never have. It’s right outside of our grasp. And since we know this, we need to slay our desire for “want.”

David did this by making a declarative statement. “The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.” David was doing two things when he said this. He was telling himself how to behave, and he was focusing on the character of God. We can do the same thing. We can tell ourselves how to respond, and we can remind ourselves how good God is. How He is for us. How he loves us. How He will never leave us alone. Reminding ourselves of His character brings us peace and freedom.

We can speak about the attributes of God that remind us that we don’t have to fix a problem without him. We don’t have to look to other things to satisfy us because God cares for us. Here are some statements we can make to slay want in our lives.

1. God is truly good; I shall not want. We can have peace knowing that God will meet our needs. Verse 2 describes that God cares about our immediate needs -- our thirst, our rest. Verse 2 says, ***“He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters.”*** We see this picture of peace. Basic needs are being met here. Someone might be in a place right now where you are wondering how your basic needs are going to be met. But God who cares for you will respond to your needs. Most of the time it’s through others. God will prompt someone to meet your need. God will open a door for a new job opportunity. God will make a way to further your education. God is truly good, and we can count on Him to help us meet our needs.

We have seen this at Crossroads over and over again. God cares for us through others! There’s a couple from our Pittsburgh North location that was moved because they found out not all children had a bed to sleep in. They made it their mission to build and distribute beds for children. I spoke with someone here at our West location that was moved by food scarcity in her school. So, she began a food pantry at school to meet the needs of families in their school system.

I have experienced God meeting my needs. In over 20 years together, my husband and I have experienced cash flow, and we have experienced being broke. I have been broke a couple of other times in my life. But being broke with kids was a whole new experience.

“Downsize” was a word we did not want to hear. Frank, my husband, took another job that did not pay nearly what he was making. As a family of four, we were living below the poverty level. We had just adopted our daughter Olivia, and we were barely making it. It was her first Christmas with us, and she did not get anything. She was a little over a year old and didn’t know. We had a 14-year-old to buy presents for. I

took a job working nights at a small grocery store, and a familiar man came in, Mr. Jarrett. Mr. Jarrett was there buying supplies for a local community center down the street. He had several gallons of milk. He walked out to his car to load it up and then turned around and came back in with a gallon of milk. It was the one of the most humbling experiences of my life. I did not look like a person who had any needs. I was not dressed like a person who might need a gallon of milk. He walked over to me and told me God prompted him to bring it in to me. I took it and thanked him. Over and over again during that season of struggle, God met our needs. I have lots of stories I can tell you. I can rest now looking back. But God wanted me to rest then knowing He would care for us. He kept showing us over and over again.

To slay want, we can say: 2. **God is present; I shall not want.** In verse 4, David says, *“Even though I walk through the darkest valley I shall fear no evil, for you are with me.”* He does not say he keeps me from the darkest valley. He said, *even though.* David is proclaiming that we have nothing to fear. The one who created it all is present with us in the valleys, in the hard times, in the shadow of death. We have nothing to be afraid of. God is with us. In other words, he calms my fear with his presence.

We can face whatever it is we need to face knowing God is with us and is for us and will never leave us. We will still face hardships, broken hearts, grief, loss, and sickness. But through it all, God will sustain us and walk with us. In verse 5, David gives us this beautiful image of God sustaining us by serving us a meal. God serving us! *“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows.”* (NIV) This doesn't mean people are my enemy. This means the enemy of my soul will look on as God carries me through. It means when Satan wants harm for me, God will use it for my good. There is Kingdom abundance in His presence.

Shepherds anointed their sheep with oil to prevent parasites from eating away at them. This is a picture of God's protection in the valley. The valley hasn't gone away, but since we belong to God, we can walk through it knowing that ultimately nothing can keep us from His presence. In suffering and sorrow, his presence is with me. He relieves my fears, my worries, my anxiety with his presence.

And finally, we can say: 3. **God pursues us; I shall not want.** Verse 6 (NIV) says, *“Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* David says, surely! It is a sure thing that we can count on that no outside force can separate us from God. And this word follow is not some far-off, lagging behind, passive, “going where we go” following. It's God in active pursuit of us! Just as the Holy Spirit actively pursued you to say yes to Jesus, this is the same pursuit we can count on. Lost sheep do not bring themselves home! He is the Good Shepherd who is following hard after you.

There's a song we sing, “your goodness is running after, running after me.” When we sing this, we are making a beautiful, correct statement of truth, that He is good and always for us, and he is going after you! His goodness runs after us. What else could I want?