

The Lord Is My Shepherd

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This evening we will be going through Psalm 23. Psalm 23. You may go ahead and turn there. Now Psalm 23. And if you have been Christian for a number of years, you would know that this is one of the most familiar psalms. It is a psalm that I would not be able to drum up as it were come up with all of the richness of this psalm. There's just so much here to unpack. So I'm not going to do a deep dive, but rather just to share with you the main themes of this psalm. First and foremost, this is if you would think one of the beloved songs. It's a mizmor. If you remember, I shared in the previous study of book of psalm, I share what that word mizmor means. It means a song of praise. And this is one of the most beloved songs of praise. And it's a song, by the way, that's not to make you feel good in the flesh. Do you understand? It's not a feel-good song as it were. It's not supposed to primarily reach you at the flesh level. It's supposed to go through your soul. That's the end goal of a psalm. It's supposed to touch your soul. It's supposed to make your soul feel alive. And in many ways, this psalm is for that purpose. It's a song for the soul. A song for the soul.

And David wrote it and it wasn't him giving a theological treatise as it were but rather a psalm that was meant to shape his heart was meant to shape his heart and his mindset to reorient the soul toward trusting the Lord. Trusting the Lord. David writes as a shepherd. So he would know what it means to be a shepherd, but he writes as a sheep as well. He writes as a shepherd as well as a sheep. And these six short verses, he gives us, he paints a picture for us, a way to see God, a way to orient our soul toward God. That's what he wants for us this evening. He wants us to see the all beauty, the all glorious God of truth. Because you see, it's not good enough for it to be truth written here on the pages of scripture, but it is to drive it home to be written in your heart and to the point where it transforms you into knowing how good the good shepherd is, how good he takes care of his sheep, namely the Christians.

The psalm divides naturally into two parts. Number one, we're going to see in verses 1 to four, God as shepherd. And then number two, we're going to see God as host. God as host. And both of these images convey the same essence, the same truth that God is personal, that God continually and benevolently is involved in the life of his people. And this psalm is not something that's to be again sentimental feel good. No, it goes deeper. It goes to the soul. It declares the reality that the soul is to be alive and wellfed and well taken care of by the shepherd. It is a perspective that God wants us to have to not look at yourself but to look towards God and to do this continually and it is around trust. So good. And so we're going to walk tonight through this psalm phrase by phrase letting David's heart his song of praise tune our hearts to the shepherd's voice. The shepherd's voice.

So out of respect out of God's word, let us stand as I read from the book of Psalm chapter 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. May God bless the reading of this word. You may be seated.

Verses 1 and three, we're going to see the shepherd who provides. The shepherd who provides. Notice that David declares the identity of the Lord. David begins with God's covenant name, Yahweh, which simply is eternal, the self-existent one, unchanging, omnipotent. And David says that God is, notice, my shepherd. This is personal. He knows who his shepherd is. It's not just any shepherd. It's the Lord my shepherd. In a world filled with idols, polytheism, and deities of all sorts, millions in India, for example, David makes a radical claim here. Radical claim that there's only one God and he personally cares for me and he cares for you. That shepherding was woven, by the way, into Israel's story. We see this with Abel was a shepherd. We see Jacob and his sons were shepherds. We see Moses shepherded sheep before shepherding Israel. And then here, David himself was a shepherd. To call God my shepherd is to acknowledge he sees more than I see. He knows more than I know. I am dependent. I'm limited. I'm vulnerable.

You see, sheep are not clever. They are not fast. They are not strong and they cannot defend themselves. You see, this is a metaphor that is intentional that we are sheep and that is not an insult by no means. It is rather an invitation to trust because only what the sheep can do is trust the shepherd. And then let's look at the next phrase. I shall not want a declaration by the way of contentment here. Of contentment in the Hebrew it gives it out even in a stronger sense. It means I lack nothing. I lack nothing. There's nothing I need except one. This is David not saying I feel like I have everything I want. No, he doesn't come from a place of abundance. He rather says whatever I have with God as my shepherd is all I need. You see the perspective of David. So clear. See this is not an absence of desire. It is about the sufficiency of God. The sufficiency of God. I shall not want. The God of the whole universe who carries everything by the hand of his mighty hand. Nothing is too hard for him. He can carry us through and that's why he can say I shall not want. I know this God can take care of me.

And then note that the shepherd sets boundaries. The staff pulling a sheep back from danger are part of the provision. Sometimes God says no to certain things because you see he knows where the green pasture is. We have an expression it's greener on the other side. Have you heard that expression? But that is always wrong. So when he says no, he's saying that's not actually where you're supposed to go. I know where the green pasture is. And so in verse the next verse, he says, "He maketh me lie down in green pastures." You see that? He maketh me lie down in green pastures. This is a declaration of rest. So we see contentment and then now rest. You see, sheep only lie down when they are full, they are safe, they are unafraid, they are free from enemies. The Hebrew phrase green pastures carries the idea of a grassy home, soft and nourished, a nourishing habitat, meaning the sheep will be well taken care of in the green pastures. And so

this is not a circumstantial peace by no means. It is a shepherd-given peace. A shepherd-given peace.

Next we see a declaration of gentle provision. He leadeth me beside the still waters. This is interesting here is that sheep fear rushing water. They're very sensitive to rushing water. And so this intentionally is still waters, not rushing waters. Because a shepherd knows this, he leads sheep into the quiet waters. Waters they can drink from without fear. And this beautifully connects this to 1 Corinthians 10:13. God never leads us into temptation we cannot bear. He provides always a way of escape. He meets us where we are all of the time. We just need to recognize that more. So the shepherd's provision is always suited to the sheep's capacity, to the sheep's capacity. God knows exactly how much you can handle. He knows exactly when you need time to be quiet, a time to rest, a time to be content. We need to be having him lead. Amen. Every time we allow him to lead, it is always good. It is always for our good. And so this song is to again speak to our souls at this time. Just let it speak to your soul.

Because in the next phrase, he says, "He restoreth my soul." He restoreth my soul. This is a declaration of renewal. Of renewal. The Hebrew word here comes the word shub means to return to bring back and to revive. Many of us were praying for that for ourselves on Friday to revive us again. Oh Lord, because only he can do that. Amen. He's the only one that can revive us. No amount of feeling good in the things of this world will ever surmount that. And he will always bring us back if we need to be restored. See, God restores us in our vitality. If you are feeling right now of no vitality, it's time to be restored. If you are lacking in joy, it is time to restore. What about purpose? Do you feel like you're God? I don't know if this is your will. I don't know your purpose. This is a time to be restored. And then lastly, spiritual strength that you sense is out of your strength and you're you feel a little bit exhausted. Well, he wants you to be restored. He wants to renew you. He wants to bring you back. Wherever you are with your relationship with the Lord, he wants you to return back to him. There's nobody else to return to. Amen. For the Christian, we know the only one that we need to turn back is back to the Lord because he's the one that gives us all these benefits. Not the world's benefits, but the benefits of God. See, this is not a mere emotional refreshment. As I mentioned, this is the shepherd giving us back the life he gave to us. He wants to constantly feed the whole man. Because this word that we see here in this phrase, it comes from the Hebrew word nephesh, which means it's not just your mind. It's not just one part of your body. He wants to restore you all the way to your whole being from your soul out. So he's concerned about that. He's concerned about you if it's just been just all mental stuff or you just been emotional lately or or you just feel physically no vitality in your strength. All of it he can restore back. He can restore it. He restoreth my soul. Amen.

The next phrase he says, "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." Here we see a declaration of purpose, the path of righteousness. For whose name's sake? The Lord's. Amen. The paths are entrenched tracks. By the way, it's a visual that these tracks have been well worn, established ways, the ones that the Lord has placed the paths. And so what he does is God does not lead us wherever we want to go. Even though you want to, he doesn't allow you to. He leads us where we need to go. Amen. Where we need to go. He knows. He knows. Why? Because he wants for his name's sake. When you are on that path, you're going to be constantly remembering his name's sake. His name's sake. This is the reason why. This is the reason why. This is why. You will know. You will know. You see, his reputation is tied to our sanctification.

Any part of our growth is tied to his name's sake. You see, his glory is tied to our growth as well. He's going to receive the glory as we're growing in the Lord. This is the process. And then his character is going to continue to be displayed in our conformity to Christ. Romans 8:28-29. We're familiar with verse 28. I don't normally read verse 29. So I'm just going to read it. It echoes this truth that I just mentioned. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose. Verse 29. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. There it is. There's that connection to this truth that we see here in Psalm. God works all things, even the valleys. Even the valleys toward the good of shaping us into the image of his son.

So we see the next phrase here, the shepherd who protects. Verse four, yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. You see that David does not say if I walk. He says yea though I walk. Very important. Valleys are essentially not detours. It is purpose for you for your sanctification for your growth for your glorifying of God. Amen. So they are part of the paths of righteousness. The valleys, the shadow of death. It's a Hebrew idiom for the darkest, most dangerous circumstances imaginable. It's the worst of the worst. This is what the valley means in the Hebrew. And he's saying that kind that suffocates, that threatens, that overwhelms. Yes, even that is the path of righteousness. But shadows only exist because there is light behind them. God is there. God is there. God is there. And then the next phrase he says, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thou art with me. This is a declaration of presence. Thou art with me. Notice the shift. Verses one to three says he he he and now verse four thou you see that interruption thou in the valley theology becomes intimacy now it's intimate you notice when you're going through the valley it hurts doesn't it God wants to be there in your hurt wants to be intimate there he wants to be right there. Thou art with me. Thou art with me. I will fear no evil. Thou art with me. Amen.

Fear is not a circumstance. Fear is what God allows so that you can run to him. And don't we see that with children? It's such a imagery, isn't it? You run to the father. We run to the father. And so David chooses trust here. I will fear no evil for thou art with me, father. And then a next phrase, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. This is a declaration of guidance. Guidance. See, the rod is correction. The staff is support. Both are necessary in the Christian life. We need to be corrected. We still have this sinful body, don't we? We are not perfect. We're not complete yet. But we also need support to not give up. Amen. So, we need that support at staff. Oh, it's so important. It's so important. Correction is comfort because it means God is near. God is near. We often think he's distant. No, he is near in the valleys. God is guiding right there in the valley. God is protecting right there in the valley. Note the Hebrew word for comfort. Nacham it means to console and to ease. To console and to ease. God not only not always removes the valley, but he makes it bearable. Amen. He doesn't remove the valleys, but he makes it bearable.

Next phrase, thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. This metaphor shifts from shepherd to host. Shepherd to host. So we see now the second part here. God prepares means present tense a table. What is this table? Not after the enemies are gone. Not once the valley is over, but in their presence. In the presence of your active enemies. In the presence of your valley. He's there. He's there. The Hebrew word for before me literally means face to face. Face to face. God sits with us at the table of our enemies. He dines with us. He fellowships with us even in adversity. We have that kind of care from our father. Enemies may surround but they

cannot interrupt the meal. They cannot interrupt the fellowship. This is the truth that we must grasp. Brothers and sisters, this must grip your soul. It is for that purpose, isn't it?

The next phrase, thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. This symbolizes many things, but I want to focus and point out because I cannot go through all of it, but calling and consecration. Calling and consecration. See, if you remember, David was anointed by Samuel, but here he speaks of God's continual anointing. This is now God. It's not from a person. This is from God. And he says, "My cup runneth over means an abundance of this of his anointing. Not of circumstances, but of God's presence in our calling, in our consecration. He wants us to be overwhelmed by his presence so much that we cannot contain it in ourselves. It was never meant for just ourselves. It was meant to even reach the enemies. Think about that. Think about it. He wants his presence to be running over. That's a calling. Those enemies are a calling from God. Did you see it that way? Did you see that cup running over and that spills over to them that they may know God? See, even in our distress, the believer's life overflows with divine goodness. It does. It's true. Amen.

The next phrase we see, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. Here we see that follow is actually a very weak word in the English. So, we need to go to the Hebrew. Notice I'm going to the Hebrew. It actually means to pursue. It means to chase down. I like that. Chase down. It's not something small or minor or yours is. This is surely goodness and mercy shall follow me. Shall follow me. Shall chase after me. Wow. That makes a difference, doesn't it? Goodness and mercy are not trailing behind reluctantly. They are running after the believer with determination. Every day, good or bad, is pursued by God's benevolent intent. He knows we need him and he's ready and he's coming quick. I remember the prodigal son. You remember what happened when the prodigal son was not even at visible sight. The father already saw him and he ran after him. He ran after him. That's what he's doing. He's chasing us down. It's not just slowly. It's running after us. He's running after us. Amen.

So, we can say, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of our life. The next phrase, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This is the declaration of our ultimate destiny is to be with him. Forever and ever. And forever here, just to nuance it, yes, it means forever and ever in heaven. But it also means for the length of days now to the end of our temporal life. This is why when we say when someone is a believer, we say to them, you have eternal life now. Many people think, oh, I have eternal life in heaven. No, you have eternal life now. You have a relationship with Christ now. You have his life now. And this is so true, isn't it? David is confident. God's goodness will follow him in life for the length of his days and the length, brothers and sisters, in your days. God's presence will welcome him in eternity. And he will welcome us in eternity. Amen. And Jesus echoes this in John 14. In my father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you. He's preparing a place for us. The shepherd who leads us in life receives us in glory.

So as we conclude, do you see the weight? Do you see the weight of the shepherd's worth in trusting him through all. As we mentioned in Psalm 23, this psalm is not to just be read quickly. As you can tell, this is a psalm to be read meditatively carefully. Again, I could not have expounded on everything. I would spend days on this. I remember I call one person just spent on the word duh. Not even the shepherd duh. That's just profound. So, it is a perspective of aligning

again these psalms that I've been going through up to now. It's for us to orient ourselves to God word. We constantly need to be reoriented, don't we? And when we do, we will know what it means to be chosen by God. We will know all there is to it. And so, David teaches us to say, "God is my shepherd. I trust his leadership. God is my provider. I trust his timing. God is my restorer. I trust his process. God is my protector. I trust his presence. God is my host. I trust his goodness. God is my destiny. I trust his promise."

This psalm invites us to live with a settled confidence. Whatever God allows into my life and your life, it is for my best and your best because the shepherd is good. May God bless the reading and the preaching of this word. Amen. Let us pray. Father, so much to meditate on, so much to be thankful for your goodness and your mercy. God, it's not just for one day, but for the length of days that we can have this kind of overwhelming presence of you in all these ways. I pray, Father, that you would help, God, your people to continue to understand how much you care for them in all these ways. Help them Lord to be meditative this passage during the week Lord when I cannot be preaching to them Lord I pray that you will be there because you're always there I cannot do it no one can except for you Lord bless the descent father we acknowledge Lord we are nothing without you but we are everything with you help us Lord to acknowledge you more and more in our lives because when we do Lord you will just realize how much you care for us. Help us constantly to look up to you in all things, in every situation, every circumstance, and to say with our lips and with our hearts and with our hoping, you're all lovely. You're all glorious. You're all good. Praise the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise his name. And may you be glorified throughout our days in Jesus name. Amen.

All right, let's go ahead and celebrate.