

What If I Don't Make It Through? — Delivery Transcript

Psalm 23 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, February 16, 2025 • Facing Fear

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All right, well thanks to Russell and the choir and Mary for leading us this morning. If you have your Bible, you can open it to a familiar psalm. It's going to be Psalm chapter twenty-three this morning, and if you've been a Christian for any length of time, it's probably a psalm with which you are familiar, a psalm that you have probably heard more than one time, maybe even a psalm that you have committed to your memory, if not voluntarily, then involuntarily because of the number of times that you've heard it.

And any time that you hear or anytime. If you're a preacher, that you preach a text that is very familiar. It presents its own set of challenges because you can kind of approach the text with the idea, well I already know what this passage is saying. And I'd like to kind of challenge that idea because the most the thing that people equate Psalm twenty-three with the most is during what kind of a season or on what kind of a day. It's a day of a funeral, right? Maybe even you at the funeral of your loved one, a spouse or brother or sister or even a child they read Psalm 23 and you went to Psalm 23 for comfort again and again and again.

But Psalm 23 actually has nothing to do with death. The only mention of death is the valley of the shadow of death, and the word death doesn't even actually appear in the actual Hebrew. It just means darkest valley. And so the idea that we read Psalm twenty-three on days like funerals is, I don't think, surprising, but it is a psalm that doesn't have anything to do with death, the nature of death, or the implications. Thereof necessarily. It is, however, a psalm that deals directly with what this series is about, which is fear and anxiety.

Mental health struggles. And the psalm that David wrote that he probably wrote near the end of his life as he was looking back over His young days as a shepherd and his days as a king was a song that I think he wrote to himself to reinforce the truths that he had learned maybe even the hard way that when I feel like I can't. In the shadow of weakness, I have seen

time and time again how the Lord is my strength. And so Psalm 23 is about how to answer the question.

What do I do when I feel like I can't make it through? And we've all had seasons where we felt that way. Maybe for you it was at a funeral where the person you depended on the most was separated from you and left this world and you were confronted with the question, how am I going to make it through now? Or maybe it was after a job loss or some kind of a source of income. And you're not quite sure how you're going to be able to provide for yourself financially.

Or maybe it was a certain anticipation of a future you imagine was going to happen this kind of way and then all of a sudden the rug got pulled out from underneath you and now that future that you envisioned is no longer going to materialize in the way that you had imagined and you're asking yourself the question, how am I going to be able to make it through now? And in those seasons where we're asking those kinds of questions, Psalm 23 comes along and says, you can make it through. Just because you don't have doesn't mean that you can't receive because the Lord is your shepherd.

And so you lack for nothing. And so Psalm 23, if you're taking notes, offers comfort to us in seasons of discouragement, uncertainty, and doubt. And I use the word comfort intentionally. Unfortunately the word comfort has taken on a kind of a sentimental consolation type meaning, kind of a pity there, poor little baby. But that's not what the real word comfort originally meant. It actually comes from two Latin words con which or cum, C-O-N, which means with, but the word fort or fort in the English comes from the Latin word forte, which is where we kind of get our English word fortify.

It means to strengthen. To make strong together. To make strong with, and that's what Psalm 23 does for us in seasons of weakness. It comes alongside and it makes us strong together. With our shepherd. So in seasons of uncertainty and discouragement and doubt, the Lord is our strengthener. He is the one who gives us comfort. In times of need. And the most compelling thing about Psalm 23 is that the source of that strength doesn't come from something the Lord does or something that the Lord gives, but it comes from the Lord himself.

So let's read it together. I'm going to be reading from the Christian Standard Version, and it's going to shock some of you the way it translates this passage, but we're just going to do it anyway. The Lord is my shepherd. I have what I need. He lets me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He renews my life. He leads me along the right paths, for his name's sake. And even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows. Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live. Now those of you who have memorized Scripture in a different translation as you read that CSB, you kept jerking and getting a little triggered because it totally botched, you know, the way you memorize Psalm 23. So I love the CSB and you know I don't know that I fully committed to it.

As my you know number one translation although we did buy a few Bibles in the CSP so I guess we're kind of committed in some way. And I love it for its readability and the way that it translates Old Testament narratives is excellent. It's a balance between word for word when it's necessary and thought for thought when it's necessary and so it combines the best of both traditions whether it's the NIV tradition or the king James Version tradition. But on days like today, when you read Psalm 23 in the CSB, you think to yourself, why did I pick this translation?

You know, this is so terrible. Because it doesn't sound like you're used to hearing it sound. So one of the best things that you can do when you're studying the Bible is not just read from one translation but multiple. And so I'm going to read from the CSB because it's going to remind you of maybe the way that you memorized it originally. And that is the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leaves me beside still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake, and even 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 You prepare a table before me. In the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord. Forever. Does that sound better? Yeah, that sounds a little better.

But it's good to read the different translations because every difference that you see between the ESV and the CSV is for a reason. There are interpretive decisions being made about certain words and certain phrases that you may want to know about that discussion and you get it clued in on that discussion as you read these different translations. But the big idea of Psalm twenty-three, the big profound idea is that the shepherd that we have in the Lord Or the shepherd that we have as human beings is none other than the Lord himself.

The Lord, Yahweh, is my shepherd. Now I sometimes wonder why the Bible refers to as a sheep. It's not just in Psalm 23. It's kind of throughout the scriptures. Jesus talked about himself as the good shepherd. And some people say that the reason the Bible refers to human beings as sheep is because hum because sheep are really dumb and therefore we're really dumb. And the but you know it's not a compliment when the Bible calls you sheep, as

you'll sometimes hear pastors say. But I don't know that I fully agree with that because there are times where we make dumb decisions, right?

And that's Forrest Gump famously said. Stupid it is, as stupid does. But that I don't believe is why the Bible calls us sheep. The Bible calls us sheep because we're dependent on a shepherd. And the thing about sheep is that they are dependent on their shepherd for literally everything. I when we bought our place out north of Tye We got ten acres and when we bought land the thing that I wanted the most was to have animals on the land. Wanted some animals. I originally thought I was going to be a goat roper as my uncle Steve likes to say.

But I didn't get roped because my father bought a bunch of sheep Without asking. He just bought them. And as a gift to the homestead and for which we were very grateful and thank you, Deb, for buying those sheep. But when I didn't know anything about sheep. So sometimes when I get into a new thing, I go into study mode and research mode and I try to learn everything there is to learn about something. And I was watching all sorts of YouTube videos and reading all sorts of blogs and articles and talking to ChatGPT about what does it mean to be a shepherd.

And there is a ton of information out there. But at the end of the day, the four basic things every sheep needs from their shepherd is to be fed, to be led, to be kept. And when they get in a bad pickle, to bring them back to where they need to be. So a shepherd feeds the sheep, leads the sheep, keeps the sheep. And brings the sheep home when they get in trouble. And that means they are dependent on the shepherd for literally everything because they don't have claws with which they can fight against an enemy.

They are not fast. In fact, the fatter they get, the slower they get. And when they try to run, you think they're going to tip over. And when they do tip over, they can't really tip back over because they just kind of stand in there with their legs. Flopping up in the air. They are totally helpless, dependent creatures. And that is the picture of a content and happy Christian life when you are fully dependent on your shepherd. The com the amazing thing of Psalm twenty-three is that our shepherd is none other than the great I am.

Our good shepherd is none other than Yahweh, the Lord, the as Plato called him, the unmoved mover, the uncontingent one, the uncreated one, as he said to Moses in the burning bush, I am who I am. My name is Yahweh, which means he's the ground of all being, that he never becomes because he always is, he always was and he always will be. He is he is the unique thing in all of creation that stands above and beyond, not within and dependent on. Everything else in this creation is somehow dependent or contingent on something else for its existence.

Everything that begins to exist has a cause as the Kalam cosmological argument argues. But there is a *uncaused cause*. There is an eternal, everlasting, personal, incredibly powerful source of this universe, and he has revealed himself in his name Yahweh, and the amazing thing is it's like philosophers throughout history, whether it's Greek traditions and Plato and Aristotle or other traditions in the East. They focus on God's transcendence, his otherness, his holiness, and make no mistake, he is all of those things. He is beyond us, he is above, he is glorious. But he is also, according to Psalm 23, near and compassionate and close and interacts with us as a shepherd.

The Lord Yahweh is our shepherd, which means he cares about you and he knows you intimately and feels kindness towards you and is willing to provide and meet your every need. Now what Psalm 23 does is it explains the ways that the Lord is our shepherd. He feeds us, he leads us, he keeps us, and he brings us home. When we get lost. So I just want to look at those quickly. I know it's a familiar psalm, but I want us to meditate on these three things. Number one the Lord is my shepherd.

I have what I need. The Lord gives me what I need. Notice the word *need*, not *want*. There is a translation that says I will want for nothing, but the idea isn't that God will give you every want in your life like some health and wealth prosperity preachers sometimes like to like to argue. That is not the picture of a of Psalm twenty-three because if you put yourself in the shoes of a sheep the thing you are most concerned about when you wake up in the morning isn't does my fur look fluffy, or am I going to graduate to head sheep of the clan today, or headsheep of the flock today?

Or am I going to be able to live in a nice barn or a you know a not nice barn? I am amazed that my sheep have a beautiful barn and they never even go into it to shield themselves from the weather. The only thing that they care about is guess what food. They hear a little bit of a shaking. I can feed the chickens and somehow they hear it. And they come running because they want to eat. Because they need to eat, they need food, and likewise we have needs as human beings that the Lord is faithful to meet.

Jesus said, look at the lilies, look at the birds of the air God takes care of their needs and how much more so will he care for you? You of little faith. He's a He is a God who delights in caring for His children and will provide for your needs, not necessarily your wants. But every need. And the needs that are described in Psalm twenty-three are done in poetic, metaphorical language as is common in the Psalms. He talks about green pastures and still waters, which you can just kind of imagine.

I know maybe you don't have any in West Texas, but you can imagine if you go to East Texas or other places in the world. That green pastures is just this picture of plenty and contentment. If you've ever seen a sheep lying down in green pastures, it's almost a little bit frustrating. I saw my sheep laying down in my somewhat green section of my pasture where

I forgot to turn the water off and it flooded the pasture and now it's pretty green over there. But they s literally lay down and eat with their bellies on the ground.

It's the weirdest thing I've ever seen. It's like they're so lazy. They don't even want to stand up to eat the ground. They will lay down on their bellies and just kind of eat it from where they're laying, kind of like if you're sitting at your desk and you leaned over and sipped your coffee kind of mindset. It's just a picture of you might call it laziness, I would call it contentment. They don't have a care in the world I am safe, I am secure, I am in a green pasture, I have everything I need, and that is the picture of the Christian life when the Lord is your shepherd.

I am safe, I am secure, I have everything that I need. I don't have to worry the still waters, some translations say quiet waters, you can see it here. A lot of the running waters that would be characteristic of the ancient near East. Certainly in the middle East today, there's a lot of running water. Sheep won't drink from running water. They need still water because they're afraid the running water is going to eat them or destroy them. And so the job of a shepherd was to guide the sheep to where they needed to go.

If you most sheep today, I've even noticed this among my sheep. They will eat a patch of grass until there is nothing left and they will begin to start eating dirt and rocks before they get the wise idea maybe I could go somewhere else. And there would be greener grass maybe in a different pasture, but they don't do that. They need a shepherd to lead them to where those green pastures were. And if that's true in West Texas, how much more so is it true than the land of Israel, the middle East, where there is predominantly desert, rocky terrain, but every now and then in strategic locations there would be green pastures that were still waters, and the job of a shepherd was to take his sheep to those places and show them I'm going to take care of you, I'm going to give you what you need, and that's the way that the Lord cares for our needs as well.

With our eyes on ourselves, it is tempting to try to meet needs in the way that you know how. But when you try to meet your needs in your way, whether those are material needs like food and lodging and health care and all the things that we need in a physical way or material needs like love and purpose and meaning when you try to meet those needs in your own strength according to your own wisdom a lot of times you don't end up in green pastures you end up in the desert regions you end up in the negative.

You find yourself looking like this was going to be a great thing and by the time you get to the destination it isn't what it promised to be. And you're enslaved maybe to an addiction or you're enslaved to depression and discouragement because you did it your way instead of God's way. But if you will look to the shepherd. And let the shepherd lead you. He promises, I will give you what you need. I will take care of your physical needs. I will take care of your material needs. And I will take care of your immaterial needs.

You will find. In me, your good shepherd, a love that will never disappoint, a peace that surpasses human understanding, a contentment that money cannot buy, a peace that no amount of security or a high number on your bank account can give you. I am the Lord. I am the great I am, and I will be your shepherd who feeds you, who gives you what you need if you'll just look to me. And so if you take if you're taking notes this morning, I've tried to phrase the notes, I got this from Taylor last week, it's a great idea.

Of four personal statements reminding us about who God is, namely he is our shepherd, therefore, I will the Lord will give me what I need. If you believe that about the Lord, there is something you will do with your life, and you the thing that you will do based upon his meeting of your need is that you'll look to the shepherd. You'll look to the shepherd instead of looking to other people places or things because the Lord is our shepherd who gives us what we need. He feeds us. But he doesn't just feed us, he also leads us.

He leads me along the right paths for his namesake, and even when I go through the darkest valley, I will fear no danger, for you are with me, your rod and your staff. They comfort me. I have a picture here of the dark valley. It says the valley of the shadow of death, but it's just that's a fine translation, but the idea is that there's this deep, deep gloomy, kind of impending disaster type of scenery. You're walking into that valley, you have no idea what's ahead of you, but it feels dangerous.

And nevertheless, it's the only way you can go, and so you're marching forward. And the Bible says in those, even in those seasons, the Lord will lead you. I remember at a gun show, I'll never forget this story, I was trying to sell a firearm that my granddad gave to me. I really had no business selling it. I should have kept it. But I wanted a handgun. Daddy Bob gave us rifles. And he did give us a pistol, but it was one of those cowboy six-shooter pistols, and I wanted a cool handgun.

You know. So I was going to sell my six shooter pistol and I was at the gun show and this older gentleman came up to me and he knew what he was doing. I was a young rookie, I had no idea how to sell guns. And he sh he started wiggling me down, trying to hack on the price and was really wanting me to sell the gun for way less than what I wanted to sell it for and certainly way less than what I needed to get the gun I wanted.

And he was about to take me, like I was about to cave. Because I didn't know what I was doing. And this other older gentleman was watching the whole thing. He comes up to me. He actually walks behind the table. He puts his hand on my shoulder and he says, Son, the Lord leads and the devil pushes. Essentially saying this guy's the devil. And I thought, you know, you're right. No, I'm not selling this gun. Thank you very much. And I've always remembered that phrase, the Lord leads and the devil pushes, because that is the way spiritual warfare has seemed to work in my experience.

The Lord loves to lead us, but he never forces it's always an invitation. It's always on the table. He delights in leading his children. But he will never force his grace upon you. He will never do it against your will. You have to if you're going to receive his guidance, you have to receive it as a gift. You have to believe it's a good thing. The only person who walks from behind the sheep is the butcher. You know, it's the devil he's pushing them into danger. Not so with the Lord.

The Lord offers leadership and guidance. And as we looked at earlier in our study through the Psalms, it doesn't the Lord doesn't lead through a map. He doesn't point his finger and say, get over there and do this and do that. You know, he says, I'm going to come with you, I'm going to lead you where you need to go. And so that's the second point. The Lord guides me where to go. He leads me, he feeds me and he leads me, he gives me what I need, and he guides me where to go.

And the promise is in Psalm 23, if you will go where the Lord is guiding you, that He will do certain things in you and for you and around you. The first is He will lead you down the right path. The ESV says paths of righteousness. The reason the CSB puts it as right paths is because the idea isn't some kind of moral virtues. It's not like your path will be morally superior than other paths, but that your path will be successful or effective or wise and proper if you follow the Lord.

That doesn't always mean it will be easy. It doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get rich, but it is going to be a path that is good. Not just necessarily morally good, although that will be true, but good in the very utilitarian sense. The other thing he says is it's going to be for my namesake. In other words, my path is not for your convenience always, it's not always for your comfort, it's not always for your material prosperity, but it is for my glory. And when you begin to follow the shepherd and you begin to trust in the shepherd for your material and immaterial needs, you begin to become a kind of person who delights in Showing off the Lord.

God is good. God is great. And I want him to order my steps in such a way that everyone can see the glory of my great God. And the Lord says if you'll follow my leadership, I'll do that I will lead you in such a way that people won't even see you in your glory, but they will see me and my glory. I will lead you in the right paths for my name's sake. And then he also promises to lead us. Every step of the way, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

There would be some who would say, well, if you're going to follow the Lord's steps, you'll never suffer, you'll never have Hardship or difficult seasons, but Psalm 23 and David would certainly argue otherwise. Sometimes it's in following the Lord's leadership that I enter into the dark valley. Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. But the promise of Psalm 23 is that even though that is true, even though you're in that

dark valley, you are not alone. The Lord is with you. And the presence of the Lord is actually greater than the danger that you're facing.

And so the reason that you don't have to fear danger is not because the danger isn't present, but because the Lord is. And the presence of the Lord outweighs any danger or fear that you may feel. And so the Lord guides us where to go. He promises to make a path that is right and to give us his presence every step of the way. And then he continues. I will fear no danger for you are with me. Your rod and I'm sorry, the application. If it's true that the Lord guides us down the right path and the right thing to do is to follow him.

Again there's some who have a vision of the Lord that he is behind you yelling, pointing, get over there, do this, but that is not the kind of relationship that the Lord would have with us as our shepherd. He would say, here's where we need to go, and I'm going to walk with you every step of the way, but you have to stay near me. I love the imagery of the shadow of death, even though the CSB doesn't use it. Because a shadow is very close, right? It's the nature of a shadow to be very close to the source.

And the picture is even though danger and evil surrounds me, it's very close to me. I am compelled to be even closer to the shepherd, to be in his shadow, in the middle of the shadow of danger and death. I will be in the shadow of my shepherd, and in the shadow of my shepherd I don't have to fear any danger because his presence is a greater a greater good and a and a greater force than the evil that surrounds me. So you got to look to the shepherd, you got to trust the shepherd as he gives you what you need and leads you where to go.

And then finally he's going to show you. That the Lord keeps you. The Lord will guard you from all harm. I will fear no danger for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Many of you have probably already heard this, but there's a difference between the rod and the staff. It's Hebrew parallelism, but they're two different tools for two different purposes. The rod was a tool of protection.

It was short, it was thick, it was good for whopping people or animals on the head. You the shepherd would use the rod to defend the sheep. To protect the sheep. And so the Lord is promising to protect us from our threats and enemies that try to hurt us. The Lord guards me. From my enemies. How does he guard me from my enemies? Well he guards me from certain outside enemies with his rod. Fights Goliath, he's standing in front of Saul the king, and he says, Saul, I know this guy's six foot or eight foot or however many feet he was, tall.

But I've killed bears. I've killed lions, you know, tigers, oh my. I've I've taken care of my sheep with my rod, and I can take care of this giant as well. The Lord guards me. From my enemies. How? He uses his rod to protect me. But he doesn't just protect me with his rod, he also uses his staff. What does his staff do? His staff I would say is a tool of preservation, a

tool of correction and care. The staff was longer and the shepherd would use the staff to get a sheep back in line if he was wandering off where he wasn't supposed to go.

He's getting off the path. That long stick would be used to kind of tap him on the rear. Or on the shoulder and getting back in line. Sometimes the staff would be used because it was long and curved at the end to get a sheep that was in a thicket or in a ditch and the shepherd couldn't get down underneath him so he would use that stick. And he would pull the sheep out. And the other thing I heard about the staff, and I actually believed this after having shepherded sheep myself.

Is the sheep, especially rams. I'm a father of four beautiful sheep and one very naughty ram. And the ram is stubborn and terrible. I got a huge bruise on my thigh from that ram. And when he is in protection mode or in you know hard headed mode, he will lower his head and his strongest muscles in his body are right there in his shoulders. And his head, I swear, it's like a rock. It is hard as a rock. And he will, you know, just ram you. But if you take a stick with a curve on it and you put it in his head and you pull it up, he is helpless.

He has no muscles in his neck. It is his weakest spot. And sometimes I feel like the Lord our shepherd will take our hard-headed ways and put that staff under our neck and lean our head up. So we can stop being so foolish and listen and look and pay attention and get back in line. So he protects us from outward threats. He protects us from the enemy of our soul who seeks to kill, steal, and destroy. And he protects us from ourselves, our own foolishness. He anoints our head with oil.

That shepherd would anoint a sheep's head with oil because flies would get up in their nostrils and lay eggs. Sounds really gross. They get infected and the oil was like an antibiotic and an antibacterial to keep the sheep. He anoints my head with oil. But then David actually shifts the imagery. Belongs to a sheep because the cup overflowing doesn't belong to a sheep. Sheep don't drink from cups, they drink from troughs, from rivers. That seems to be kingly imagery. The Lord anoints my head with oil, but Cain was anointed with oil.

David was anointed with oil by Samuel, you remember, when he was chosen as God's king, he anointed his head with oil. A king would sit at a table in the presence of his enemies. You don't believe me? Just watch some old school Lancelot movies and you'll see it. When a king was going to be going to battle and he had absolute confidence that I'm going to win. A lot of times he would bring his guests over and entertain them in front of the meal, even though they would wish nothing more than to end his life.

He would sit there and eat with them. Because you can't touch me. You can't harm me. Because the Lord is my shepherd. He protects me. He guards me against my enemies. He will protect my life from enemies. He will preserve my life with his sustaining and corrective grace and then he will provide perfect peace that surpasses human understanding even in

the presence of my enemies You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. I know I am chosen by God. I know I will be sustained by God because He has anointed me, He will sustain me and keep me through to the very end.

And when you begin to trust the Lord as your shepherd, you will begin to say similar kinds of things. I can look to the shepherd because he gives me what I want and need. I can follow the shepherd because the path down which he leads me is good and right and for his glory, and I can have peace and safety, and I will be protected and preserved because my shepherd will do whatever is necessary to guard me from the enemy threats. Doesn't mean I will go through the valley. Doesn't mean my life will always be easy, but it does mean I will endure through to the end because I have the Lord as my shepherd.

But that's not all he does. The last thing he does. I'm sorry if you're taking notes. You need to trust the shepherd. If he's leading you and keeping you trust the shepherd, you look to the shepherd, you follow the shepherd. And then finally he lived with the shepherd. Only goodness and faithful love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live. And so God feeds us, he leads us, he keeps us, and then finally he brings us home when we get lost.

He pursues us. I think in your notes I use the word guarantees. The Lord guarantees my salvation. The reason I use the word guarantees is because of that phrase. He pursues me. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me is how the ESV translates it. CSB says, goodness and faithful love will pursue me. And a lot of people feel like well if I'm going to get to heaven when I die, I've got to chase after the Lord, I've got to strive, I've got to work hard and the message of Psalm twenty three and really the message of the gospel is you'll never be good enough, you'll never try hard enough.

In fact your sin nature is going to Incline you towards running from God and rebelling against God and getting lost in the ditch. And you have a shepherd who loves you so much that he will pursue you His goodness and his hesed, his faithful love, his always abounding, never giving up, always in forever love will pursue you. And chase you down and fight to win you back. Because that's how much he loves you. Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And I'll dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now remember, this is before the temple. Maybe he's got the tabernacle in mind. I think he's probably thinking of the moments in his life where he enjoyed the rich presence of God. Knowing that is a foretaste of what will ultimately be one day in heaven. Remember when he grieved the loss of his son, I can't go to him, but one day he can't come to me, but one day I will go to him. I will go to the Father's house. And I will enjoy the presence of the Lord in its full forever and ever and ever.

And that's the picture of salvation. That's the picture of Psalm 23, guarantees my salvation. And the most beautiful thing about Psalm 23 isn't that the Lord is our shepherd, but that the good shepherd, the great I am, took on flesh in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he became A visible picture of God shepherding love and grace towards us. Jesus said in John 10:10, I am the good shepherd. And I lay down my life for my sheep. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father.

I will lay down my life for the sheep. And so as we take the Lord's Supper this morning, we do so reminded of the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ is the great I am. He is Yahweh in the flesh, and he is our good shepherd, who when we feel like we can't get through in the shadow of weakness he is our strength who gives us comfort and everything that we need to endure through to the end. And so as we take the Lord's Supper, I want to encourage you, if you're not following the shepherd, to repent and to follow him.

If you are not trusting and looking to the shepherd to take your eyes off of whatever competitor has your heart's affections and to turn it back to the shepherd to see him Crucified for you, if he did not spare his own son, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Look to him, follow him trust him so that one day you can dwell with him forever and ever. If you're not a Christian this morning, I would encourage you during this time of response to make today the day where you say, Lord, I want you to be my shepherd.

I'm tired of leaving myself. I want to follow you. I want to make you the Lord and Savior of my life. And I'll be down here at the front to help you with that decision. I'm going to ask our rushers to make their way forward as we prepare to receive the elements. And as Mary, please quietly, I want you to do business with the Lord right there where you're seated. As we respond in light of his word and the truth of the scripture that the Lord is our shepherd. Paul warned the church in Corinth of taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, so it's proper for us before we take the Lord's Supper to Examine ourselves to repent of known and even unknown sin and to allow the Holy Spirit to encourage obedience and a proper response to his word this morning.

And so would you do that now as Mary plays? Just asking the Holy Spirit, would you search me and know me? See if there's any unclean way in me. And lead me in life that is everlasting. Don't you just confess your need for the Lord your shepherd? Lord Jesus, before we need bread, we need we need grace that covers sin. Before we need still waters, we need mercy that doesn't give us what we deserve. And we are so thankful that we experience your goodness and faithful love chasing us down. Winning is over.

Fighting what needs to be fought even when it's our own stubborn, sinful nature, and bringing us back home to the Father. Lord Jesus, we praise you. We lift up your name. We honor you for who you are and what you've done in securing our salvation on the cross. And we pray now as we take the Lord's Supper that you would move in our hearts in such a way

that we would be fully surrendered, fully repentant, holding nothing back. Yielding completely to you so that you can lead us, guide us, keep us, provide for us according to your perfect will.

And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.