

Harris Creek Baptist Church
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Series: The Shepherd in the Psalm
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The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23:1-4a

“The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for His name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil,”

Good Morning Harris Creek! It is great to be with you. If we have not met, my name is JP or Jonathan Pokluda. I have the privilege of serving as a member of this staff. And I want to start by introducing you to someone. And so, this is Baarack (picture of a sheep with massive amounts of fur). Baarack is a sheep that was lost for five years, they estimate. And so, he has this heavy coat of wool. I think his name is actually BAA-rack. Which is not even a joke. Cause there are two a’s there – I do not know; I think they were trying to do something funny there with his name. But he was lost in Australia and at once was under the care of someone – a part of a flock, a part of a fold. But he escaped into the wilderness, and they cut off 78 pounds of wool from him.

And that is not all, he went into care at the animal sanctuary. And this is from USA Today. Edgar’s Mission Farm Sanctuary said that it appeared that the animal was once owned – having an ear tag that had been torn out by the thick matted fleece near his face. After rescuing Baarack, sanctuary staff gave him the long overdue sheering and found the fleece clocked in at 78 pounds. Despite his heavy fleece, Baarack was actually underweight and malnourished after being sheered. The wool around his face impaired his vision too. They found grit and debris pulling in the gap between his cornea and his eyelid. And grass seeds stuck in there had caused an ulcer. While the large fleece has often drawn international interest, they are nothing to be proud of, the animal sanctuary said. This is no title to covet as it amounts to being the most neglected sheep in the world.

There is the reality – a sheep needs a shepherd. A sheep has to have someone care for them. And so, this got national attention because of the overwhelming nastiness of the look. There was someone who filmed a Tik Tok video of him being sheered and so you can watch this just for a second. (Shows a video of the sheep being sheered – with the final product being a much less hairy sheep). 78 pounds of wool came off that animal that was blinded by his own wool and he was just out there.

And the question that I actually have in seeing that is how did he not get devoured or eaten, right? They said he could barely walk when they got him. He was weighed down. And so, I am surprised that he was not lunch for some cougar or wolf out there in the wild. Because that is most of the fate for these animals when they escape. Did you know that a sheep is actually the most defenseless animal in the animal kingdom? And I heard that and I kind of argued with that – like wait a minute, is that true? Well, what about a cat, well a cat has claws and sharp teeth. Well, what about a rabbit? A rabbit is fast. Do you know what happens when a sheep gets startled? They freeze! That is their defense mechanism, they stand really still. Sometimes they fall over. And when a sheep falls over it is called casted – it cannot right himself often. They cannot get up, almost like a turtle on its back. And so, it has been said about cougars that they can devour a sheep while they are standing on all four legs. Like they will stand there and be eaten by a predator.

And this is the metaphor that the scripture gives us for our role under the care of God. We are this animal, right? Defenseless unless we are in the care of a shepherd. And you might think, well what do you know about sheep? I actually come from a long lineage of shepherds. My family was full of shepherds growing up. So, I will just show you, here are some pictures from our family growing up. (Pictures are showing on screen.) That is my brother, I thought it was me at first – it is not – it is my brother. There is my sister. I am showing these pictures without their permission – I am sorry. Here she is again and her hair! And definitely showing that one without permission. And so those are my siblings. I tried to find one of me, I could not find one. Probably, conveniently, probably because I hated it very much. I did show sheep in 4H and FFA.

And what you see is consistent about all of those pictures is that sheep are on a leash. They are tethered to the shepherd. And so, we sit here, and you think why would anyone go the way of Baarak? It is the desire for all of our hearts. We do not like being tethered to anything! Like somewhere in our hearts and in our souls, we want to do what we want to do, when we want to do it. We equate that to freedom. And ultimately, that is what we want.

We wander from the fold; we get weighed down by 78 pounds of our sin. We can hardly walk; we are blinded by the choices we have made. We cannot see them. We cannot smell ourselves. We think we are doing fine, and we are just moments from being devoured by the one who prowls around like a roaring lion – looking for someone to devour. He seeks to still, kill, and destroy. I have seen it over, and over, and over again. In fact, the title that the Scripture gives someone in in this position is poimén in the Greek. And it translates three ways: first, directly shepherd. We also use that word as pastor and elder. That word means those three things. First and foremost, what it means is Shepherd.

So, for the past 15 years I have sat with people and really, I am just trying to cut the wool out of their eyes. Don't you see that the choices you've made have led to destruction? But they can't see the destruction! We get blinded by it. No, it is right for me to leave my marriage, for me to go this way, I want to do what I want to do. It is ok for me to wander down this path. And I am so addicted to this drug that I want to keep doing it. And I get it because I've been there! First and foremost, many times in my life has the Scripture called me to something that I really did not want to do. It called me to have a difficult conversation with somebody. It called me to go and

resolve conflict with someone, to sit in front of someone and say you hurt me by _____. It called me to go and ask for forgiveness, to sit in front of somebody and say, “will you please forgive me for _____.” It called me not to cheat in a way that I know that I would have gotten away with. It called me not to take a shortcut. It called me to pay extra for something or to own something when I felt innocent.

And many times, I have not done with the Scripture says, and without fail I could audit every single one of them and every single time I have regretted it. And many times, by the grace of God, I have done exactly what the Scripture says - sometimes it was difficult, sometimes the outcome did not go the way I wanted, sometimes it resulted in difficulty - and every single time I did not regret it because I was able to sleep well. Following the Shepherd is the softest pillow. Knowing that we are smack right in the middle of His will and He's watching out for us, there is no softer pillow than that.

So, we are going to talk about how the Shepherd leads us. We are taking this Psalm - Psalm 23, we are breaking it up into three parts over the next three weeks. This is Week One - talking about how He leads us. Because the Scripture this week says that He leads us in paths of righteousness, or He leads us beside quiet waters. He makes us lie down; He guides us in paths of righteousness. He leads us; He guides us; He's over us; He's Lord; He's Shepherd. We are under His care and you either are or you are not. Just because you are here does not mean you are. Have I, in this season, have I been under His care? Those of you watching at home, have you been under His care in this season? That is a question for you to ask. Because I am telling you, all of us - every single person - it transcends age, it transcends life stage. I do not care if you are here and your 16 or you are 63, there is something inside of you that just wants to be free. Something inside of you that just wants freedom. We do not like the leash. Proverbs 14:12 says, **“There's a way that seems right and, in the end, it leads to death.”** Remember that, there is a way that seems right but, in the end, it leads to death.

So, we are in the Shepherd and the Psalm – that is what we are calling this series. Psalm 23 is the most famous passage in the Old Testament. It is read at funerals. It is actually a song; it is a poem that was written to be sung. It was written by King David. It shows up in movies, shows up in songs - I will give you a list. So, in movies it has been seen in Jarhead, True Grit, Titanic, Book of Eli, Dangerous Minds, Elephant Man, Deep Blue Sea, and in an episode of LOST. In music it has been sung by U2; it has been sung by Kanye West; and everyone's favorite gangster rapper Coolio - Gangsters Paradise. I will not sing it... (begins to sing) As I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I take a look at my life... I will not sing it again!

David wrote it, we do not know exactly when. We know that David was a Shepherd and so this was intimate language that he is using. He grew up protecting sheep from bears and lions – the Scripture tells us that. Later to become King. This is David - in the field David; attacking a 9-foot-tall Philistine David; playing the harp for Saul David; running from Saul David. It is possible that he wrote this when he was hiding in caves running from the most powerful man in the land; saying, I am protected by Yəhōwā, Jehovah, God Almighty! He is, my Shepherd. He is, my Protector. This could have been when he wrote it, but it is the greatest hits of the greatest hits. Ok? This is a song David wrote and it has got some staying power that 3000 years later I am

on stage talking about it. Rest assured, in 3000 years no one knows who Taylor Swift is - no one is singing her song Bad Blood or any of that stuff. No one is singing Bieber 3000 years from now. But somehow, we are going to take this song, written by King David, and we are going to go line by line with it. And so, as we move through it, we are going to look at: How the Shepherd Leads us to Rest; How the Shepherd Leads us to Restoration; and How the Shepherd Leads us to Righteousness.

Public service announcement: if you look back on this week and you did not get in the Word, you did not read the Scriptures, we are in the Bible Reading Plan and we are about to go back to the Psalms. So, this is a great opportunity for you to jump on board. And all you have to do is go to biblereadingplan.org and you can do that, and you can read the same thing that much of our staff is reading, that I am reading, and that much of the body of Harris Creek is reading.

I want to say this to pay credit, much of my research in this song came from a book A Shepherds Look at Psalm 23 by Phillip Keller. So, you can get that book, it is a tremendous resource commentary on these six verses. A Shepherds Look at Psalm 23 to read along with us or study at home if you would like. Psalm 23:1 it says, “**The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.**” The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing. We know who the Shepherd is, He's God. I have already said Yəhōwā, Jehovah is my Shepherd. Which puts us in the story, we are the sheep - most defenseless, vulnerable animals in the animal kingdom. That is the role we play we are desperate for a Shepherd.

David is using this intimate language. If he was an athlete he might say, “You know who my trainer is? I've got the greatest trainer in the land!” If he was a patient, he'd say “Guess who my doctor is? Let me tell you who my doctor is!” If he was a student he might say, “I've got the greatest professor! Do you know who teaches me?” But He is a Shepherd, and he says “Listen, the Lord is my Shepherd. Because He's my Shepherd, there is nothing that I do not have that I need. He provides for me everything that I need.” He says, “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” He surrounds me with that which I most want. And there is this beautiful picture of contentment, that rather than devouring it and getting as much as I can - I lay down.

1. The Shepherd Leads us to Rest.

He leads me to rest. It is my first point. The Shepherd leads us to rest. Too often you think of church and the things of God as exhausting! I got to go Sunday morning and I got to read the Bible and I got to pray, and I got to go to Life Group, and I got to serve, and I got to go here and it just – ah! And on top of that, I have got school and I have got sports, and I have got extracurricular activities and I have got this supper club that I got to go to. I've got these friendship that I got to maintain, I got to call your mom and dad, have we checked in? And I cannot breathe! And I am just tired. I got to, I got to, I got to... You've got to? You get to! I get to sit in the care of the shepherd and rest in Him and find rest in Him.

Someone asked me - I do this Q&A every Friday, answer questions - and someone just asked me “Have you ever thought about leaving Christianity because it's so exhausting?” And this is what I said, I said “Are you sure that's Christianity?” Because here is what I read in Matthew 11 – “come to me.” Jesus says - Christian, come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I

will give you what? (Crowd says “rest”) Say it again with me, “And I will give you rest.” Oh? “for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” Are you sure that's Christianity? There's this part of us, that we have this “I have to” attitude, rather than “Wait, I get to surround myself with God's people and grow in my relationship with Him and fix my rebellious heart that constantly wants to go its own ways! I'd be weighed down by my sin and blinded by it so that I can't see.” I get to!

Phillip Keller says that a sheep will not lay down unless it is free from fear, free from conflict, free from parasites and flies, and free from hunger. Unless those four things are true the sheep will not lie down. So, a sheep will not lay down unless it is free from fear. One thing I have learned in my marriage is sometimes I travel, and Monica does not like it when I travel - which is good news for me that she likes me there. But she has a hard time sleeping. You know all of a sudden, the ice maker in the middle the night sounds like a burglar when I am not there. It is like what is that? So, I get these calls late at night, “Hey, I just heard something in your office.” “Ok, go check it out. Get a big stick - I don't know what to tell you.” No, no - I love that, right? It is good - because I am afraid and so rest escapes me. It avoids me, we are like sheep – do you see that?

They will not lay down; they will not lay down unless they are free from conflict. This is important! I stood on this stage; we did a series called Conflicted: When Christians Butt Heads. And I said it may be the most important series that I ever do here, because at the center of resolving conflict is the Gospel. At the center of reconciliation, is the Gospel. And we have to live out what the Scripture teaches us about resolving conflict - because a sheep will not lay down if it has conflict with another sheep or conflict with the herd. And Christians are the same way! You will not rest - you will not find it; it will evade you - if there are conversations that the Lord has called you to have that you will not have because you are afraid. “It's not going to go well!” Well, then you will not sleep.

Free from parasites and flies, these are life's little bothers that spin around our head. Little things that just swarm. You wake up at 3:00 in the morning; and then you look at the alarm clock; you see it's three and you have got a good couple more hours that you can catch some Z's – nope, not going to happen! Don't you know at work you have got to do this tomorrow; and don't forget about school; and did you do this? And wait, did I pack a lunch; what have I got to do; I have got to do this! And they just spin around your head and you know you have got to sleep, but not tonight. Not for you, right? These little worries buzzing around our head.

They (sheep) will not lay down unless their full, unless they are well fed, if they are free from hunger. So, the sheep's greatest desire is food - like everything in its life revolves around food, when they are going to eat. And they will not eat lying down, they do not do that. It says, “**He makes me lie down in green pastures.**” It is this really beautiful picture of contentment, that in my greatest desires - in that which I am tempted to devour - I can find rest. I lack nothing! This picture that God knows what we need, and we can trust Him to provide for it.

Because here is what sheep will do left to their own devices, a sheep - this is true - a sheep will starve itself because it will eat all of the grass; it will pull up the root; devour the roots; so that

the grass does not grow and there is nothing left to eat ever. And it will die. It will starve itself; it is self-destructive. And that is us. We will consume everything, there will never be enough, we will try to fill this void of eternity in our hearts with trinkets and treasures and stuff and status. And we will die of a heart attack. We will overwhelm ourselves with the weight of this world and we will crush ourselves.

But you probably will not die of starvation. It's interesting to me, that the greatest fear of most Americans - if you ask the "what-if" questions and you chase down all the what-ifs of all your fears and anxieties, you get to the foundation of "What-if I starve to death?" Do you know anybody that has starved to death; they did not have access to food? Anybody? Isn't it interesting that that is the foundation of our greatest fear? God says "look at the birds of the air, they have nowhere to store food and I take care of them." He said, "I've never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread." And yet we live in fear, under the care of the Shepherd, that we are going to have nothing. No member of this body will ever starve to death as long as somebody has a loaf of bread.

He gives us rest! Only the Shepherd can give us freedom from these things. You know I got to this place in my own life, where I just got busy. Fill the schedule with busyness - had to go here, had to do this. And it is interesting because when you get busy, you get self-reliant, self-dependent. And when you get self-dependent, the first thing you squeeze out is prayer and the disciplines. And here is the public service announcement for all of us! You will not grow as a follower of Jesus without the disciplines. It is never going to happen. One of you will not be the first person in the history of history to grow as a follower of Jesus without the disciplines. You are not going to go on your own and do what you want to do and become a better Christian. It's not going to happen! It never has happened, and it will not happen with you.

And I learned this the hard way. Because as I am doing more things and you know I am traveling; I am speaking; and writing messages – you begin to phone it in. I have taught that before I do not need to study. I will just get up and say some things that entertain them, and go here and do this, and go here. And do you know what evaded me? The first thing to go was sleep. It was just like the Lord said, "No! You are not going to do that without me, I control all things. I'll take it from you." And this is the one part of the message where I feel like the biggest hypocrite. Because I look back and there are times in my life where I just I filled the schedule to full and I run too hot.

And I look at last week, and as God in this kindness would have it, I traveled last weekend; I got back in town to do the Sunday night service with young adults here; I taught that message; I left, I stepped off the stage; I drove down to Baylor, FM 72, announced one of the speakers there; I sat there. I got a call about 11 that Monica was taking our son to the ER who is having trouble breathing; I get in the car, drive down to the ER (he's fine, he's OK, he's on the mend), so I'm at the ER at midnight. I am teaching at Breakaway the next day. So, I get up Tuesday drive over to College Station; teach at Breakaway, stay there; come back here and begin to prepare for a new series today. And I just told Monica, "I know - like I did this, it is me, it's on me - I'm running hot. I have filled my life with these things and when I do that, I tend to push God out. Relationships are the first thing to suffer.

And so, when you are not finding rest, go and examine this relationship. How am I doing at being under the care of the Shepherd? How am I doing? Or is that being choked out by kids' sports, and schoolwork every night, and finals, and commitments, and perception management? And things are going back to normal so they're getting busier, right? And then we have more things to do. And social media – we sit there and endlessly scroll because we do not have any time. We have got to see what is going on in Tik Tok. Rest is found in the Lord.

It says this, “**He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul.**” He leads me beside quiet waters, He refreshes my soul. That word refreshes in the Scripture, the Hebrew word, is almost always restore. It is a going back to health. When I sit in the care, when I am tethered to the Shepherd I am going back to health. He is rebuilding something in me that is broken. And the image beside quiet waters, I think the reason the NIV uses that word refresh is because it is like you are walking in the desert and you are dying of thirst and you stumble across a cold bottle of Aquafina or Ozarka. Or if you are bougie Fiji - or whatever it is. Right? Your water of choice. And there it is, and you drink it, and you are refreshed – you are restored! There is a rebuilding that happens, you have energy. And so, God is a God of restoration.

2) The Shepherd Leads us to Restoration

I think so many of us are afraid of being hurt by the church, being hurt by Christians. It is like I tell someone often - here is the truth you cannot trust people, but you can trust a Shepherd. Right? And you can see and observe are they being led by the Shepherd? While they are capable of all things evil, the Shepherd will lead them to what is good and right and true and restorative. He is a restorative God. He leads me beside quiet waters.

Here is what is true about sheep: I told you they are driven by their appetite - mostly food and the necessity of water. A sheep, where they will drink from is they have these hooves, and these hooves make this imprint in the ground and that imprint will fill with stuff. And so, they are perfectly fine just going straight down and drinking out of their own hoof prints. This is what they will go to, to relieve their thirst. Now, what is in those hoofprints is usually feces and urine. And you know, 762 other sheep have walked that same path so whatever was on their hooves - parasites and germs and all kinds of things that will hurt them. They are totally fine to drink that which will hurt them. Here is why - sheep are afraid of water. I didn't know it either, you know? Wow! But they are, they are afraid of water. I was like why. Why would sheep be afraid of water? Think about it, they are a giant sponge with little drumsticks for legs. They cannot swim. They get near the water, they get the water on them, they sink like an anchor, and they get carried away. So, afraid of specifically running water. So, when he says He leads me beside quiet waters this is really attractive. This is the water that the sheep wants.

What a Shepherd will do is, if there is running water, they know the sheep will not go near it, they will trench out a stream. So that, the herd can come around that little stream that they trenched out so that it would be still. It says He leads me beside still waters. Now, you think about what we do when we get busy and we are looking to cope, we will go to drink out of that which will destroy us. Right? We will go. I need to cope; I just need a little treat; a little dessert for myself. I will go and I will look at this, I will go to this website. I will drink from this broken

cistern; this mud puddle; this cesspool. I will go over here. What can I cling to so I can find comfort? And we will go over here on the social media and just binge through these images, or we will click this hashtag, or we will follow that to the start place. You have been there; you know what I am talking about. Or maybe yours is “No, I'm stressed out. I am stressed out. Let me just go back to my bank account and make sure I'm ok.” How many times do you check the bank account like it is going to change dramatically? Let me just make sure I still got what I need.

What can I trust in? What can I depend on that's not God? So, that I don't need a Shepherd, so that without the tether I'm fine? There is nothing - you are going to die. There is nothing you can trust other than the Shepherd. It is going to kill you. You will find yourself with 78 pounds of sin; blinded by your choices; wandering in the wilderness; waiting to be lunch. Even the fact that you do that, is relevant or related to the reality that you are looking for something to trust in. And this transcends age and life stage!

Let me tell you what I have seen over and over. Parents have a prodigal. Someone who is like, you know I am going to find life in vaping and smoking weed and going over here. And the parents are like, “Oh no pray for us. They just left the way and we pray, you know?” But then the parents become empty nesters and they say FREEDOM! And then they decide that church thing we will check in on that sometime. We will stay up to speed. We are going to pull back from serving a little bit. We are going to travel, we just bought an RV. I see it over and over all the time. Satan does not care how old you, are how smart you are, how educated you are, how church-ed you are. He does not care; he does not give a RIP man. He will feast on you like lunch! You leave the flock, and you are dead. I am not, listen, I am not fear mongering - this is just a lot of years of shepherding speaking. That's what I'm saying, ok? That is not even in my notes - I just got worked up about it.

I think they are afraid of what they need to be restored from. That is true. I think we get to this place where the first thing we push out are quiet times, community, membership, reading the Bible, worship - those are the first things to go. This is what the prophet Jeremiah says, **“My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.”** And that is what they will drink from. But when you turn to God, He's rebuilding. No one's too far gone. At any moment in our life, we can go back to the Shepherd and say, “Alright I'm here. I am done running. Fade me up, you know give me a haircut. Cut this stuff out of my eyes; let me see again; and I am back to the fold.

I had one of my favorite moments in all of ministry happen last week in membership class. Somebody just asked the question, “Hey, I've heard you guys confess sins.” “Great, I'm glad you heard that, because it is true.” “How far back? Do we have to talk about things in the past?” And I just said, “Well, you don't have to talk about anything. The only thing that we would do is what is restorative. Like there is nothing, this is not like a Christian contest and who can be the most vulnerable and say the most crazy things. That is not what we are doing. God's a restorative God. The only reason we would share anything is so that we would experience healing.”

And I said, "It's like" and I was looking for an example from my own life. And I stood up here and paused an awkward length of time, trying to find the perfect example. And it is like the Holy Spirit said abortion. Now that is not a part of my story, by the grace of God, but I said "You know it's like what I see in women sometimes is they think I'll never be able to say that out loud. And the enemy will just hold you a prisoner to this choice. And when the Holy Spirit moves you to this place to say you know once I made this choice to have an abortion, and the church comes around you and hugs you; and says you have been forgiven; and you are loved; and you are welcome here; and God forgives you; and there is a path forward to freedom. And then what happens is there are girls around that say, "Woah, I can't believe you said that and me too." and "Whoa, gosh did you just...and me to." And it just strengthens, and the enemy's grip is loosened. I see it all the time.

And then we had moved on, and she just got the mic back and said, "Hey, I'm 62 years old and when I was 17, I had an abortion and I never told anyone." And I jumped off the stage, and I went over her to her, and I threw my arms around her and I said, "I'm so glad you are here! You are loved and He said He's removed your transgressions as far as the East is from the West. It says in 2 Corinthians 5 that He's no longer counting your sins against you. In Romans 8:1 He says there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ. That you have been the recipient of His grace. And it says in Micah that He enjoys showing you mercy, He does it for fun! He loves showing mercy! Welcome home, welcome home – we are glad you're here!"

God is a restorative God. You move toward Him and He is all about healing you. Healing your divorce; healing your adultery; healing your pornography; healing your materialism; healing your self-righteousness; healing your pride; healing your arrogance; healing your foolishness; healing your addiction. He is all about healing. So, we move toward, we tether ourselves to the Shepherd. She did such an amazing job of just leading this body in authenticity which I think is a big part of the fight here in Waco. We like to manage perception here. We want to convince everyone that we are ok. Let me tell you something, the person who is most committed to convincing everyone else that they are ok, is the least ok. That is what ministry has taught me.

It says this, "**He guides me along the right path for His name's sake.**" So, here we have where the Shepherd takes you and His why, His motive. "**He guides me along the right paths for His name's sake.**" The reason He does it is for His name's sake and where He takes me are the right paths. Where it says right paths, this Hebrew word is translated in the Bible 77 times as righteousness. So, He guides me on paths of righteousness. And the reason He does is His own reputation.

3. The Shepherd Leads us to Righteousness.

My third and final point is the Shepherd leads us to righteousness. That is where He's taking us, the right path. And it shows that His motive is for His own name's sake. So, what people would think of Him is - now this is so key to understanding this passage - that your interests are aligned. In fact, His interests are better than yours. His interests are what your interests would be if you knew what He knows. Like listen, the reason God takes you down the right path is for His own reputation. This is huge, because here is what it means - God will never ask you to do something

that is not for your best interest. Y'all's interests are alike. He is never in heaven laughing saying "you can't have sex". Let us see, this is going to be fun. Let us just withhold good from them. That never happens. All the instruction He gives us, is for our best interest. This is huge, you have got to get this, ok?

So, I just was in Port Aransas. I was fishing for a friend's 40th birthday. And so, we went to Port Aransas, we went fishing, and we wanted to catch fish. Because we wanted to catch fish, we hired a guide. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. We hired a guide. We wanted that guide to take us where the fish were so that we could catch them. And he did. We get on that guides boat; he knows the waters; he has been there; they are familiar to him. He takes us where the fish are - we limit out before noon. We come back. I come back to Waco; my friend is going to Port Aransas. He says, "Hey, do you know of a good guide?" "Yes I do know of a good guide." Why? Because he did what he said he was going to do. I have a good guide. I have a guide; he is a good one.

How do you know if a Shepherd is good? Jesus says in John 10, He's the great Shepherd. How do we know? So, He's not like a Good Shepherd, He's not a better Shepherd, He's the best - He's the GOAT. But He is a Shepherd over sheep. I do not know - anyway. He is the best. He is the best there ever was. That is Jesus, He's the great Shepherd. How do we know? Because His flock is the healthiest, they are doing the best, they are prospering, they go, they walk. As they listen to Him, they walk in the paths of righteousness. His reputations on the line.

Coach Drew is a guide. Who wants to win the NCAA championship worse - Coach Drew or the team? Who wants to win? Who wants to win more? Their interests are aligned. He says, "Hey guys - you want to go here? I am going to take you there. That is where I want to go. If we go there you prosper, my reputations on the line as a coach, this is where our interests are aligned.

Your and God's interests are aligned. His interest is what your interests would be if you knew what He knows. This is good news for us! He is, our Shepherd. We shall not want; He takes us in right paths. But you and I, we wander off. We question His goodness at every turn - is He good, can I trust Him? And it is like He says, "What do I have to do to show you that I love you?" "Hey, what do I have to do to get you to show Me?" "Do I need to let my one and only son die for you, to show you that I love you? Because I'll do it." It is unspeakable. It is unimaginable. So, we began to treat that like legend. We have not taken that to heart, that He let His only son die for us. He's like what do you want Me to do to show you that I'm crazy about you? Why do you question My love at every turn for you? I will do the craziest thing - the most unimaginable thing. I will let My only son die for you. I love you that much. I am crazy about you. And I am in control and so if you will go where I lead it is for your best interest.

But do not you see He not only leads us the right way, but He pays for the times we go the wrong way. That's a good God! He not only shows us the way to go, but He says for all the times you have not gone the right way I pay for that. I got you. Debt paid. That is the Gospel - that is the good news. You do not have to pay for your sins because God paid for your sins through His son, Jesus. That is wild!

I think the greatest apologetic, in the day to day, is when a Christian trusts the Shepherd when it is really hard. That is when the worlds confused. You ever seen it? “Man, I don’t understand. I do not understand. How can you trust God in the midst of that miscarriage? How can you trust God in the midst of that adultery? How can you trust God in the midst of that loss? In the midst of that cancer how are you trusting the Shepherd? How? I do not understand, I am confused. I think I have got to know your Shepherd. How are you trusting Him in the depression? I'm just so confused.” That is when people are like wait a minute, I got to get to know your Shepherd. Who is care you are under?

In summary: the Shepherd leads us to rest; the Shepherd leads us to restoration; and the Shepherd leads us to righteousness. You and I, we want to be free. So often we want to be free from the Shepherd. That leash thing just does not sound fun. I do not want to be led. I do not want to be guided. I want to be on my own!

I saw this little video; it does not have sound. This sermon is sponsored by social media evidently because last night I saw this video and I was like, “Oh that is my life! There it is.” And so just watch this for a minute. (A video plays. It begins with a lamb stuck headfirst in a narrow ditch with rock on either side. A person is attempting to pull this lamb out by the leg. The person succeeds and the lamb is overjoyed bouncing down the road – only to leap back into the crevice a few feet later. The video has the person labeled as Jesus and the lamb labeled as me.) I mean...is that not us? Like you went to summer camp. It was the Lord's kindness to show me that last night. I went to summer camp, you had that feeling of Jesus freed me! Oh, He freed me! Oops. You know? We think once I trusted in Christ, I am good right? I am free right? I can go do what I want to do? Now I can be on my own – oh, no, no!

Once you trust in Christ you step into the fold. You become a part of the flock. You come under the Shepherd’s care. Because you will fall right back into a pit and so will I. We will fall right back into the pit.

In fact, there is somebody here, somebody watching, that has gone their own way. They say, “you know what I've gotten to a place where I trust myself to do what I want to do and go where I want to go” And I want to put their picture up here. I am going to show you, their picture. (Picture of the hair sheep.) Weight down by 78 pounds of the choice of freedom. And cannot even see because the wool is in their eyes. God is ready to take; fade you up; remove the weight of that; remove the burden of that; care for you; and show you real and true freedom. I pray that you come under His care. Let me pray.

Lord,

What a verse, what a passage. Thank you for inspiring your servant David to put this down in writing. And so, Lord, we just declare that you are our Shepherd. With being our Shepherd there is nothing that we lack. You make us lie down in green pastures. Surrounded by the things that we want most, we can find contentment in You. You lead us beside quiet waters, You restore our souls. You make them new again. You rebuild; You refresh; You renew; You regenerate. You

guide us in paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. It is your reputation that is on the line and so you lead us to that which is right. Even when we walk to the Valley of the Shadow of Death, we do not have to be afraid. Because You're with us and Your rod and Your staff it comforts us. That You have the strength to defeat our enemies. We find comfort in that God! In fact, You prepare a table before us in the presence of those who seek to steal, kill, and devour us. You anoint our heads with oil. We have got more than enough, our cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow us all the days of our life and we get to be with You in your Kingdom forever and ever and ever and ever. It is good news!

It is in the name of Your son, Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.