

# My cup runs over

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[0:00] This morning, we finished in a dark valley in verse 4. Dark valleys being very normal parts of the Christian life as we follow the Lord, our shepherds.

And we saw the encouragement that he doesn't just lead us through them. He comes and walks beside us. He's not just our shepherd in the valley. He's our companion.

He's walking with us and he comforts us with his rod and star. And if the Christian life is like that, if it involves dark valleys, and perhaps we sometimes think some Christians seem to go through more dark valleys than others.

Perhaps you feel like you go through more dark valleys than most. If the Christian life is like that, as we're trying to walk along these righteous paths, and add to that in verse 5, there's the pressure of enemies.

People who seek to oppose us and oppose our Lords. How do we get through? How do we keep going on these right paths?

[1:20] Because focusing on those dark valleys and the enemies, it all sounds rather downbeat, doesn't it? Perhaps it feels a bit sort of glass half full-like.

But this evening, I want to encourage us that we as Christians can not just be glass half empty. But this evening, I want to encourage us that we don't have to just be glass half full, which I think we can be.

But actually, we're going to find that our glass is overflowing. That's where we're going. That's where we'll get to. That'll be wonderful. And that joy comes, as we look at verse 5, in the Lord who sustains us in three wonderful ways.

Three wonderful ways the Lord sustains us as we walk through life, even in the dark valleys, even surrounded by enemies.

People who oppose us, oppose our faith in the Lord, oppose our Lord himself. So three blessings. Firstly, the table.

[2:38] The table. The shepherd in this psalm, in verse 5, we sort of see him also as a host.

First couple of lines in verse 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

He's inviting his sheep to sit at the table. Imagine a sheep sitting at a table with its hooves out, enjoying a wonderful feast that its shepherds prepare for them.

Don't have to imagine it too much. Again, I've called on AI to paint something for us. Here's some sheep at a table.

I surprisingly couldn't find a real photo of that. So there we go. That's what God does for his people.

[3:46] He lays out a feast for us. And those sheep, imagine there's like wolves or bears or lions or some dangerous animal who wants to devour them.

Watching on as they enjoy that feast. Watching, looking jealously at them. The feast, the lavish feast the shepherd has laid out for them.

That's what we're to picture as we begin verse 5. That's what God does for his people. Christian life may have those dark valleys.

We may have opposition. But the Christian life is a most blessed life. As our shepherd lays out this feast for us.

The Lord, who has made the world and everything in it, we've seen in the Psalms, stoops down to be our shepherd. And in him we truly do lack nothing.

[4:51] And I think we're beginning to see in verse 5 how indeed we lack nothing. We're not in want for the Lord sustains us with this table that he spreads for us.

This table of blessings. Feasting on the good things that the Lord gives. As I reminded us this morning and will remind us again this evening.

We need to remember David wrote this psalm. And to think about how he writes from his own experience of following the Lord and seeing him as his shepherd.

He knew dark valleys as we thought about. He also knew enemies surrounding him. But even as he had enemies surrounding him, he also knew the provision of his shepherds.

Here's an example. We'll look up other verses in the Bible later. This one's on the screen for you for ease. In 2 Samuel 17, amidst that time where he's fleeing from Absalom, hiding from Absalom who wants the throne.

[5:59] We read this. When David came to Mahanaim, Shobi son of Nahash from Rabah of the Ammonites.

And Machir son of Amiel from Lodiba. And Barzili the Gileadite from Roderlem. Brought. Here's the important bit.

Don't worry about the names. They brought bedding and bowls and articles of pottery. They also brought wheat and barley and flour and roasted grain and beans and lentils and honey and curds and sheep from cow's milk for David and his people to eat.

For they said the people have become exhausted and hungry and thirsty in the wilderness. As David faces so much opposition to him and the throne, he finds this wonderful provision that the Lord provides for him.

So that he doesn't go hungry and thirsty. That he's not left there in the wilderness in that way. The Lord provides for him.

[7:10] And perhaps David is thinking about this as he writes, verse 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

Now that's David's experience. And here comes a question. And maybe there's more than one answer. That's okay. I'll tell you the answer that I have in my mind.

Can anyone think of a time that the Lord Jesus was at a table in the presence of an enemy or enemies? Last Supper.

Last Supper. Yeah. That's where my mind went straight to as well. It's worth us turning to read about the Last Supper.

Luke 22. 14 to 23. And if somebody would be up for reading those verses, do you stick your hand up and we'll get the microphone.

[8:15] Ray, there you go. Conveniently placed. So Luke 22, 14 to 23, I think. When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table.

And he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, take this and divide it among you. For I tell you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

And he took bread. And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them saying, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after the supper, he took the cup. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table.

[9:26] The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him. Thank you, Ray.

Jesus is there. He's at the table reclining there with his disciples. But as he is there and hands out those bread and the wine, which are those symbols of what's going to happen to him very shortly after his death, he hands that round knowing full well that there's an enemy at the table, doesn't he? Verse 21. But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table.

And we, of course, know that that's Judas. Verse 47. If you were to look down there while he was still speaking, a crowd came up and the man who was called Judas, one of the 12, was leading them.

He approached Jesus to kiss him. And we know that that's the betrayer who was present there at the table. And yet the Lord still hands the bread and wine out to his betrayer, his enemy.

[10:57] And the other disciples were there, even though he knew they would flee away, even though he knew Peter would betray him. And there's an extraordinary grace shown in this meal, isn't there?

And this is a table. This is a meal that we know now as a source of sustenance for us, for the journey that we're going on, walking in those right paths guided along by himself.

And as we take it, we can remember he shared this meal even with a betrayer.

We remember he died on the cross, surrounded by enemies. Our Lord did that for us.

And he shows us so much grace in that meal as he gives that to us who we ourselves were once enemies and now we're his friends.

[12:02] It's a table given for us to sustain us, to keep us going in the journey. There's another image of a table or a banquet or a feast, whatever you want to call it, that I thought of as well in Luke chapter 14.

Luke chapter 14, 15 to 24. I think we're really good to read this as well. Would somebody be up for reading this little passage? Asema, thank you.

Luke 14, 15 to 24. When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

And Jesus replied, A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, I have just bought a field and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.

[13:22] Another said, I have just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me. Still another said, I just got married so I can't come.

The servant came back and reported this to the master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

Sir, the servant said, what you ordered has been done, but there is still room. Then the master told his servant, Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in so that my house will be full.

I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. So the Lord's Supper, the Lord's table that we saw is Jesus showing that in the bread, in the wine, in my death, you can come and you will enter into my kingdom.

And here his kingdom is described to us as this great banquet, a table, a wonderful table set out with great fine food for us to feast on and enjoy.

[14:51] That's what the kingdom of heaven is like according to Jesus here. And so the invitation goes out to people, but there's excuse after excuse after excuse.

But this is a banquet. The Lord Jesus is offering you this banquet, this lavish meal for you to enjoy. And yet people don't come.

And so he says, go out and invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind. Inviting people who really know their needs.

Who know that they are like sheep. Who wander away and there is no health in them. Invite them to come and dine with the king of all kings.

And they come along, along with people who are invited out in the highways and the byways, the outsiders. Brought into the lavish feast, the wonderful banquets.

[15:59] That's what the kingdom of God is like. People who have a seat in his kingdom. Not because they have earned it. Not because they deserve it. But because of God's lavish grace to them.

They can come. Not just to enjoy the blessing of forgiveness from the Lord Jesus. But just so many wonderful blessings. So many delights found at this table.

What a wonderful picture. And the food. The food that they eat.

Last week we thought about Jesus saying, I'm the bread of life. He himself is food for his people.

We eat of him. We're strengthened by him. We're equipped by him to travel on the right paths he set out. And we also just know so many other provisions, don't we?

[17:00] Day by day we have so many things that he gives us that we can thank him for. So many things we just don't deserve, don't even need particularly.

And yet he blesses us with them. A home. Real physical food on the table. Money in the bank. Friendships.

Families. All that. And so many more blessings that he gives to us. And Jesus himself. There's another feast image I'd love us to see.

Isaiah 25. We could have turned to Revelation, but actually let's turn to Isaiah. Isaiah 25, 6 to 8. Before someone reads it. We saw the Lord's table.

[18:03] The bread and the wine. Food for our journey that the Lord gives to us. We saw the banquet, the kingdom of heaven. It's like a banquet, like a wonderful rich feast.

For us, for outsiders, people who are in no good spiritual health to come in and feast with the King of Kings.

That's wonderful food. That's wonderful strength that he gives us on our journey. And then here in these verses, I think we're thinking about a heavenly feast.

A feast we're yet to enjoy. And so would somebody be up for reading 6 to 8 of Isaiah 25? David. We won't throw the mic to you.

Thank you so much. 6 to 8. Yeah.

[19:07] And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the leaves, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the leaves, of wines on the leaves well refined.

And he will destroy this mountain in the face of the covering, cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death and victory, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.

And the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth, for the Lord hath spoken it.

We've got this feast to look forward to, this rich feast, a feast of David's Russian fat foods.

That's fine. Rich foods for us. The best wine, the best of meats. It sounds really exciting. And I think this is the feast we have to look forward to when we enter into that new creation that God has for us.

And we're to think party, we're to think victory feast, when, verse 8, he will swallow up death forever, when there will be no more tears.

[20:32] And we might go to parties now, and they might be full of wonderful smiles and rejoicing, but they could still be full of tears as well. But this really won't be, for we're on the victory side.

We have victory in the Lord Jesus Christ. I guess this feast in the book of Revelation is pictured as like the marriage supper of the Lamb, isn't it? A wonderful victory feast.

A wonderful celebration that we've got to look forward to. The table spread with a lavish feast. In the Christian life, we're not just rescued.

We don't just escape from hell. We have innumerable blessings. We have a rich feast spread before us. We've got the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ, his life, his righteousness.

He's remaking us into his image. He gives us a family of believers. He gives us strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, as that hymn says.

[21:41] And it's a wonderful image of grace. Imagine, imagine for a moment, you're laying on a dinner and you decide to invite your worst enemy, if you have one, or the person you just don't like the most.

And you lay out a lavish feast for them. That would be a gracious thing for you to do. And the Lord is doing that with each one of us.

Once enemies, now enjoying a table spread out for us. I also thought another passage we could have read, that the prodigal son, he lived that life like his father was dead, wanted his inheritance early, but after finding himself in disgrace, he journeyed back to his father, thinking, I could be his servant.

At least they're treated well. But his father is there with arms open wide to welcome his son back home.

And he doesn't just say, help yourself to a sandwich. He says, I'm going to throw a feast for you. I'm going to kill the fattened calf for you.

[23:04] And that's what happens as we become God's people. He doesn't say that there's a sandwich over there. There's a rich table of great feast for you, my dear child.

And so if we're feeling like we're surrounded by people who oppose us, who oppose our faith in Christ, we can just sit or stand and just imagine that table that is laid out for us.

We can sit and remember the Lord Jesus, our bread of life. He gives us food for the journey, strength for the journey. And we're going to sing of him now.

Jesus, the joy of loving hearts. I particularly was thinking in this hymn of verse three, we taste of you, the living breads, and we long to feast upon you still.

We drink of you, the fountainheads, and thirst our souls from you to fill. So when the music begins, hopefully it's a sort of tune we're roughly familiar with.

[24:28] We've seen the table. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. And the next line is, you anoint my head with oil.

Oil. Oil is often used in the Bible as a thing to anoint kings, priests, to set them apart for the Lord, for their roles.

But also, oil was used in the Middle East as something which was poured on guests.

The Middle East are dry land, and apparently having oil poured on you after a trip through dry and dusty land was a really refreshing thing.

It's particularly reserved for esteemed guests. And apparently it's still a tradition in the Middle East to pour oil on your guest of honour today.

[25:32] So it's still something that's going on. And I think this is particularly what we're to think of in verse 5 when we see you anoint my head with oil. If it was us in our culture and we were to go and buy olive oil from the shop, perhaps we'd note it's really expensive now, isn't it?

Like about seven pounds or something and security protected. It's a really very precious item. You wouldn't want to pour that on any old person, would you?

And so here in this passage, as we read, you anoint my head with oil. Think of that precious olive oil that you've got at home. And think of an esteemed guest coming to your house and you pour a bit of olive oil in.

Not too much. It's expensive. But you pour some on to show them that they are your guest of honour. And here we're to think of ourselves sitting at the feast in the kingdom of heaven that the Lord has invited us into his kingdom and he pours oil on our heads.

Because to him, we are a guest of honour. I said it earlier, but I'm saying it again. God doesn't just rescue us.

[26:56] He invites us to a lavish feast and now we're finding we're an honoured guest at the table. Such amazing grace. What a wacky way to shepherd your sheep.

Come sit at my table, little sheep. Sit at the table. Your enemies are over there. They can just watch on in jealousy. I'm going to deal with them.

Don't worry. You sit here and enjoy this feast. And as you sit there, little sheep, I'm going to pour oil on your heads.

Because you are mine. And I love that you are part of my sheep thoughts. And if you are a part of God's people this evening, do you see in this verse just how much God loves you?

The Lord of all, the Lord who has made the heavens and the earth. He says, I am who I am. He doesn't need anything or anyone. He doesn't need you.

[28:06] He doesn't need us. But look how he loves you. Look at the dignity that he gives to you. You're an honored guest at his table.

Perhaps at times some of us feel a bit worthless. Perhaps at times we feel like we don't really belong anywhere. Perhaps we feel a bit unloved.

And yet here, your God, your shepherd, shows that he can't love you anymore. You are a precious guest.

Honored guest at his table. He loves that you are his. He loves that you are in his kingdom. And that's so precious.

And perhaps that's what just some of us needed to come and hear this evening. You're God's precious child. And as, but as with the table, now with the oil, can anyone think of maybe a time when Jesus had oil or something like that poured over him?

[29:31] Yes. He was a guest, wasn't he? And a woman comes and pours oil on him. Let's turn to Mark 14.

Mark 14. Let's read an account of it. Perhaps there was more than one instance of it. I'm not completely certain myself. but that's a conversation we can have at another time.

Mark 14, 3 to 9. Would somebody like to read this passage for us?

Maria, thank you. Mark 14, 3 to 9. I think, where's the mic? David's got the microphone. Thank you. Thanks, Maria.

While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon, the leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume made of pure nard.

[30:49] She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head. Shall I carry on? To verse 9, please. Thank you. Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, why this waste of perfume?

It could have been sold for more than a year's wages and the money given to the poor. And they rebuked her harshly. Leave her alone, said Jesus. Why are you bothering her?

She has done a beautiful thing for me. The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them anytime you want, but you will not always have me. She did what she could.

She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare me for my burial. Truly, I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached, throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. thanks, Maria. So, note there what is poured on Jesus, pure nard by this woman. Pure nard was a fragrant oil, or fragrant perfumed oil, a very costly substance.

[32:05] It's going to cost more than your bottle of oil from Sainsbury's or Aldi or wherever you shop. this cost a year's wages, we note there in verse 5.

What this woman does is incredibly lavish for the guest that is worthy of the honour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And perhaps she didn't really know how significant this was, the Lord Jesus says of what she's done in verse 8, she did what she could, she poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

And truly I tell you wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. I'm sure she had no idea how significant what she did was.

Pouring the nard oil on the Lord Jesus to prepare him for his burial, to prepare the one who should be the honoured guest in every home who's actually going to be treated as a problem, as a troublemaker, as someone to get rid of.

[33:33] And he's going to be buried in a tomb. But of course, after his death and resurrection, he ascends to the throne where he is worthy and he receives all the honour and glory and praise he is worthy of.

He's the one who really should be honoured, is honoured in the glory of heaven. But we are the ones who shouldn't be honoured. Really?

We're the problem. We're the troublemaker. It was our sin, our rejection of him that drove him to the cross. And yet we see in Psalm 23, the Lord anoints us with oil because through our union with Christ, in his death and in his burial and resurrection, we find we ourselves are honoured by God too.

Isn't that wonderful? What wonderful grace treats us as we just don't deserve. And finally, in Psalm 23, we go from oil to the cup.

Oil to the cup. Psalm 23. verse 5. Verse 5. My cup overflows.

[35:13] I said we would move from potentially feeling glass half empty from the dark valley and the mention of enemies to maybe glass half full, but actually to cup overflowing, glass overflowing.

David is saying, as he reflects on the fact that his shepherd, who acts as host in verse 5, prepares this wonderful table before him in the presence of enemies, who anoints his head with oil. He's an honoured guest at God's table. His cup overflows. grace. It's an image of joy. It's an image of blessing, overrunning. On a Sunday afternoon, Becky and I will often sit at home and we will watch the F1 if it's on.

as indeed we did this afternoon. We caught up on some highlights. We actually missed the actual race. At the end of an F1 race, the top three drivers, first, second and third, end up on the podium. They're honoured with their trophies. The national anthem plays for the winner and it's all very sort of calm and relaxed and ordered and then the party goes wild.

[36:42] I did have a video but it wasn't working. The champagne comes out and they spray it everywhere. Actually, that's probably quite calm really compared to what it sometimes is like.

The champagne bottles overflow and it's a party. It's an image of joy and celebration at winning the F1.

joy and celebration is just a little picture of what it's like for us as we consider just how many blessings, how many riches that we possess in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our cup overflows. overflows. But just to come back to Jesus again, what cup did Jesus take? What cup did Jesus drink? cup of wrath. God's righteous anger on our sin.

[37:55] The cup of wrath for those wandering and straying sheep who stray from him and his good and righteous ways.

And that cup was due for us. And yet the Lord Jesus, our good shepherd, says, I'm going to drink that for you.

And he drank the very dregs of that cup down so that the cup for us was empty and now filled with great blessings.

Now we receive a cup of mercy instead of fury. A cup of blessing instead of dread. A cup of joy overflowing instead of judgment waiting for us.

Charles Spurgeon on this verse in his commentary says, a poor man, and in fact all people may say of being a Christian, what, I get all of this and I get Jesus too.

[39:14] We get Jesus, that's more than enough for us. We get Jesus who has shed his blood in our place, who has faced, drunk that cup of wrath, but we get the cup of so many blessings too.

Being the honored guests at the lavish feast of the kingdom of God, we have so much. So much joy in our cup that overflows.

Joy not in ourselves, not in our circumstances, for they may be enemies and dark valleys, but so much joy found, rooted in the Lord Jesus Christ, who sustains us with a feast spread out for us, with oil poured over us and a cup not of wrath, but of overflowing blessing.

Surely that's enough to sustain us as we walk through this world, as we seek to walk along those right paths that the shepherd leads us on, until we dwell in his house forever.

But that's for next week. Why don't we respond together in prayer? Perhaps I'll lead us off in a short prayer, and then if a few others would love to lead us in some prayers of praise and thanksgiving to our Lord.

[40:54] This is some of the stuff we've seen this evening, or even today and last week in this psalm, please do lead us, and then we'll respond in song.

Let's pray. Lord, oh, heavenly Father, we hear all this in verse five, and we can rejoice.

Our hearts rejoice as we consider the wonderful blessings that you give to us, unworthy, wandering, and straying sheep, and we thank you particularly that they are seen most profoundly in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank you for the feast that he lays out for us. Thank you that on him we can feast.

He's the bread of life, and he gives us so much more. thank you that though he should have been that honoured guest at every house by everyone he met, thank you that he was willing to be treated as a criminal so that we can come into your house and be that honoured guest.

[42:29] And thank you that though we should have drunk that cup of rock, love. The Lord Jesus has drunk that for us so that we can enjoy the cup of blessing. What wonderful lavish grace you give to us, and we thank you.

Amen.