

# The Lord is My Shepherd

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[0:00] I know Brother Neil's just read it. I'll just read it through one more time.

! Feel free to read along with me. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. It's a Psalm of David. Let's say it together if we can. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness. For his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil. My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Familiar words, don't they? Hear them often. There was one time a church newsletter editor was preparing a bulletin and asked the preacher what the sermon topic would be.

[1:35] And the preacher said, the Lord is my shepherd. And the editor asked him back. He said, is that all? And the answer came back, that's enough. That is enough, isn't it? The Lord is my shepherd. That's enough. That's in one line, isn't it? In one phrase. The Lord is my shepherd. That's enough.

I like how someone explained it about the 23rd Psalm as the Psalm of King David. It's part of a trilogy, they call it. So a trilogy, it means a set, a group of three related works. The three Psalms fit together. Psalm 22, Psalm 23 in the middle, and Psalm 24.

So you've got Psalm 22, which is a messianic psalm. It speaks of the Lord's suffering and death. In Psalm 22, he cries out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

You see, the Lord right through, pictured there in Psalm 22, the messianic psalm. Then we've got Psalm 23, which we're going to talk about tonight. And we know the Lord Jesus says that he is the good shepherd, and it lays down his life for the sheep.

And then we see Psalm 24, it talks further of the King of Glory. It tells of the King of Glory. And, you know, we could think of how one day he will come back as that King of Glory.

[2:55] Not coming as a babe in a manger, but as the triumphant King to take rightful reign of planet Earth again. And so we see that one day our Lord will reign as the King of Glory.

It's very interesting, Psalm 22, 23, and 24. We're just touching on Psalm 23 tonight. The Lord is my shepherd. And truly that is enough, isn't it? That we want nothing more.

He says, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Jehovah, the Lord, L-O-R-D, capitals, Jehovah, Yahweh, is my shepherd.

And it speaks of our relationship with him, my shepherd. Our relationship with God, when we're saved, that he acts as a shepherd, as the shepherd, as my shepherd, your shepherd.

He guides, he shields, he feeds, he leads. He is Lord, L-O-R-D, and he is shepherd. He is Lord above us, and he is shepherd. He is with us.

[3:54] Think of a shepherd. We need a shepherd, don't we? We need a shepherd because we're inclined to stray like sheep. As it says in Isaiah 53, verse 6, it says, All we, like sheep, have gone astray.

We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord hath laid upon him the sin, the iniquity of us all. Seeing how God compares people to sheep, it's kind of interesting.

I wonder why. You know, it's been said sheep are stupid. Sheep are ignorant. You know, they're prone to wander. They're prone to go astray and get lost. Now, people might not know that we've got some sheep in our backyard.

You know, I've got a bit of a paddock at the back, and we've got some sheep that I'm supposed to be looking after. And I think Julie does most of it, really. But these sheep need some shepherding. And when we first got the sheep, we had some fence lines that were pretty dodgy, and the sheep kept jumping and going astray. So I can really understand.

[4:56] That's what happens with sheep. They tend to wander and tend to get lost and do their own thing. You know, the Bible talks about the shepherd, the good shepherd, the Lord our shepherd, as the one who goes after these sheep that wander and go astray.

And we can strain like lost sheep, because man has a sin problem. I've got a sin problem, and I need a saviour. Can you identify with that? I pray that you do, because firstly, you've got to see that you're a sinner, and secondly, you see that you need a saviour.

You know, one follows the other. And the saviour tells how he's like a shepherd searching for some lost sheep. We see as he tells a parable of some 99 sheep and one lost sheep.

And he tells us here in Luke 15, where it says, verse 4, What man have you having an hundred sheep? If you lose one of them, does not leave the 99 in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it.

And it says, and when he has found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, it says he calls together his friends, his neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep, which was lost.

[6:13] We say of him, he is my shepherd. Notice he says of us, you are my sheep. He says, he's my shepherd. And he says to you, you are my sheep.

The Lord, my shepherd. He says, you know, I know when we had some times when we might get some food to the sheep at home. And sometimes we'd look down and we wouldn't see all the sheep because there's a bit of a dip.

And you can't see all the sheep. And Julie used to get worried. Oh, have we got all the sheep? Maybe one might have gone missing. And we were always conscious of that, especially when our fence was broken.

And we were wondering if we were going to lose one of the sheep. So here in Luke 15, we see a shepherd with a hundred sheep, plenty of them. But he knows them.

And he knows that one is missing. He even knows the name of that one, doesn't he? Our good shepherd. And we say, here's my shepherd. He says, you are my sheep. And the Lord, my shepherd, he's the one who goes out, searching, watching, looking, counting, and then noticing who is not here.

[7:22] One is a stray. And he looks at you and me, doesn't he? He searches for the lost sheep. And he saves them. And what a joy it is.

What rejoicing. He lays it on his shoulder, that lost sheep that's come home. Praise him. Praise God. And he is such a shepherd to you and me. And he reaches that stray one, that one that is lost, maybe hungry, wandering, endangered.

And he comes out looking for us without longing and concern. And he looks out for us. And the shepherd comes. And the eastern shepherds, I understand, would wear like a sheepskin coat. They would take some sheepskin and it would keep them warm in winter and cool in summer. And one eastern shepherd said, as he was wearing this sheepskin coat, he says, My sheep like to see me looking like themselves.

Isn't that like our good shepherd? You know, the Lord our shepherd is God manifest in the flesh. Here it says, God was manifest in the flesh.

[8:30] One Timothy 3 verse 16. Now, he was not just like a man, but he was a real man. He didn't just pretend to be a man. He was a man. Such as we, yet without sin.

Thank God for that. That the shepherd became a sheep, as it were. Then he came down, became a man, dwelt amongst us to save us. He went to the ultimate extent as the shepherd, searching for the lost sheep.

And as our shepherd, think of it. The Lord is the owner and the master. We belong to him. He says, you are my sheep. He says, you are my shepherd.

No, we say of him, he is my shepherd. We're under his ownership, under new management. And he feeds us, he leads us, he tends us. And the shepherd himself became actually the door to fill up the

entrance of the sheepfold.

And he would stand guard, keeping watch. Now I know, even in our own situation, as kind of pretend shepherds, we're not got any great country knowledge really to speak of.

[9:38] But we've seen some foxes. I've seen one, it was about that long with its tail behind it, going across the back paddock. And we actually caught one and they're vicious creatures, really.

You know, really. You know that, don't you die, as a former shepherd as well. They're just, they're fangs. You know, really, you don't want to get near them.

You don't go passing a fox on the head. And these foxes, they can go after little lambs. The little lambs can get taken by the foxes. And that's the end of them.

And so, the Lord is like this guard, standing watch at the doorway, at the entrance of the sheepfold. And David calls him not a shepherd, but my shepherd.

Notice that, he is my shepherd. And that's something, you can say that for yourself. You can say it for him yourself. When you know him, you can say, here's mine. My shepherd. Here's mine.

[10:36] It's a personal relationship. And this personal pronoun, or the personal pronoun, which is I, me, and my, it occurs 17 times in six verses.

So, it's very prominent. And he and his, it occurs 13 times. So, it's a very personal thing. It's my shepherd. The Lord, our shepherd, is with his sheep all the time.

And they're his friends in a way. They're his children. He names them. You know, the shepherd, the Lord, our shepherd, he actually names the sheep. Now, Julie's a bit like that. She won't, you know, as much as I'd like to have some lamb, some kind of lamb meal or something, Julie has named the sheep.

So, there's no way we're going to eat those sheep. But we know that our Lord knows the sheep. He knows each one. And even tonight, when I was calling them up, actually, to get some food and just throw some feed to them.

And I opened the gate. And they were just really, you know, all, you know, rushing into the gate. Even though I was right there, normally they're quite flighty and, you know, afraid.

[11:44] But they were running through the gate. And you can picture how, as the gate gets open, as the door is open, as the shepherd himself is the door, as he opens that doorway, he'll count them.

One, two, three, 99. Oh, one's missing. You know, that's how our Lord looks at us, doesn't he? That we count. He counts us.

He knows us. There's that personal, caring relationship, that tender communion, that closeness. He calls them by name. And they know his voice, it says. And what's more, this good shepherd says of him that he is willing, and he did, lay down his life for the sheep.

He's willing to lay down his very life. That's the kind of shepherd we have. Our shepherd, he searches for us, and surely he cares for us. He looks for us, and he looks after us.

And he loves the sheep. David says, I shall not. What? I shall not lack. How can I lack anything? If he is mine, and I am his, I've got everything.

[12:51] There is no want. Because we have his supply. He sustains. He provides security. And he gives strength. It says, in contrast to him, there's a thief out there.

There's the ship stealer, I suppose. There's the thief. He cometh not, but for the steal, to kill, and to destroy. I am come. That they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.

I shall not lack. Yet I have life, and life more abundant. And friends, the sheep is totally dependent upon the shepherd. And the Lord, our shepherd, think how he cares for you.

How he takes care of you. Of the welfare of his flock. He gives green grass, and feed, and shame, and drink. He provides us rest. And for us, he provides forgiveness.

He provides guidance. He provides fellowship, and comfort, and all the necessary things of life, and joy. And his sheep are perfectly content in his care.

[13:57] The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not. What? Think of it. How we're so supplied with everything that we truly need.

Truly need. Psalm 84, verse 11, it says, For the Lord God is a sun and a shield. The Lord will give grace and glory. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.

He's not going to withhold from you what he knows you need. He is my all in all, you can say. Beyond him, I have no need. If I have Christ, I have everything. Truly everything. There's nothing else that you need if you have Christ. The good shepherd. And it says, as we read through Psalm 23, verse 2, it says, He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. Think of the rest that is in Christ. There's a rest in Christ. As the good shepherd, the shepherd pictured here, would bring relief from wounds and diseases and parasites.

[14:59] I know we had to call on Di because one of the sheep was limping. And Di's a bit of a sheep expert. And she told us just what to do. And, you know, the shepherd, our good shepherd sees when we're limping, when we're wounded, when we're hurting.

And he knows just what to do, doesn't he? He knows just what to do. To bring us rest. Now, it could be a parasite. It could be a wound. It could be a disease. He knows just what it is.

And he knows just what to do for you. Thanks to the shepherd, the sheep can lie down, relax.

There's a comfort. There's an assurance. There's a safety.

We're free from fear, from aggravation, from tension. As the sheep, free from hunger, free from the flies. The shepherd knows just what to do to give you that rest that you need.

And it says, he maketh me, it says. He compels me. He forces us to rest. Sometimes we need something forced rest. I know Julie keeps trying to force me to rest, too.

[15:59] There's times when we've got to rest. And it's a good thing for us. We need rest, don't we? We need that holy rest. We need that Sabbath, as it were. That rest. That resting in him, in our Lord.

There's a rest for you. His sheep. And how so? He says, come unto me. That's what he says. Come unto me, all ye that are labor, that are heavy laden.

And he says, I will give you rest. He goes on to say, rest for your souls, isn't it? He gives us rest.

Friends, you've got rest. There's a battle, but you've got rest from that battle.

The soldier needs to rest. The driver needs to rest. If you're too wakeful and you don't have enough rest, it's dangerous, isn't it? We need rest. Rest from the busyness of life, from the stresses of life.

Take time to rest your soul in him. Rest your soul in the Lord. There's a blessed rest in the Lord.

The presence of the Master, it puts us at rest.

[17:01] At ease. Friends, it's the peace that passeth all understanding. We can know that. His perfect care. His security. That contentment. Where does he place us?

It says he puts us in green pastures. Don't you love that? Even in Australia, there's some green pastures for you. Amen. He provides fresh, green, tender grass.

He guides us away from the poisonous weeds. He knows just where we need to be. And he places us there. There's one writer who put it, There has made us for thyself, and our hearts have no rest until they find it in thee.

And some people, they don't have rest. They're searching, searching, they're wandering, hurting, and they don't have the rest.

He provides rest for your souls. There's rest for you. You know, this world, I've heard it said, and I've said it before, it's a bit of a rat race, and it seems like only the rats win.

[18:02] You know, there's that sense where it's just busy, busy, and just no one's got time to actually rest. Find God's rest for your soul. It says, He leadeth me.

He leadeth me. Our Lord, our shepherd, tells us what to do, where to go. If we would just hear his voice, and here it is, that's his voice.

Not some extra-biblical prophet or some, you know, fuzzy-wuzzy feeling and, you know, voices in your head. But this is his voice. This is the voice of God.

Listen to that. And the Bible says that we should hear his voice. It says that in John 10, verse 4. Of a good shepherd, when he puteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, it says.

He leadeth me. He goeth before them, it says. And the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

Know his voice. The ones who know his voice.

[18:58] Know this. His voice. And you'll be able to know what he's telling you to do. And it says, he leadeth me. He doesn't drive us. He leads us. He guides.

He protects. He feeds. He carries. He sustains. And he guides me. And peace comes as we follow him. Follow me, he says. It's a repeated phrase, isn't it?

As he called the disciples. Follow me. So he leadeth me, it says. He leadeth me. And he leadeth me, it says, beside the still waters. The still waters. And this busy, crowded life that we often live in this internet world.

And it's just, everyone's just jam-packed. Their life is so full. He gives rest. And he leads us beside the still waters.

You know, it's easy to get dry and thirsty. And well, that doesn't have that. A sheep is 70% water. They need water. And surely he can satisfy our thirst.

[19:59] And what's the thirst that matters most? Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness. For they shall be filled. That's the kind of thirst and hunger that we ought to consider.

And our Lord, our shepherd, will sustain us and provide us those quiet and restful, peaceful, refreshing waters. Those calm pools of fresh water.

How easy it is to get heads up and frustrated and just overwhelmed. But he can take us to that place. That place of the still waters.

And it says further, it says, he restoreth my soul. He brings a refreshing. My soul he refreshes. He revives my drooping spirit. He gives me new life.

He renews life within me. As elsewhere it reads, he restores the joy of my salvation. You can get that refreshing in Christ.

[20:59] He restoreth my soul. There's a peculiar thing that happens to sheep, which is called having a cast sheep.

Have you had any of those die in your property? A cast sheep. A heavy sheep falls on its back. And it's helpless. Immobilized. Just kicking its feet in the air. The weight of the body, I guess, of the fleece.

Its feet can't touch the ground. And it becomes an easy prey. It's just a sitting duck. A sitting sheep. And the shepherd comes. And it sets it back on its feet.

I saw a little video clip of a shepherd doing just that. Of picking the sheep up, rolling it over. And then putting it back on its feet. And getting it back into action again. And reinvigorating it.

Holding it. Rubbing its limbs. Rubbing those legs. And bringing back the circulation. And it's a picture of restoration, isn't it? That sheep was doomed.

[21:59] It was in desperate danger. It could just die from neglect. Or from predators. But the shepherd comes. And he refreshes that sheep.

He restores that sheep. Brings it back to life again. He restores the weak. And the weary sheep. And friends, don't you get weak and weary sometimes? This life can be a bit weary.

You know, we might feel. Yes, Lord, restore my soul. Restore my soul. Revive me again. The shepherd restores the sheep. Back to strength. And further it says, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.

Again, to think of this thought that he leads. That a sheep. Apparently a sheep has really got very little sense of direction. They can just wander willy-nilly.

And they cannot find their own pasture. And there's a song that goes, Saviour, like a shepherd, lead us. We need to ask him that, don't we?

[22:59] He guides it, says. He guides me, it says, in the paths of righteousness. For his namesake. He shows us the right paths, the straight paths. And again, he does not drive his sheep, like the Aussie shepherd, or the shepherd, as we understand in our culture.

But actually, he walks before them. And he gently leads them. Friends, sheep are not independent travellers. They need a human conductor. And it's the same with you and me, brothers and sisters. We need the shepherd to lead us. A shepherd was asked, Will your sheep ever follow anyone but you? And the shepherd said, Yes. Sometimes a sheep gets sick, and then he'll follow just about anyone.

You know, when we really know the voice of the shepherd, we'll know he's the one to follow. We'll know this is his voice, and we'll follow what he tells us to do.

We must follow the Lord. And I need to keep my eyes on him. We all need that, don't we? And then we'll know the paths that are right, right in his eyes.

[24:05] That will honour his name. Paths of blessing, paths of peace, paths of prayer. For his namesake. For the sake of his name.

It's interesting, someone has reflected the seven compound names of our Lord that you could reflect on in this psalm. And they've pictured it here. They're listed here.

Seven names. As you could call it in the Hebrew, as far as I know how to pronounce it, Jehovah Rara is Jehovah our shepherd.

The Lord my shepherd. Jehovah Jireh. That's a familiar word, isn't it? The Lord our provider. We shall not want, it says. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

Now think what he's provided for you. He's provided salvation. The most awesome, precious gift. He's lavished it upon you. He's provided his word. You can actually hear the word of the one who's created you.

[25:05] Your maker and Lord and the lover of your soul. He's giving you his message. We shall not want. He's provided heaven. If you all receive his salvation.

He's Jehovah Jireh. He's Jehovah Shalom. The Lord our peace. Those still waters that he takes us to, there's peace for you. There's peace in your soul. There's peace in your heart.

There's peace with God. Those still waters. It talks about having made peace through the blood of his cross. Jehovah Shalom.

Jehovah Rapha. The Lord our healer. He restoreth my soul. We're like that sheep, that cast sheep, with our feet kicking in the air. And he restores us. He saves us.

He restores us. He revives us. He's the Lord our righteousness. He leads us in paths of righteousness, for his name's sake. And our righteousnesses are nothing.

[26:02] They're dirty compared to his righteousness. And so Isaiah says, we're all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. We need his righteousness.

We need the Lord our righteousness. Another one is the Lord is there. Jehovah Shammah. Thou art with me. Thou art with me.

His presence is with you. He is the Lord there with you. The Lord here. He says, He will never leave us, nor forsake us. His presence is there.

And his Jehovah Nissi, the Lord our banner, as we'll talk later, in the presence of mine enemies.

We've got this rejoicing, even in the presence of the enemy, that we have this one, we can exalt and praise, and lift up his name, even in the presence of our enemies.

He can lift up his truth, lift up his victory, lift up his love. It's like this banner over us, his love, isn't it? So it's much you could think on these thoughts. It says, Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

[27:09] Think of that one, verse 4. We're going to walk through some things. Thankfully through them. We're not going to stay there. You know, if you don't pitch a tent in the valley, you keep on going through it.

It says, There's a temporal passing through towards the glories of the beyond. We're going to see some loved ones part from us. There's a valley, there's a shadow of death. There's times of that grieving, of loss.

But even in, even in, yea, yes, even in, even there, in the very valley of the shadow of death, even in that darkest valley, that we all will face, that times through life, those deep gorges that we face through life, those times of disappointment, of distress, of sickness, the darkest times, the darkest hours, through life, we're going to travel them.

You're going to have those journeys. But it says, we're going to go through, through the valley, through, through to the other side. Now those valleys, they were deep, gloomy, waterless, sunless. They were hiding places of wild beasts and dangerous men. You picture those wild, beast infested, rocking, dangerous, death lurking ravines of Palestine.

[28:26] You know this, imagine, I know, like in Catherine, there's some, like these gorges where it's just sheer cliff faces and you're going through these narrow cracks and crevices in the rock, these ravines.

And, and the picture here is of this valley, this shadowy valley. And David tells of death here, as it were, as a shadow. Now think of it, brother, sister today, that a shadow cannot hurt you, can it?

You don't have to be worried about shadows. You don't have to be afraid of shadows. Yeah, it can bring fear and terror. And especially little ones can get scared about shadows and worried that something's going to frighten them.

But friends, death is just a passing shadow. not an end, but a door into a more perfect life. Now God is with us in those valleys and we know beyond his glory there'll be a brighter day.

Even in death's dark valley we can know a comfort. The valley of death is just a going on to a higher ground. We're going to go through. Amen? Believer, you're going to go through.

[29:32] Because of the cross of Christ, death is swallowed up, it says. Death and all its fears are going to be swallowed up in victory. Because Christ has won the victory. He's conquered death, hell, Satan, sin, and he's purchased life for you.

So the psalmist David says, I will fear no evil. Now some people like to put no fear as a kind of bumper sticker. Well, this is more than a bumper sticker.

This is, we can know no fear. No fear. I'll fear no evil. Why? Because our shepherd protects us. And he says, David says, I will fear no evil, no hurt, no harm, no danger.

Why? My shepherd's with me. He's my guard. He's my defender. He safeguards his sheep. And friends, he's watching. He's a watchman. He's always attentive and vigilant.

And he protects. He wards off a tank. The shepherd protects the sheep from the wolves, the wild animals. We can rely on him. He's going to look after us. And sheep are in constant need of care.

[30:38] And supervision. Helpless. Really. As we are, really, in our own human strength and wisdom, we need the shepherd. We need him. And the wolves of the sheepfold that the shepherd made from stones and thorn bushes had a doorway.

And as I said, the shepherd himself is the door. He's actually the door that opens and closes in that entranceway. Our Lord himself is the door.

And surely, we can know safety. Think of it. If he's the door, you can rest. You can rest in that fold, in that care of him who watches over you.

Surely, we can know safety. Safety. Because the shepherd is our shelter. what time I am afraid I will trust in them.

By faith, we can say that, can't we? I'm going to trust in him. I'm going to trust in his 24-hour surveillance and know the constant presence and guidance of this shepherd who so loved me that he gave himself for me.

[31:45] He laid down his life for me, one of his sheep. And he's our source of strength today and confidence. He tells us of him that he shall feed his flock like a shepherd.

He's going to feed us like a flock under the shepherd. He's going to gather the lambs, it says, with his arm and guard them with his bosom. I've seen fathers with children, mothers with children, cradling them.

That's what a shepherd does with the lamb. He looks after us like such a one. He's going to carry them in his bosom and he shall gently lead those that are with young. I reflect back, Julie and I with our little flock, that we had opportunity to have a lamb, several lambs born.

And there was one time there was twin lambs born. And what happens is sometimes the ewe, the mother lamb, rejects the, sorry, the mother sheep, the ewe, rejects one of the twins.

And this is what happened. And Julie and I noticed this little lamb wasn't getting fed. And so we had to somehow corral her and make it such that the mother, the ewe, could nurse the lamb else it could have died.

[33:10] And so we had to take some necessary measures to harness the ewe so that the lamb that was rejected could still have a feed and be nursed and survive.

And you know, it's like the picture of the shepherd, our good shepherd, that he gathers the lambs. He cares about the lambs, the little ones. And we need to care about the lambs, don't we? I know Julie likes to not call children kids.

They're little lambs, they're not goats, they're lambs. God helping us, they're not kids, they're lambs. And that's how God looks at little children, doesn't he? They're lambs.

We need to have the heart of the shepherd for the little ones in our midst too. And so it goes on to say that thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Think of that. Now the rod apparently was some three foot long, it was for defence, to protect, to use as a club against the enemies.

You know, those foxes, wolves, whatever, those wild beasts that would come and take the lamb. The rod, it speaks of God's authority, of his power, of his strength, and protection.

[34:17] You can see the rod as perhaps reflecting to us the word of God as God's authority and power, his protection, his words. It puts us right when we're wrong.

It shows us the right from the wrong. It's the rod. And likewise, we could think of the staff as well. The staff was six or seven foot long in a crook type, like a crook type stick with a curved top. And this was a symbol of the shepherd's constant care. And this staff would work as the sheep needed protection. And also, as the sheep have no sense of direction, the shepherd would use the crook like a hook and the staff around its legs and pull it, gently ease it out when it might be trapped somewhere or guide the straying sheep.

And it says, they comfort me. Friends, the rod and staff. It's the word of God, isn't it? We could think how God's rod is the authority of the word, his staff, the comfort and care of our God.

It's like a rod and staff. Of course, we might reflect other things that they could intend. But it says, thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me. Friends, we've got encouragement.

[35:31] There's comfort. There's encouragement. Surely, brother, sister, you've got great encouragement. The Bible says this is given for our comfort or our encouragement. So we have that, the tender care of our shepherd.

We read on that it tells of the table prepared before us. He has set a banquet for me. He thieves his sheep. And as I was reflecting even tonight, when I just fed the sheep just before I came here and the ones who got the most were the ones near the shepherd's hand.

And friends, it's the same, isn't it? For you and me. But close to the shepherd we'll be able to feed. And those who walk nearest to the shepherd will get fed the best. The leaves, the fruit, the herbs that the shepherd might pick and break off and give them by hand.

It's the sheep that are closest to the shepherd that'll get fed the best. Because sheep can't feed or water themselves. They must be led to water, to green pasture.

Friends, he feeds our souls. We must get close to the shepherd that he can nourish and sustain our spiritual life. Friends, he can satisfy the cravings of every human heart.

[36:41] And he clears away the poisonous weeds. He's going to prepare a table before you that is going to be fully furnished. He's not going to put things on your table that are going to be poisonous for you.

So if you hear his voice and you sit at his table, you're going to know that he'll feed you right. It says that he's going to prepare a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.

Interesting that all this happens right under the eyes of the enemies, my enemies. The shepherd defends the sheep in the Arab attack. Friends, sheep are relatively defenseless.

They have no weapons to kick, to attack or defend. They can scarcely bite, scratch or kick. Well, that's what I read. Maybe they do sometimes, but generally they don't.

Is that right, Di? They're pretty mild, calm, mild-mannered. They can't run, sorry, they can run, but not so fast as their enemies. And think, sheep have got lots of enemies.

[37:40] They could be in danger from just getting lost, danger from lions and bears, from hyenas and jackals, huge birds of prey, robbers, bandits.

The Bible tells how we, as God's sheep, we face grievous wolves. You know, these slobbering, mangy wolves that are pictures of false pictures. And the Bible calls them like wolves in sheep's clothing.

They kind of blend in. They look relatively harmless, like they're all, you know, they look fine to the eye, but the Bible says they're wolves undercover.

So we've got to watch out. If you just don't follow any shepherd, make sure that scripturally you're following the right teaching. And sheep are always under threat.

It's said that vipers can bite sheep's noses. They have these holes, the snake holes, and the shepherd comes and puts oil around the hole, the snake's hole, so the snake can't get out and the sheep dislike the smell.

[38:42] So the shepherd keeps us safe. The shepherd makes every endeavor to keep us safe from our enemies, even though they might be really at hand.

It reads further, thou anointest my head with oil. The sheep is anointed by the shepherd with oil. Now the oil stops the flies getting up the nose, heals the scabs, it brings up contentment, and we can be peaceful because of our shepherd.

It says he anoints us, he anoints my head with oil. We can think of that as the healing oil that he gives to us, that relief from bruises and diseases and parasites.

You know, it's just what to, how to minister to us. And oil was also used to prevent sunstroke as protection.

So it also brings refreshing. He bathes the face and the head of the exhausted sheep. Now imagine, now as I was feeding the sheep tonight, you know, when you've got food in your hand you can pat them on the head.

[39:45] They don't, because they're too busy eating. And it's kind of nice, isn't it, to think that our shepherd touches us, he reaches out to us, he soothes us, he anoints our head with oil.

What a picture it is that how our Lord truly loves us in such a wonderful way. And so too the Holy Spirit, he gives us the oil of gladness for the spirit of heaviness.

He sets at liberty them that are bruised. And we might feel like we're a bit of a bruised sheep sometimes, a bit hurting. But he knows how to heal. We've got the shepherd's healing.

He's a doctor and he's a nurse, the shepherd. He's the great physician, this one. He's the healer of the diseases of the flock. And he has the multitudes who are distressed and scattered.

As it says in Matthew 9.36, he looked out and he saw these people, they were like sheep without a shepherd. He saw them worried, tired out, you know, exhausted and he reached out.

[40:42] Friends, that's the heart of our shepherd. The Lord, our shepherd, he takes care of the troubled, those with wounded hearts. And when they fall, those sheep, when they hurt themselves, they cut themselves, when their feet get sore, he cares for us.

And it says, my cup runneth over. You know, friends, think of the abundance of God's supply, God's love for you. It's so overflowing. It's like an overflowing cup, isn't it?

The love of God is just an overflow. That abundance of life, that abundance, you can know. And we're not into the TV preachers who say, you can have abundance of money in your bank account, but there's an abundance from him.

An abundance of what really matters, isn't it? An abundance of joy. An abundance of his love. And it says, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Think of that, goodness and mercy. Don't you want some of that? That's good stuff, isn't it?

Goodness and mercy. In this world where everything stinks, there's goodness and mercy. There still is goodness and mercy that we can find.

[41:51] His unfailing love. And it says, it's going to be with me all the days of my life. It's going to pursue me, this goodness and this mercy. Every day of my life, I'm going to know his goodness and his mercy.

Every day, every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. And the psalmist, David, he says, I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. There's an assurance there.

I will. There's an assurance. I'm going to state what it says. I'm going to believe God. I'm going to confess his word. I'm going to say, I will. Because his promises give me that assurance that I can say, I will.

There's no doubt about it. Not I hope or I may be. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. You can say with an assurance and we like to, as we reach out in our witnessing efforts, as those team of folk that go witnessing, when someone says, oh, you know, I think I'm going to heaven or I hope I'm going to heaven.

We try to show them how the Bible shows us how actually you can know, you can actually know that you're going to heaven, that you have everlasting life.

[43:05] that there's an assurance of faith that you can have that assurance. And it says, I'm going to dwell. I'm going to settle there. That's my home. I'm going to dwell there.

I'm going to make that my permanent dwelling. I'm going to have that eternal home there. And friends, here we have no continuing city. You know, really, this is temporary, all of it. There's a continuing city up there. That's forever. That's the real one. And the Lord, the house of the Lord, shall be my dwelling place forever. Forever.

Friends, surely he says, my sheep, hear my voice. And I know them and they follow me. We can know his provision, his peace, his protection, his presence.

It's all there in Psalm 23. The shepherd called and the sheep comes running to him. He makes a sheepfold, an enclosure and he himself at the door to keep the jackals and the wolves and the leopards and the panthers and the thieves out.

[44:24] They can't get it with sheep. If you're inside the fold, then he closes you in. He watches you and he stands at the gate so the sheep can't get past.

He calls his sheep by name as they come in, as they go out. He knows where everyone is. He knows where you're at and the sheep hear his voice and he calleth his own sheep by name. He calls you name.

Your name. Your name. Your name. He calls you by name. Think of that. That the creator of the universe calls you by name. He knows your name.

Isn't that something? He calls his own sheep by name and as each sheep came, he would know the ones that were hurting, the ones that were thirsty and he would turn himself sideways to let them in as he himself became that door as we read in John 10 verse 9.

He says, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture. One by one, they would go in. They should pass the shepherd.

[45:27] 96, 97, 98, 99. But there should be 100 and the shepherd valley is that one sheep. Think of that. There's still one.

There's still one outside the fold and one unsafe person is important to God, isn't it? One person. He leaves the 99. He leaves them.

They're safe. You go searching for that one. That's not safe. He goes out. Think of the shepherd, the picture of the shepherd here. As he goes out into the mountains, the wind, the rain lashing, his flesh, the branches tearing at him, wild animals snarling nearby.

Maybe it was dark and as he stumbled on all the while he was calling, calling to his sheep. It does not matter how dark and stormy the night, how dangerous and uncertain the way the shepherd goes searching, how uncomfortable it might be, how tiring, how costly.

He knows the sheep by name. He knows you. He knows me. He knows, he wants you to be with him.

[46:32] And it's kind of a picture, isn't it? We could think whether, I guess if it's his sheep, they're already saved, they might be backsliding. I don't know, you could put all kind of pictures in your head about what this might represent.

But in a way, you think about the shepherd, that he's just got a heart to reach the ones that are not with him.

And we could think maybe it reflects on reaching the lost. But the point is the shepherd goes out. Even though it was a difficult thing to go out, leave the comfort and to go into the dark and dangerous place because he could see the lost lamb was out there struggling, helpless, maybe at the mercy of vultures or whatever it be.

One lone sheep would be an easy prey. And that's why sheep like to stick together. You see the flock tends to stick together. That's why it's good for you to fellowship, stick together, the strength in fellowship.

If you're a one lone sheep, you're an easy prey. How long does the search go on? In this search for the sheep, it talks about how, until he find it, until he find it.

[47:43] And this shepherd keeps on searching until he find it. And so, friends, we can be helpless without the shepherd. A sheep can be defenseless, easy prey.

There's darkness, there's howling walls, this world's full of dangers. There's many that are, as it were, as a sheep, astray.

You know, all we like sheep have gone astray, as we talked about. Many souls are lost. The shepherd knows the sheep, he knows everyone by name.

He goes interested in every sheep, everyone. He goes out after that lost one until he find it, until he find it. And then it says he lays it on his shoulder coming home, rejoicing.

What a picture, that he would lay us on his shoulder. Friends, he's got big shoulders. He's got shoulders big enough to carry every one of us. He takes us up on his shoulders. Think of that.

[48:42] What a picture of his love, that he would hold us in that safekeeping. And then he says, rejoice with me, for I found my sheep, which was lost. Notice it says, my sheep.

He hears that faintest cry. If you're his sheep, he hears you. He hears you. Don't think you can get so far, far away that he cannot hear you. He says, my sheep.

And he'll climb the very cliffs and go to the furthest place and he keeps on searching until he finds it. So friends, if he's got your number, he's going to track you down.

You know, you might think, well, I'm far, far away from God. Well, actually, in the sense of if you are his sheep or you will become his sheep, he'll keep on searching for you.

You can't get out of his reach. He's going, I know, we know we trust the Lord but in a way, he's the one searching too. It's twofold, isn't it? And God is searching for you if you're lost.

[49:43] God is searching for you and he will find you. He'll find you. He'll track you down and you've just got to let him get a hold of you and just fall into his arms.

Let him put you on his shoulder and lay your burden down on him. Friends, he's the good shepherd. It says, the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Now, one preacher said, when I look at my congregation, my honest evaluation is we spend most of our energy on the ninety and nine. Most of our phone calls are to the ninety and nine. Most of our visits to the ninety and nine. Most of our prayers are for the ninety and nine. This should be re-evaluated. If men and women and young people are really lost, then searching for the lost must be a priority.

It needs to be a priority with us because it's a priority with God. I think we can be quite, not to negate, we should be the ninety-nine, but think of those that are lost.

Think of those outside of Christ. There's a dangerous rescue operation and our shepherd wants us to mount it. We need to be like him, the great shepherd, the good shepherd, to be in that search and rescue operation and think, he persists in that.

[50:57] He searches until he finds the one. And so, tonight, think of it, if you can, who he is. Psalm 23, just beautiful pictures there.

John 10, he's the good shepherd. Jesus is that one. He's the Lord. You know, in a way, it says it all, doesn't it? Like, for those who would say or denigrate or, you know, devalue Christ as if he is not God.

He is the Lord. L-O-R-D. Yahweh. Jehovah. Our shepherd. And say that to, you know, the Jehovah's Witnesses who would downgrade Christ. He is the good shepherd.

He is the shepherd. One shepherd. He is the shepherd. And the shepherd, the good shepherd, it says, he giveth his life for the sheep. But friends, here tonight, can you say, he is my shepherd?

Can he say, you are my sheep? Pray that you will know him tonight. Let's pray. Our Lord God, we thank you that your words gives us such a beautiful picture of who you are and what you do that we can know you as each one can say, as my shepherd, I pray tonight.

[52:13] And Lord, it's not because of really anything we can do but everything you have done, that you laid down your life for the sheep. And Lord, we praise you for that, that wonderful gift of your salvation.

We pray each one might have that comfort and that knowledge and that they can truthfully say, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

Pray for anyone here tonight that's yet to take that step that even, even now, even today, even before they leave this place, they'll settle it with you, Lord, and say, Lord, I want you to be my shepherd.

I need you. I'm like that sheep that's gone astray. I'm like the one that's gone missing, the one as all we like sheep have gone astray.

Lord, I know that. That's me. And I want you to be my shepherd. And Lord, we pray that you touch each one. Help us to have a heart like you to reach out to those ones that are outside the fold,

those that know you're not, those that are lost or straying, Lord, that we might be having your heart to reach out to them and that we'll keep on searching until we find that one, just as you kept on searching until you found us.

[53:33] And now we can know your great care. We thank you for these things. and change this life. Amen.