

# Our Shepherd Before Us

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 07 September 2025

Preacher: Mike Salvati

[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. You may be seated. Children, you're dismissed to your King's Kids class.! And if you would open up your Bibles while I tie my left shoe.

! I don't want to trip while I'm preaching. Psalm 23 is on page 541 of your pew Bible.

Psalm 23. I'm going to read it. May God bless the hearing of His Word.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for His namesake.

[ 1 : 06 ] Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. May God bless the hearing of His Word. Psalm 23 is likely the most familiar and beloved passage of the entire Bible.

These six verses are very familiar to many. And we got to ask the question, why is that? Well, a quick answer to why Psalm 23 is so special to so many is it's so personal, so comforting.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me. You know, your rod, your staff, they comfort me.

[ 2 : 34 ] You know, we all know what it's like to be in dark places. We all know what it's like to long for a leader, to be present with us, to guide us through dark times.

But Psalm 23 is far more than comforting. Psalm 23 begins with a confession, with a declaration. It's a declaration where David, who wrote it, says, The Lord is my shepherd.

There's no ifs to that. There's no maybes in that. He's not, I hope the Lord is my shepherd. It's declarative. It's a confident claim.

It's an assertion of fact. Do you know what David is claiming? The God of the universe is for him. The God of the universe is his leader.

And it's as though David is saying, The Lord Yahweh is my shepherd. Lead on. Lead on. Over the next three Sundays, we'll be lingering in Psalm 23.

[ 3 : 56 ] I got a little cracker still in my throat. This morning, we're going to look at our shepherd goes before us in verses 1 and 2.

So we get to say, I lack nothing. Next Sunday, we'll see our shepherd is with us in verses 3 and 4. So we can say, I shall fear not.

And then the following Sunday, we'll see how our shepherd comes after us in 5 and 6. And how we are promised to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Lead on. Lead on, good shepherd. Lead on the great shepherd of the sheep. Lead on the chief shepherd. Lord, we fear not.

We lack not. We will dwell with him for other brothers and sisters. The God of the universe is for us in the person of Jesus Christ. He's our leader.

[ 4 : 55 ] He's our shepherd. And so we follow him. And so this morning, I want to help you see how he goes before us. And so as we look through chapter 23, verses 1 and 2, I want to make this case.

With God as our shepherd, we lack nothing. With God as our shepherd, we lack nothing. And that should put confidence in you.

So three points. Our shepherd's name. Our shepherd's care. And our claim on this shepherd.

So let's look at our shepherd's name. Chapter 23. The first five words. The Lord is my shepherd.

What we have here is a bit of a job title. Shepherd. And a name. Lord. Throughout the Psalms, God is described as a king enthroned in heaven.

[ 5 : 59 ] Psalm 2. He's described as the judge of the whole earth. Psalm 96. And in Psalm 18, we have this series of descriptions.

My rock. My fortress. My deliverer. My shield. The horn of my salvation. My stronghold. And here in Psalm 23, David confesses God as his shepherd.

Now, David himself was a shepherd. 1 Samuel 16. He's a shepherd of the sheep. But he was also a shepherd of people. A shepherd king. Psalm 78, 74.

Shepherds of the ancient Near East would go out before their flocks by day, leading them out to grassy pasture in fresh water. And they would leave them out with their voice or with a little pipe. And the shepherd would recognize the voice. The sheep would recognize the voice of their shepherd and would follow. Shepherds would provide for their sheep.

[ 7 : 03 ] Shepherds would protect their sheep from danger. Shepherds tracked down lost sheep of theirs. Shepherds brought sick and injured sheep back to health.

To shepherd sheep is to lead sheep. And to shepherd people is to lead people. God is our shepherd leader.

The shepherd leader of his people. Shepherds know their sheep. And sheep know their shepherds. Now, sheep are not the most intimidating creatures of the animal kingdom.

Sheep do not have claws. They do not have fangs. Sharp teeth. They're not bloodthirsty. They're rather vulnerable and defenseless.

Has anybody felt vulnerable and defenseless? Felt exposed? Yes. Sheep aren't the brightest of the animal kingdom.

[ 8 : 11 ] They're easily disoriented. They're more on the dull side of things. And aren't we too? Doesn't take much to disorient us.

Doesn't take much to realize we have knowledge of only a limited amount of things. Sheep are nervous. They're nervous. They're nervous. Sheep are nervous. They're jumpy.

They're skittish. They're anxious. We all know what it is like to be anxious.

If God is the shepherd, then we are the sheep. And we need a shepherd to lead us.

Do you know in John 10, how Jesus refers to himself? I am the good shepherd who lays his life down for the sheep.

[ 9 : 11 ] Jesus isn't speaking about animals. He's speaking about people. A whole new flock with one shepherd that would become his through the blood he sheds for them.

A blood and a body which we celebrate at communion. A new covenant. And that's why this shepherd's name is so important.

The Lord is my shepherd. We've looked at the title, shepherd. Now let's look at the name, Lord.

Now you may be thinking, huh, Lord, that sounds like another job title, not a name.

But did you notice in 23.1 that the word Lord is all in caps, every letter? L-O-R-D.

Now that is because that English translation of the Hebrew word under it is signaling something. It's signaling that the name is the personal name of God.

[ 10 : 17 ] Yahweh. Or Jehovah. And it comes from something that happened in Exodus chapter 3. In Exodus 3, Moses is shepherding his father-in-law's flock, Jethro's flock.

And he's on Mount Horeb, also known as Mount Sinai. And lo and behold, God speaks to Moses from a burning bush. And what was striking about this whole situation is that this bush was burning, but the bush was not being consumed.

The flames, the burning was self-perpetuating without consuming the bush. It was a sight to behold. And out of that burning bush, God speaks to Moses and he commissions Moses to go to Egypt and lead his people out of bondage.

And so Moses says, okay, I'll do that. What if I go and the people ask who sent me? By what name do I tell them is sending me? And then God says to him, tell them I am who I am is sending you.

Tell them I am is sending you to them. It's almost like God is saying, tell them the I is is sending you.

[ 11 : 36 ] And what that name that's translated Yahweh, because it means I am, it's a Hebrew verb.

It's getting at something about God's nature. His self-existence. His self-sufficiency that he is uncreated.

The I am. He is the creator of all, the sustainer of all, the savior of all, the judge of all, all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present, all-wise.

This is the great I am. And if you're hearing it right, this is what David is saying. In these first five words. The great I am is my shepherd.

No ifs, maybes, or hopesos about it. It's confessional.

[12:39] It's declarative. What's interesting about Psalm 23 is that Psalm 23 1 starts with the Lord Yahweh. And if you look down to verse 6, And I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh forever.

It bookends the psalm. Now, when you know that your shepherd is the God of the universe, it puts confidence in your heart.

In John 8, Jesus is interacting with some Jews. If you want to turn there, it's on page 1064 of your Pew Bible. He's interacting with a group of Jews.

And Jesus starts talking about Abraham in the most interesting of ways. He says in verse 56, Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.

Now, what's interesting about that is he's not talking about Abraham as a historical figure. He's talking about Abraham as if he knew Abraham. So the Jews said to him, You're not yet 50 years old.

[13:46] And have you seen Abraham? He lived hundreds of years ago. Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, Before Abraham was, I am.

The Greek is ego ami. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible translates the I am of Exodus 3.14 as ego ami.

What Jesus is claiming here is to be Yahweh incarnate. This good shepherd of John 10, here in John 8, is claiming to be Yahweh incarnate.

This is striking. So when we read, The Lord is my shepherd.

David is saying, The great I am is my shepherd. We get to say, Yahweh incarnate is my shepherd. We confess him.

[14:56] The great incarnate I am is my shepherd. That's his name. Jesus. And now we move from our shepherd's name to our shepherd's care.

At the second half of verse 1 into verse 2, we read, I shall not want. Yahweh is my shepherd.

The great I am is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. To English speaking Americans living in the 21st century.

It would be very tempting to interpret, I shall not want as, He gives me everything I desire. He gives me all the health that I want.

We know that's not true. He gives me all the wealth that I want. We know that's not true. David's not saying that. What David is saying is that, The great I am is my shepherd.

[16:00] I lack nothing. It's the old way of thinking about the word want. I lack nothing. And the reason why David lacks nothing is because his God is his everything.

The great I am is his shepherd. And he knows that he will provide everything that he needs. In Psalm 16, David speaks of his God as my portion.

My everything. Because the great I am is David's shepherd, he knows that all of his needs will be met.

And so what you have in the rest of Psalm 23, if you think of the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want, as kind of the governing sentence of this whole Psalm, the rest of the Psalm kind of lays out how we need not worry.

He goes before us. He is with us. He comes after us. Green Pastures.

[17:16] Name that movie. The Hills Are Alive. Yes. Do you remember the opening scene? Some kind of flying vehicle kind of zooms in on Julie Andrews.

She's twirling in a pasture, a mountain pasture of the Austrian Alps, surrounded by lush forest.

It is just vibrant. The hills are alive. Or maybe you've driven up north and you've driven through the pasture lands of Wisconsin.

And you've seen these fenced stretches of rich green grass where animals roam in gray. You just need to let them out of the barn.

Because it's fenced. You don't need a shepherd. These are not the green pastures of David's time.

[18:26] In David's day, he lived in a dry, arid, rocky, hilly place with dangerous ravines. Green pastures were spread out among this dry and rocky countryside.

And it was somewhat dependent too upon the season that you were living in. A shepherd knew where to find green pasture so that his sheep could eat, survive and live, to thrive.

The grass in these green pastures provided the nutrients for the sheep to live. But God doesn't lead sheep.

He leads people. God doesn't feed us with grass. He feeds us with the spiritual nutrients that come from this book.

This is the green pasture. Our good shepherd leads us here for our souls to feast, to find strength.

[ 19 : 45 ] We find rich pasture in God's word. Still water. Did you notice that the phrase is, he leads me besides, not just water, still water.

Remember, we sheep are nervous, jumpy, and anxious. And so, it turns out that sheep are reluctant to drink from running water, apparently because it moves.

And so back in the day, these shepherds would dig out little troughs next to streams. And what would happen is, the running water would trickle into this trough and it would fill up into a serene pool of water that was very inviting to sheep.

Still waters. Just as sheep need water to live, we need spiritual refreshment, and God leads us to the still, deep, gentle waters of this book for refreshment.

We need the food and the drink that our good shepherd provides and he provides us again and again and again. He leads us to the book so that we find strength, that we thrive, we eat our fill and drink deep on a daily basis.

[ 21 : 23 ] This book, the Apostle Paul describes it as every word, all Scripture is breathed out by God. Every word originates in God's mind.

And when you consume it, it gives life. Remember what Jesus said when he was tempted in Matthew 4, for man cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Hey sheep, you want to thrive? You want to live in this dry and rocky place called life? Your good shepherd brings you to this grain pasture and this still water of Scriptures.

It's to give you nutrients and refreshment to live. I mean, September is the season of start-ups.

School starting up, extracurricular starting up, work seems to take up notches.

I mean, just our life together as a church ramps up. One could start neglecting the green pastures and the still waters because it's so busy.

[ 22 : 42 ] I would say it's all the more reason to eat your fill and drink deep from God's word on a daily basis. Man cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

and Jesus himself, our good shepherd wants you to eat your fill and drink deep. There's this expression, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make a drink.

Your shepherd can lead you to the green pastures and still waters of this divine book but he can't force you to eat and drink.

What are the obstacles that get in the way of you consuming daily from this good book?

Have you ever wondered why God would want you to daily consume his words? Do you have a daily time, a daily place, a daily plan to consume the richness and fullness of God's word?

[ 23 : 52 ] If you don't, I got a plan for you. You ready? Just carve out five to ten minutes a day to start and just start reading Psalm 23.

That's all. Just start reading Psalm 23 and then if you think of it, start confessing verse one by way of prayer.

The Lord, Lord Jesus, you are my shepherd. I lack nothing. There's this other piece of verse two that's very interesting.

You see in it, in verses two and three, he makes me lie down, he leads me, he restores my soul, he leads me in paths of righteousness. This is God leading us.

This is our good shepherd leading us. But what's interesting about verse two, that he makes me lie down in green pastures, this one commentator said, it's more like he settles me down.

[ 24 : 53 ] He doesn't force us down. He doesn't force us to lie down. He settles us down. He knows the sheep are jumping. And the way that he settles us down is by saying, hey, eat your fill, drink, drink deep.

And when we eat our fill of scripture and we drink deep from scripture, we are renewed, we remember that our God is our shepherd, we remember that all things are in his hands, we remember that he goes before us, he's with us, he comes after us, and that we can settle.

He settles us down. He calms our anxious hearts. It's a picture of peace, safety, security, of rest.

Remember what Jesus said, come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. With God as our shepherd, we lack nothing.

We lack nothing. It's his care for us. This book gives us everything that we need for life and godliness.

[ 26 : 11 ] Isn't he good? good? We've looked at his name, we've looked at his care, now let's look at our claim on him.

Back in verse 23, 1, we read, the Lord is my shepherd. I'm not sure if there's a little question in the back of your mind, but maybe it goes something like this.

how can David say that, like that? How can he be so confident that the great I am is his shepherd, no ifs, maybes, or hopesos?

How can David, with such seeming confidence, say, I lack nothing? How can David say that he knows that God is with him, so he will not fear in these deep, dark ravines?

How does he know that? How does he know that he will dwell in the house of the Lord forever?

How does he know that God's goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of his life?

[ 27 : 19 ] How does he know that? Because I want to know that. Don't you want to know that? Don't you want to go day in and day out knowing that your God goes before you and with you and comes after you?

How do you do that? Is that something I need to work myself up for every day? I want that kind of confidence. Charles Spurgeon, the prince of preachers, who called Psalm 23 the pearl of the Psalms, he wrote this, the sweetest word of the whole of Psalm 23, the sweetest word of the whole is the monosyllable my.

The Lord is my shepherd. That my is a covenantal my.

That my is a my of promise. David can say of God my shepherd because of God's promises to David.

It's a covenantal confidence. It's a confidence based on who God is and what God promises. David was living under the old covenant when he wrote Psalm 23.

[ 28 : 53 ] It was established by Moses on Mount Sinai. It's where God said I will be your God and you will be my people.

God committed himself to Israel's welfare so long as they were faithful to him and out of that divine promise to Israel David is able to call Yahweh my shepherd.

And if David wrote Psalm 23 after becoming king that would also mean that he had this confidence to say my shepherd based on a covenant God had made with him in particular.

In 2 Samuel 7 God promises to David to set one of his descendants upon his throne forever. So it's on the basis of these promises these covenants God makes to David that he can confidently claim the Lord is my shepherd.

He's not confident in himself. He's confident in his God. In his God's promise to him. And of course we know that the descendant of David who now sits upon his throne over a forever kingdom is none other than Jesus Christ.

[ 30 : 17 ] David's greater son who's established a better covenant. Thank you Hebrews. A better covenant through his blood. Each of us on this basis this blood covenant established at the last supper we can say each of us with confidence the Lord Jesus is my shepherd.

The great I am incarnate Yahweh in the flesh is my shepherd because of his covenant to me. You see when our good shepherd laid down his life for us his sheep he bound himself to us.

He is our God and we are his people the sheep of his pasture and his church is the new covenant flock and he is he's the good shepherd.

The new covenant established by the laying down of the life of the good shepherd is the basis by which we can claim him as our shepherd. There's no ifs about that.

There's no maybes about that. There's no hopes about that. This my with which we say my shepherd is a blood sealed my.

[ 31 : 45 ] You belong to him and he is your shepherd your leader to be fully trusted. He laid down his life so that you could call him my shepherd.

That's our claim on him. It's a blood bought claim. And in the words of Romans 8.32 He who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all.

How will he not also with him graciously give us all things? With God as our shepherd we we lack nothing.

would you finish this sentence for me? Here's how you're going to finish it. Two words my shepherd the Lord Jesus Yahweh incarnate is my shepherd.

The Lord Jesus Yahweh incarnate is my shepherd. You wake up tomorrow morning what what did you think about this morning when you woke up?

[ 33 : 00 ] Feet hit the floor? Who are you looking to to lead you today? My guess is you're looking to you. How about tomorrow you bounce out of bed because I know it's you're bright and happy on a Monday morning.

You spring out of bed with a smile on your face like Julie Andrews. the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want he is our good shepherd.

This shepherd's name is Yahweh and we call out to him as Yahweh incarnate Jesus. He's your confidence. He is the great I am.

The creator of all the sustainer of all the savior of all the judge of all that's our shepherd. He goes with you he goes before you to supply everything you need and the shepherd's care is that we lack nothing I lack nothing.

He leads us to green pastures and still waters of this book. We feast on his word we eat our fill we drink deep from this on a daily basis and that's how he settles us down.

[ 34 : 21 ] How we trust in him. And our claim on the shepherd is that sweet monosyllable word my.

A blood bought my. A covenant my. A God promised my. You claim him because he has first claimed you. With God as our shepherd we lack nothing.

So we say to him lead on. Oh we're in a busy season? Lead on. We lack nothing. The great I am is our shepherd.

It's this shepherd that goes before us. And so how about this tomorrow morning when you wake up. Feet hit the ground. you say this.

The Lord Jesus is my shepherd and today I lack nothing. Let's pray together. Lord Jesus thank you for all that you have done in order to claim us as our own so that we can claim you as our own.

[ 35 : 36 ] We trust you. You are good. You are holy. You care for your own. Would you Lord Jesus would you Lord Jesus draw near to us?

Would you be our confidence for the balance of this day? Lead on. And if you give us tomorrow if you give us breath we will say to you Lord Jesus you are our shepherd.

Today we lack nothing. Lead on. In your name we pray. Amen. Amen.