

The Lord Our Shepherd

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- [0 : 00] Well, good morning, everyone. Immediately after our press session this morning, I was sitting and chatting with Shambi.
- ! Shambi always asks very probing questions as many of you would be aware.
- ! He asked me, he said, well, how long is your message going to be today? I'm not certain whether he asked because he has something after service, but I was actually happy that he asked the question because it gave me an opportunity to think about it.
- And I said to him, well, you know, it won't be longer than usual. And I assure you that the message today will not be longer than usual.
- And I say that really because of the way the message today is structured, right? So you might get the impression as we go through the introduction that we're going to be here all day.
- [1 : 19] But trust me, we won't be. Or perhaps there might be a section that we spend more time on than another. But we will certainly be mindful of the time and stick within the time that has been allotted.
- Well, today we want to speak on the topic, the Lord, our shepherd.
- And this message today is based on a very familiar passage in Scripture, Psalm 23.
- And I believe that probably everybody in here has read or has heard that Psalm read.
- The Lord is our shepherd. For most, if not all of us, life is not a bed of roses.
- [2 : 32] Sometimes everything seems to be going right. And at other times, everything seems to be going wrong.
- And that reality seems to have no respect for whether someone is a believer or not. A careful reading of Psalm 23 reveals a man who, like us, was often challenged.
- Challenged. Remember, he talks in the Psalm about his soul needing restoration. And his valley of experience.
- His valley experience. Those are but two examples of the challenges that he had. Indeed, a survey of David's life, as recorded in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 Kings, reveals a man of breathtaking contradictions.
- These accounts you know well. Chosen by God to be king, which he was for more than 40 years.
- [4 : 06] Pursued for many years by Saul, which resulted in him finding refuge in caves and among his enemies.
- Triumphant in battles. Historic self-centeredness, which resulted in him taking the wife Bathsheba of a loyal soldier, Uriah, while having him killed.
- Loved and revered by those he led. The man who was in the midst of the world. Made to endure the unimaginable pain.
- As one son, Amnon, raped his daughter, Tamar. While another son, Absalom, killed many of his brothers.

Then saw David's own life. Husband to many wives and friend to an even greater number of concubines.

[5 : 20] Yes, a man beloved by God. None of our lives is or will be as storied as David's.

But we go through our own stuff. Go through our own stuff. The psalm we come to today was penned by this intriguing and colorful man whose life story would be a must-watch on reality television.

Imagine if David were alive today. I would find his reality show quite intriguing.

But listen to what this man wrote in Psalm 23. Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.

[6 : 35] He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your Lord 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. And in verse 6 he concludes, Surely, surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Let us pray. Father, we present this time to you.

And Lord, we ask that you would do with it what only you can. Lord, make these words come alive.

[7 : 51] Lord, cause our heirs to be attentive and our spirits to be receptive to that which you would desire.

We pray, O Lord, that we would see ourselves in this passage, Lord, so that our lives might be adjusted, so that we might be challenged.

I thank you, Lord, for those who will hear this message, not only today, but in the days and the months and the years to come.

May they too be enriched. May they too be enriched. In Jesus' name and all God's people say, Amen. I believe that the message of Psalm 23 is this.

The message of Psalm 23 is this. No matter where they are, no matter what they are going through, the Lord takes care of his children.

[9 : 03] That's it. That's the message of Psalm 23. No matter where they are, no matter what they are going through, the Lord takes care of his children.

That's it. That's the message of Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is a thoughtful and thorough picture of God's relationship to his children.

David uses metaphors of sheep rearing, which he was intimately familiar with, to our relationship with God.

I've organized my thoughts on around three themes in Psalm 23 that support that summary.

But before we consider the first point, I wonder, as you listened, as you listened to this message, as you listened to this message, I want you to hear, and I pray that the Lord will enable you to understand how we as believers should see, respond to, and seek to reshape the events that take place in our lives.

[10 : 32] Verse 1 of Psalm 23 is a good introduction to the psalm.

Indeed, the entirety of the psalm rests on the truth of verse 1. Therefore, we would do well to consider it before launching into the points of this message.

Everything in Psalm 23 hinges on these five words. Everything in the psalm hinges on these five words.

The Lord is my shepherd. That's it. Everything rises and falls on those words.

We could truly spend a lifetime preaching messages on that truth and its byproduct, which the psalmist simply and boldly summarized in these words.

[11 : 53] I shall not want. The psalmist says, the Lord is my shepherd. Therefore, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. Notice, if you will, that David makes the point that the Lord is my shepherd.

And you and I, like David, can say the same thing. The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. If you're a believer today, the Lord is your shepherd.

And the Lord has this personal relationship with us. Also, notice that he does not say that only that the Lord was or will be his shepherd.

He uses the present tense and could just as easily have said, the Lord is shepherding me. The Lord is shepherding me.

[13 : 03] The Lord is leading me. Therefore, I shall not want. That needs to sink in. That is so profound that I believe only the Holy Spirit can reveal the depths of its truth to us on an individual basis.

I can try as much as I can. But I got to acknowledge my inability. The Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. What if we believe that?

Imagine for a moment. If you truly believe that. As a believer that the Lord is your shepherd.

I shall not want. I shall not want. I shall not want. We see in these words that it is the sovereign one.

[14 : 13] The creator of all things. Who is the shepherd. Who is my shepherd. Who is your shepherd. Who is your shepherd.

Condescends to be our shepherd. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. implication of the opening clause of this psalm.

It is vital to our understanding that we not only see the Lord as shepherd, but implicitly and obviously we must see ourselves as sheep.

There can be no shepherd without sheep. Sheep, smelly, dumb, rudderless.

[15 : 44] It's one thing to be called an eagle, to be called an eagle king of the sky, or a lion king of the land, or even a bear, a cuddly, strong bear.

But a sheep? A sheep? The point is that David recognized and embraced the fact that when it came to life in general, he was ignorant like a sheep.

He needed a guy. You and I are but sheep. Yes, the man who slew Goliath, who became king, who had hundreds of thousands, hundreds of thousands, and his beck and call was wise enough and humble enough to know that in the broad stroke of life, he was nothing more than a sheep.

You and I are nothing more than sheep. But what is the posture of your heart today?

Are you sheep or are you king? Notice David's declaration in the second clause of the verse, I shall not want.

[17 : 23] David says that God's shepherding leads us to a place of sufficiency. Leads us to a place of sufficiency.

Is that true for you today? In the next two verses, verses two and three, the psalmist shows us that God sufficiently provides for three basic needs of his sheep.

So number one, the first point is the Lord provides for his children. The Lord provides for his children.

David writes in verses two and three, he makes me lie down. That is the shepherd. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the path of righteousness. Why?

[18 : 35] For his name's sake. The Lord provides for his children. I want to suggest to you that there are three needs that are captured in these two verses.

The first is our physical needs. David writes, He makes me lie down in green pastures.

And he leads me beside the still waters. David is mindful of how a shepherd would lead his sheep to green pastures, to lush pastures, so that he might feed, so that his physical needs might be taken care of.

and he leads him to still waters. Waters that are not contaminated. David, I believe, is helping us to see that the Lord, our shepherd, takes care of your needs and my needs.

The needs and my needs. The needs of the sheep. And then in verse 3, he says, The shepherd restores my soul.

[19 : 58] Here David speaks of our emotional needs. In this fallen world, it is often true that we grow weary and despondent.

Many times we have more questions than answers. David tells us that our shepherd restores our soul. Have you ever been weary in your mind?

Have you ever been confused, concerned about the happenings of life? David said that God, our shepherd, is able to restore our soul.

We can pray to him during times of despondency. And then in 3b, David continues that he leads me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake.

I think here David speaks of our spiritual needs. This clause reminds us how the Lord truly cares for us.

[21 : 15] Just like the shepherd leads the sheep along certain paths. Shepherd carefully guides the sheep along certain paths. It is the Lord who leads us along the pathway of righteousness.

Now this is very interesting. David said, it is the Lord who leads us along the pathway of righteousness. He is the one who makes a way of escape.

He makes things better. He gives us means of grace. He makes things better is what I meant to say.

He gives us means of grace. He leads us along the path of righteousness. righteousness. Why does he do this?

The psalmist says that he does it for his own name's sake. Can you imagine that? That God is leading us along a pathway of righteousness for his own name's sake so that he might be glorified in what you and I do.

[22 : 35] He can be God's champions on the earth. We can bring glory to his name as we live lives that are righteous and holy.

Leads us along the path of righteousness for his name's sake. But not only does the Lord provide for his children.

Point number two. The Lord guides his children. In verse four, David says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.

You are with me. Your Lord and your staff, they comfort me. As we consider these, as we consider this verse, I want us to carefully observe David's choice of words in the opening part of verse four.

David writes, even though. Those two words caught my attention as I was preparing this message. David could have substituted them for though or although, but they were not strong enough.

[24 : 20] He could have said while or as. For example, David could have said, while I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, or as I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

But I think that David wanted to make a stronger point. Because you see, maybe we would have missed this point.

David here is saying, and you've said it before, David here is saying, even though, when he uses that expression, even though, David is saying, in spite of, and he is about to tell us something that is really painful and very difficult.

David says, even though, you've said it before, you've said it to your children, you've considered it, even though you have done such and such, I'm going to do this.

David says here, that even though, even though, I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, even though, perhaps, in fact, no doubt, there are some present here today who have stories that they can tell that begin with those two words.

[25 : 49] Even though my health is not what it used to be. Even though my finances seem to be challenging.

Even though this relationship that I thought would have been such and such. Even though, even though, even though my job is not what I expected.

Even though. Our good shepherd is able to lead us through those difficult times as well.

To make the point that the Lord indeed guides us, guides his children, his sheep. The psalmist uses an extreme example.

He uses death. death. In doing so, the psalmist makes the point that if God can guide his children through death, through something that could result in death, he can guide them through anything.

[27 : 02] He says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, to fully understand what the psalmist is saying, let's consider the psalmist's condition at this point.

His condition is one of extreme difficulty. He faces the possibility of death. death. Now let me say here that I know very often this verse in particular is read at funerals.

And I understand it. I think it's good. It's quite appropriate for us to read it at funerals. And people use it to suggest that the psalmist here is speaking about someone who would have died.

But I think as we go through this, we get an appreciation that the more appropriate but not the only application is when one is actually walking through a circumstance that is challenging, that is ordinarily fearful.

this difficult circumstance David faced could lead to death.

[28 : 37] Notice that the psalmist does not refer to his condition as a pleasant one. He calls it a valley. He says this is a valley situation for me. What is the point I'm making?

notice at the beginning David said the Lord is my shepherd. Sometimes sometimes the shepherd leads us through the valley of very difficult and dark places.

But he's right there with us. It's not unusual for us to face valleys ourselves. sometimes you ask where?

Where is God? As we are facing these valley experiences. David says he's right there with us. Notice how the psalmist responds to this condition as he walks through this valley of the shadow of death.

The first thing you notice is he doesn't run. He walks. walks through the valley even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

[30 : 00] You and I would ordinarily have a tendency to run through the valley of the shadow of death. But he walks. He walks. He walks because he is not afraid.

he walks because the Lord is right there with him. He does not fear any evil.

The evil of man. The evil of sickness. The evil of circumstances. He does not fear because the sovereign one is shepherding him.

The psalmist offers further explanation for his peculiar what some might see as a peculiar response in the face of danger.

He says I will not fear. Why? Because you are with me.

[31 : 13] You see you and the Lord can overcome anything. Your steps are ordered by the Lord. And then the psalmist makes another point here.

The psalmist says I will not fear. I will fear no evil. Why? Because your rod and your staff they comfort me.

how amazing is that? The psalmist has in view here no doubt what he as a shepherd of sheep would do with his sheep.

How about he would have a roar to beat away the animals that would come to attack his sheep and protect them with the roar.

and with the staff the staff would have a hook at the edge at the end of it. And as the sheep are walking navigating very difficult terrain and some of them as they would go towards the edge the shepherd would use the staff and just pull them by the neck.

[32 : 28] And perhaps at times that would be painful for them but he would save their lives. And David says that your rod and your staff they comfort me.

Not many of us are comforted by rods. Not many of us. A couple weeks ago we heard from this very pulpit how not many of us as we were growing up.

In fact none of us at the time I very very doubtful that any of us would say that discipline brought us comfort.

David says this point in his life understands how the rod and the staff of the shepherd could help him.

And hence he was comforted by them. We've considered how the Lord provides for his children.

[33 : 41] How the Lord guides his children. And then number three we'll consider how the Lord blesses his children.

In verses five and six David writes you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now to be sure, to be absolutely sure, we have already seen many blessings of the shepherd. But in these verses we see even more. Verse five, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

David acknowledges here where his help comes from. And you can imagine for a moment the sheep is there as they're just walking and in the field, the green grass, the green lush, lushy grass that they enjoy.

- [35 : 02] And perhaps not far away, animals that would devour them, but for the presence of the shepherd. David says by comparison that the Lord does the same for us.
- it is he who prepares the table for you and for me. And he does it despite the happenings around us.
- David said, the Lord, you prepare a table for me, bearing in mind the analogy of shepherding. He writes here of the sheep being supplied even when others want to harm them in his presence.
- what I want to make to you today is that it doesn't matter the circumstances. It doesn't matter what others are saying about you. They don't control your circumstance.
- That's the message. That's one of the powerful messages of Psalm 23. That you don't do battle with people. You don't do battle with people.
- [36 : 14] you don't do battle with the person in your office perhaps with whom you might have a disagreement. You don't do battle with them. You don't do battle with the neighbor who perhaps has some issues with you.
- That's not the person you do battle with. You go on your knees and pray for the Lord because He is the sovereign one. He is the one who controls all things.
- And he is able to set before you a table that is fully prepared even in the presence of those who mean you ill.
- David says that you anoint my head with oil. And this is an interesting thing that shepherds would do to sheep.
- Because as you can imagine sheep being on the outside that they would be attacked by bugs insects could go in their nostrils and wreak havoc.
- [37 : 34] But oftentimes what the shepherd would do with the shepherd would actually put oil on the sheep head to keep the insects away.
- David here speaks about the cure of the Lord. But I believe here that David speaks more than just that.
- I think David here is speaking about the presence of the Holy Spirit. God gave to us the Holy Spirit to lead and to guide us and to be our help.
- David writes further that surely goodness sorry that you anoint my hair with oil and my cup runneth over.
- my cup overflows. My cup overflows David writes. Here David speaks not only of having enough but having a circumstance in which you have more than enough to supply your needs.
- [38 : 50] here David is not talking about us lavishing excesses on ourselves but rather being a conduit being a vehicle through which God is able to bless others my cup overflows and then David concludes the psalm he says surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life how long all the days of my life goodness and mercy why because the Lord is my shepherd goodness and mercy there is a certainty in David's words goodness and mercy shall follow me there is certainty there is permanency in these words all the days of my life how many of you know that despite who we are despite the fact that we are here today listening to this word that we need mercy that we need some mercy from the Lord today perhaps and in the days and the months to come and David says I can tell you that mercy is going to be your Lord mercy is going to follow you he is a merciful God all the days of your life David said how are I to respond to all of these things how are I to respond to the fact that the Lord is my shepherd how would I to respond to the fact that he provides for me that he guides me that he blesses me first concluding words of this psalm David says my response is that I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever and I believe David has in view here two things

I think David has in view our gatherings how we assemble together you can't you can't really if you can't possibly it's not I dare you to say otherwise it is not possible for you to believe and to embrace the words of this psalm and not find it delightful to be in the house of the Lord it's not possible so don't try to convince me otherwise it can't happen it can't happen it's not possible David says my response I take a light in day in the house of the Lord David also has a view here being in the presence of the Lord forever I know that the promises in this psalm are delightful unless we leave here today with as it were just a you know just feeling almost like with a sugar high

I want to talk to you about the practical applications of this message what does it mean to you what is this what ought it to mean to you how do you apply the message of psalm 23 to your life the first thing I want to suggest is that we must remember that like David's our life will not always be a bed of roses and often like David's things will not always go the way we want in our lives however we must view all of life's experiences the ups and the downs the joys and the heartaches through the lens of God's sovereignty we must view life good and the bad the ups and the downs the joys and the heartaches through the lens of God's sovereignty everything yes the one who holds the world in his hand holds you in the palm of his hand before you were formed he knew you and he loves you with an everlasting love so when things are unwell it is he who we go to

I know we have a tendency to see people and things as the agent of sorrows we do battle with the Lord on our knees on our knees love because he is the shepherd psalm 23 covers a wide swath of our lives and tells us how to live psalm 23 really for practical purposes tells us how to live to one who is high minded the psalm tells us to be humble to one who is in the midst of a decision look to God to one who has achieved any degree of success give God the glory to one weighed down by the pressures of life be restored to one grappling with besetting sin look to

[45 : 15] Jesus to one who is walking through a difficult situation fair not to one who has enemies all around ignore them to one who is uncertain about the future take heart why why can we respond to those situations like that answer is simple because we are the sheep and the Lord is our shepherd shepherd psalm 23 is a thirsty man's water brook it's a hungry man's food and a dying man's comfort we would do well to commit it to memory we do well to commit psalm 23 to memory children commit it to memory and revisit it daily or often I'd suggest we revisit this psalm often for someday

I can almost guarantee you that someday each one of us will wish we knew this psalm if you were able to interview someone who's dead today they'd tell you boy I wish I knew this song I wish I knew this song well death's bed but it would not surprise me if some people have a negative reaction to this sermon because we said that believers should take comfort in knowing that we are the Lord's feet some people don't like that kind of talk no doubt some will say that they're nobody's sheep nobody's sheep well the reality is that every one of us whether you're in the church or outside of the church you belong to one fold or the other that's inescapable you belong to one fold or the other either we are sheep being led by material things by pride we're either being led by pride or some sinful pursuit or we are of the fold of Christ yes if you are a believer

Jesus is your shepherd listen to what he says in John 10 beginning in verse 7 truly truly I say to you I am the door of the sheep all who came before me are thieves and robbers but the sheep did not listen to them I am the door if anyone enters by me he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy I came that they may have life and have it abundantly I am the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep and that's ultimately what it's all about the good shepherd laid down his life for you and for me that's it that's the pinnacle of the shepherd's work the death of Jesus

Christ willingly laid down his life for us but you know something if you are here today and you're not a believer you cannot lay hold of the blessings in Psalm 23 they're not for you you don't have the benefit of viewing life all of life any part of life through the prism of God's amazing sovereignty his unyielding love and his unflinching care that's not your Lord most most importantly if you're not a believer you cannot appropriate now appropriate the grace that rained down rains down from Calvary instead you will face a just God on your own merit and not that of the good shepherd as the praise team prepares to come now but I ask that we pray father we lift up your word to you

Lord every word every every word that we have read and spoken in the in Psalm 23 all of the words in Psalm 23 Lord we believe and we believe that they belong to us and we embrace every word and father for the one who has been hurting for the one who has been in doubt for the one who has been challenged by life circumstances so that he Lord wondered where you were who felt that you were far off the one who Lord walked through the valley of the shadow of death Lord for the one who is pained by disappointments Lord

[51 : 57] I pray that these words will be particularly meaningful I pray Lord that those who have endured long periods of illnesses and disappointments Lord that these words will be planted deep in their hearts today Lord where there has been disappointment I pray that faith will arise and father I pray also I pray for those Lord who today would say everything's going well well I pray Lord that they would complete that statement and say everything's going well because you are my shepherd I pray for humility Lord I pray that our heads every head is bowed low because we know from whence our help comes

Lord grant to everyone a gift of humility today is my prayer and father for those who don't know you Lord we lift them up to you and Lord we pray in the name of Jesus that the light of your gospel will shine to every heart Lord every person who does not know you in this place we pray Lord that you will do the work that only you can do that you would save hearts that you would be a good shepherd to them in the name of Jesus we pray amen amen I invite you to please stand as we sing my redeemer's love verse 1 my redeemer my redeemer's love is deeper than the depths of sin and hell he who was enthroned in glory came to bring us to himself my redeemer's love is wider than the breach my sin had made he reached down into my darkness he alone has power to save deeper than the rolling seas higher than the mountain peaks your love is all

I need verse 2 my redeemer's love is stronger than the fiercest enemy he who hold me in the tempest through the flood he carries me my redeemer's love will lead me through the deepest valley air he will shepherd me and guide me he will ever keep me near deeper than the rolling seas higher than the mountain peaks your love is all

I need stronger stronger than the rushing wind shattering the power of sin your love is all I need my redeemer love grows stronger as eternity draws near!

I'll enjoy his love forever at his throne for endless years my redeemer's love will fill me on the day I see his face I will love him back forever and forever sing his praise and forever sing his praise and forever sing his praise deeper than the roaming sea higher than the mountain seas your love is all I need stronger stronger than the rushing wind shattering the power of sin your all

[57 : 50] I need your love is love is all need love is all I need your love is all I need Amen, Lyndon.

Thank you so much for reminding us that we are sheep. But more than that, reminding us that the Lord is our shepherd.