

The Lord is our Host

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Preacher: Nigel Anderson

[0 : 00] The Church Bibles, passages on page 458, and let's read again the two verses I want to particularly focus on with you this evening, verse 5 and 6, where David the psalmist declares to God, 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 take me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Those of you who were here last Lord's Day evening, remember we were focused on the first four verses of Psalm 23, these very well-known words that assure us and assure the Lord's people that yes, truly, the Lord is our shepherd.

The Lord is the one who cares for His church. The Lord's the one who nourishes His people. The Lord who protects His sheep, His flock, His people from the ravages of external enemies that would seek to destroy the flock of God.

And as we noticed in these verses, these initial verses, we noticed this great picture that David gives us of the Lord in an active sense.

[1 : 20] The Lord, our shepherding one. The Lord who's active in His loving kindness towards His people. Yes, even when we wander. Even when we stray.

And we're assured that the Lord, our shepherd, brings us back to Himself. He brings us back to that right way. The way of righteousness. The way of holiness.

The Lord granting His people the blessing of peace and rest in Him. And that picture that David portrays here of the Lord, our God, the Lord who shepherds His people, of course, it's seen in all its glorious beauty in the Lord Jesus.

When, of course, Jesus Himself spoke of Himself, designated Himself as the good shepherd of the sheep. The good shepherd who cares for His sheep.

The good shepherd who is with His people forever. And that picture that we find here in the psalm of the Lord, our shepherd, our shepherding one, it gives you and it must give you and it must give me that confidence in the Lord, our shepherding one.

[2 : 31] To give you that confidence in His shepherding love. Even as we see the Lord Jesus Christ in His act. In His actions as the good shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep.

And, of course, it's that love that knows no greater love. That intimate bond between Savior and His people. And this shepherd metaphor that we see here in the first four verses, this shepherding metaphor that shows the great love of God for us.

We, like sheep, have gone astray. We've turned away, aside every one of us. Wandered. And needing that restoring, that turning back to Himself.

And so, we've already been, as we were comforted in that image that David gives us of the Lord. His shepherd, the Lord, our shepherd. That great comfort both in life and in death.

As we saw in the comfort of verse 4. Assuring the Lord's people that even in death, as in life, the Lord is still our shepherd. Still your shepherd.

[3 : 41] Guiding you who are in Him. Guiding you to your heavenly home. With you, even in the valley of the shadow of death. And our shepherd with His people.

Even in what, yes, what we probably fear most. And yet assured of His presence with us. And that assurance of the Lord's presence.

That intimate relationship that we see here in this shepherd imagery. That intimate relationship between God and His people. It's further emphasized.

We might even say further reinforced in these next few verses. Verse 5 and 6. We might say the second of the metaphors that are used here to describe the great love of God towards His people.

God as host. God as the host who cares for His guests. As we read in verses 5 and 6. Because I think we do see. I think we do see that this change of imagery.

[4 : 41] Change of metaphor in relation to God's care. Because here isn't God now depicted as the divine host. God who welcomed. Well, in the context of the time when David was writing this.

The context being. I think we can suggest this from the psalm. The context of the triumphant king having triumphed over his enemies.

This king has known victory over his enemies. And there's been a feast prepared for him. David would have experienced this. This great feast with all the trappings of victory.

Celebration. And this feast celebrated in the presence of David's enemies. It was the common custom of the time. To have this feast in full view of certainly defeated enemy leaders.

And then what are we told here? You anoint my head with oil. And again, David, again a common custom of the time. Guests when they came into a particular meal. Even a feast would have oil.

[5 : 43] Fragrant oil poured over their heads. This sort of idea to create a sort of pleasant atmosphere. And David's so aware of God's generous love towards him.

That he's saying that his cup overflows. The wine at the tables given in abundance to celebrate victory. Now, these are the words. But what are we seeing here? What are we reading?

Surely we're reading a number of things. In relation to our God, our Lord. Who's with his people. Surely the first thing we see here is the safety that the Lord gives his people.

Because if in the first metaphor, this first picture of our Lord as our shepherd. The one who protects his flock from danger. The one who protects his people from all that would seek to hurt and destroy his people.

Well, the second metaphor reinforces this picture. And you notice in verse 5 that David's now addressing God the Lord directly. You prepare a table before me.

[6 : 46] You anoint my head with oil. So there's this direct word from David to God. The enemies are at a distance as the feast has been prepared.

No longer are the enemies able to attack David. No longer is David in conflict, direct conflict with his enemies. These enemies are now shackled and shackled securely.

They're not going to share in the feast that's been prepared for David and his men. So David has this absolute security that he knows has come and come only from the Lord.

That safety has been made possible by the Lord, our God. Stronger, infinitely stronger than David's enemies than all the enemies of God and his people.

David knows that it's the Lord who's enabled him to triumph in victory. He knows that absolute security from his enemies. He's been given that absolute victory because of his relationship with the divine host.

[7 : 54] Because of his covenant relationship with his Lord and Master. And in the same way, yes, the believer who goes through, yes, many battles in this life.

Who knows that fight against sin. Who knows that spiritual warfare. Who knows that warfare against the evil one and against all who would threaten to disrupt the security in the Lord.

You, who are a believer, you know, you know that God's able to do for you far more abundantly than you can even ask or think.

You know that victory that's in him. And therefore, you know that security, that safety that you have in the Lord who protects you. The Lord who's with you because the victory is his.

That victory is assured. I think that's one thought that we can take even from verse 5. But we mentioned just a moment ago celebration.

[8 : 53] I think we also see that in this verse. Because, you know, we've looked at the sort of general picture of David's safety in the Lord. We know that, yes, the believer, the Christian, the believer can truly rejoice in our Lord and Savior.

You know that safety that's yours through the finished work of the Lord Jesus. You know that he has won the victory over sin, over Satan, over death.

What's your response to that? Surely it's to rejoice. To rejoice in that victory. To rejoice what God has done for you and for all who are his.

That's, I think, also again what we see here in verse 5. To rejoice in celebration, rejoicing. We read this portion. We sing from this portion. And surely this is a portion that we truly can rejoice in.

And particularly as we look more at the detail here, that you're unable to rejoice in the Lord, to have that joy in him. Look at the words again. You prepare a table before me.

[9 : 58] Try and use your imagination here. This is very much a word picture. However, that lavish feast is prepared. And it's a victory feast. And this is no ordinary meal.

This is the finest of food, the finest of wine. This is abundance. This is the best of produce. We might say the table's heaving with choice food. It's a celebration meal, as we were saying just a moment ago.

And of course we see in other parts of Scripture exactly this aspect of celebration through a meal.

Remember when the Israelites were celebrating their departure from Egypt.

How did they show that celebration? It was through a seven-day feast. Or think of the parable of the prodigal son. Remember the returning son who'd gone into that far country, wasted his living, wasted his, almost wasted his life there.

And he returns. And what happens? His father gives him a feast. The father prepares a lavish banquet to celebrate his son who's returned from even the very dangers to his son's soul.

[11 : 05] And here in Psalm 23, here's David. He's telling of his confidence in the Lord, his shepherd. He's telling of his joy in the Lord who's his welcoming guest.

He's telling of the abundance of God's grace towards him. And he's using this lavish language that tells of God, the Lord who blesses his people abundantly.

And again, you know, again when we think of what David's saying here about preparing a table, the context of the feast. Because, yes, any preparation for any large meal, any feast, takes time, it takes thought, it takes planning.

It's done to celebrate, it's done to make people happy. The lavishness of what's prepared indicates that. There's been a great deal of care and love and generosity.

And surely this picture here, as David says, you prepare a table before me. This picture of preparation reveals to us the God who cares for his people.

[12 : 11] And not just cares for his people, but God's care that is so abundant, God's care that's meticulous in his love. Every detail of his love towards you is without limit of his grace.

Think of planning. He planned your salvation from all eternity. And yes, he's mapped out your life, the race that you're to run, in all its detail.

He's not deprived you of anything, you know, in his particular call for you to know him and to live for him. And to use another analogy, I mean, the very hairs of your head are numbered.

You know, that tells us of the meticulous precision of God's love towards you. And then this lavishness of God's grace towards David here, I mean, as we said, it's just this meticulous aspect of, you know, sumptuousness, abundance.

You know, even the anointing of head with oil. As we said just a moment ago, this was what happened in the culture of David's time. And guests having fragrant oil poured over their head.

[13 : 21] As we said, this pleasant atmosphere that was created. Of course, not just in David's time. Fast forward a thousand years after this psalm was written. Can we still read of that practice?

We still read of it in the New Testament. Remember that when Jesus was at the home of Simon the Pharisee. Remember there was a sinful woman who came to the house. And what did she do?

She wet Jesus' feet with her tears, her tears of repentance. And then poured ointment on his feet, liquid ointment on his feet. And remember what Jesus said in response to that.

He said to Simon the Pharisee. He said, Simon, you haven't even bothered to show me the common courtesy of anointing my head with oil. Whereas this woman has anointed my feet with perfume.

Jesus had expected to be shown the courtesy of, you know, of a guest. He was that treasured guest in that house. But the host denied him that courtesy.

[14 : 24] Well, let's bring that Middle Eastern courtesy to our experience today. The experience of believers today. Because, yes, figuratively speaking, God anoints your head with oil.

With the oil of his love. You think of that pouring out. That pouring out of his grace. That pouring out of his saving grace. That's a continual pouring out of his undeserved favour.

Because God welcomes you. Not merely as a guest. But as a permanent resident with him forever. And so surely the generosity that we see here.

The generosity of this anointing with oil. Tells us that a guest has been welcomed into this feast. I mean, as we said, the custom of the day.

A rich person would do this anointing. But surely here we're seeing riches upon riches. This picture here that reveals God. God who's generous.

[15 : 25] Abundantly generous in all that he grants you. Even the great generosity of his salvation. That gift of eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Jesus who poured out his soul even unto death. For you and for me who deserve nothing. Who deserve nothing of that status as a guest of the Lord.

And yet we're given to sit at the Lord's table. To celebrate that great victory of Jesus against his enemies and our enemies. So here's David. He's revelling in his status as a guest at the table of the Lord.

And so revelling is he in this blessing, the privilege that he has us, this guest. That he tells us that his cup overflows.

Again, it's speaking this language of lavishness, abundance. The lavishness of the provision of this wine at the table that indicates God's lavish blessings on his people.

[16 : 29] And this particular imagery, for whatever reason, always seems to strike me. Even in very personal situations and circumstances.

Because here's another metaphor, this metaphor of the cup. Because, you know, you see it often in scripture when we read of the cup. The cup, this description, this way of speaking that tells of a person's life.

It tells of how God has ordained that life. In his perfect providence. Now, David could, I think, here speak in a literal sense of this cup.

This cup, obviously the wine at the feast. But, you know, when we see here this description of the cup. And the message that this brings. Surely it tells us the more of the allotted providence that God gives to each one of his people.

And that allotted providence being abundant blessing. Lavish grace. Full and full again of God's goodness to you.

[17 : 34] And so David could relate his experience of God's lavish grace upon him. Well, with this mention of the overflowing cup. What about you?

Can you echo these words of David that my cup overflows? You know, in other words, that God's goodness to me and his providence and what God has allotted to me.

What God's apportioned to me in his perfect wisdom. Can you say that is overflowing grace? That's grace upon grace. The cup that God has given you to drink from.

Has been a sign for you. For your good. And God's glory. So never ever despise that cup. That allotted portion that God has given you. Never even question that cup of God's providence that he has given to you in all his abundance.

And it may well be that in this side of eternity we won't fully understand God's provision of that cup in your life. And that's certainly what Robert Murray McChain wrote in his words.

[18 : 41] When we stand with Christ on high, looking o'er life's history, Then, Lord, shall I fully know, not till then how much I owe. And then in the refrain that he uses, Even on earth, Lord, make me know something of how much I owe.

I mean, on earth, yes, David was made to know something of how much he owed to the God who had given him victory. I pray that, yes, you here on earth may know something of how much you owe to God, Who makes your cup overflow with his goodness and grace.

And that you'll know something of how much you owe, Because of the love of Lord Jesus, Who drank from the cup of God's wrath, So that you might not drink from that cup, But drink from the cup of God's abundant saving love.

Well, David knew. David knew and celebrated the abundant love of God. David could praise God and did praise God for that abundant provision for him and his safety.

For God's welcoming him into the security of his protective love. David knew that he owed God everything in his life.

[19 : 58] David knew also that with God, he was safe eternally. That's where we see the conclusion to this psalm in these wonderful words of verse 6.

Let's read them again. Surely, for truly, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

We see thirdly and finally the sure promise that God gives to his people. David's so overjoyed. He's overjoyed at the goodness of God, the loving kindness of God towards him.

He's overjoyed at the steadfast love that he knows has never abandoned him. He knows that that love, the love of God, has followed him all the days of his earthly life.

And now he tells he's assured forevermore. He knows that he's more than just a temporary guest in the house of the Lord. He knows he is and will be with the Lord forever.

[20 : 58] And notice how David speaks of that in his joy. He speaks of, well, how God has dealt with him, goodness and mercy.

David's showing his deep knowledge, well, his deep knowledge of God's ways with him. He's acknowledging that God has been good with me, God has been good to me.

That God's goodness has followed me. It's pursued me all the days of my life. He's speaking of that goodness of God that tells of God's having blessed him and blessed him abundantly.

It's that goodness that we still and must continue to rejoice in that tells that God bestows his sovereign grace on all who are his.

The goodness that David rejoices in that you and I must rejoice in the goodness of God. But then we're told here the mercy, the mercy of God. That mercy that tells of God's steadfast love.

[22 : 00] That mercy that tells of God's faithfulness to his people. And that faithfulness shown in love. That unconditional love. The love that God gives to his own, to you, to me, that not one of us deserves.

And yet that love that's given freely. Freely from the God who lavishes upon his people is saving grace. And so David here is testifying to God's continual, God's persistent goodness and mercy in every aspect of his life.

For every day that God has given David breath, David acknowledges God's goodness and mercy towards him. And surely in this time of worship that we do reflect on these words.

Yes, in your own application. Ask yourself, is that your testimony? Can you echo these words of David? Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

You say, yes, God's goodness has been with me thus far and will continue to be with me for all the days of my life. Yes, contemplate, meditate on God's goodness and mercy.

[23 : 12] Because God has been, or we might say God has never been anything but good towards you. And yes, even in your darkest providences, his mercy has been showered upon you, lavished upon you in his goodness.

None of us deserve that mercy. None of us have deserved the great love of God's peace, his blessing, his compassion. We're sinners, each one, each one of us, who deserve nothing of his grace.

We can still sing with David, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And have that absolute assurance from God's word, from God's word of truth that yes, with saying that, that you'll dwell in the house of the Lord all your days, forever and ever, forever and all eternity. With that assurance that you will feast at the table of the Lord. And in that heavenly home, where in that home where the enemies, the enemies of sin and Satan of death will be no more, no more sway.

For you will be given and shown eternally the goodness and mercy of God. In that heavenly feast that will never end.

[24 : 34] We read in John 14, in my father's house are many rooms, but were not so, would I have told you. That's the prospect of David, the prospect that you have. Is that your prospect?

Or do you have no prospect beyond this life? Is this life all that there is? In that case, think well. Think hard. Think deeply.

And I ask you, will you not come to the one who calls you to himself as we were thinking this morning of the Lord Jesus who called you to follow him? He's calling you again.

Follow me. He's bidding you to come and dine at the master's table. He calls you to be nourished with the very riches of his grace.

His riches that satisfy you eternally. He's bidding you to come and taste of that spiritual wine and food that we were thinking a few Lord's Day mornings ago. That food, that wine was bought without a price.

[25 : 34] Well, the price, not by you, but of course paid for by the very blood of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is calling you to himself.

So we read in Revelation 3.20, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and eat with him and he with me.

Will you not come to the Savior and find your eternal rest in him so that you will celebrate his goodness and mercy?

So you will know that the reality of that promise. That promise of eternal dwelling in the house of God and the heavenly home of our God and Lord.

You know, the Lord's people do sing and must sing. Must sing these words of David. These truths that, well, again, we'll be singing this week. We'll soon close the service.

[26 : 33] But these words that speak of the certainty that the believer has in his eternal home, being with the Lord forever. And again, I say to you, sing these words with meaning.

Sing these words with joy. If you can't sing these words with that true connection with what we have before us, call on his name.

Repent. Ask the Lord Jesus to be your Savior, even tonight. And yes, you'll know the joy of these words ringing in your heart. I know this.

I know this. There will never be a day or a time in eternity when God's people are outside the house of God.

We're told of the new earth where God's people will spend length of days. Literally, the translation is the very last since I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever for length of days.

[27 : 32] There will never be a day in eternity when that isn't true. In the new heaven, the new earth. You will spend length of days with the Lord. In his house, in his temple.

As we read in Revelation 21, 21 of the new earth, the new Jerusalem, but I saw no temple in it for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. And this is where you will dwell.

With the Lord. At that eternal table. With your eternal host. You dwelling, resting with the Lord.

As your eternal shepherd. As I mentioned this morning, in a fortnight's time. Well, God willing, of course, but in a fortnight's time, you who love the Lord, who are here at the service in the morning, will be dining at the Lord's table.

That table that's a foresight, a foretaste, if you like, of that eternal table. And at the table, the Lord's table, our host will be there at present.

[28 : 34] In that simple meal, the Lord our shepherd will be with his people. And you'll be there. You who are there in Christ, you'll be there because our Savior is that good shepherd.

The one who said, I am the good shepherd. The one who laid down his life for you so that you might dine at that table. So that you might, yes, dine eternally with the Lord our Savior.

When you come to the table, give thanks. Give thanks. Give thanks for his giving of his life for you. He who laid down his life for the sheep.

And that death of the Lord that, well, that promises life. That promises life to all who follow the good shepherd. And even in this Lord's day evening, even in the quiet of your heart.

Yes, you who know the Lord as the good shepherd. You know God as your heavenly host. Give thanks. Praise him. Praise the one whose love for you means that through you lack nothing.

[29 : 41] I shall not want anything. Because he gives you everything. Because he's given you his all when he gave his life for you. That whole burnt offering on the cross.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Amen.

Let us pray. Lord our God, may it be that this week feast upon your word. That truly we will delight and have delighted in it.

And continue to delight in your word. Lord, we thank you for the blessing that your word gives to us. Even when we struggle in faith. Even when we struggle in our commitment towards you.

Even when at times we are so weak. We pray Lord that as we have heard your voice speak to us through your word this evening. That truly we will know that our safety is in you.

[30 : 41] And that we celebrate your great love. And we are assured of that sure promise of dwelling in the house of God eternally. So Lord bless we pray all that has been considered, all that has been proclaimed this evening.

And truly may goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our life. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Well let's close in Psalm 23.

As we sang at last Lord's Day evening. We sing again. Page 28 in the Singed Psalms version. The Lord is my shepherd.

No want shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow. And then the verses we were considering this evening. The sight of my enemies, a table you spread.

The oil of rejoicing you pour on my head. My cup overflows and I'm graciously fed. So surely your covenant mercy and grace will follow me closely in all of my ways.

[31 : 47] And will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days. Psalm 23 to God's praise. Amen. Psalm 23 to God's soon.

And the Lord is my covenant. Jill. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

And now may grace, mercy, and peace from God. Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and remain with you both now and forevermore.

Amen.