

The Good Shepherd

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[0 : 0 0] In seeking the Lord's help, we'll spend some time looking at this psalm and also some of the verses that we read in John chapter 10. There's some parts of scripture that we can come to and we have to actually work quite hard to try to understand the context of it.

We have to work quite hard to try and get ourselves back into the there and then before we can apply anything to the here and now. There's some parts of scripture that are less familiar to us and we find it harder to get into and to connect with.

But none of that is likely to be the case in terms of this psalm. Because this is a psalm which is so familiar to.

I expect all of us here. And this is a picture which is presented to us in this psalm that is very familiar to us.

That of the sheep and the shepherd. All of us are familiar and have been all our lives probably with what a sheep looks like and sounds like.

[1 : 1 6] And most of us, I expect, have encountered them. I encountered some on the road this morning between Harris and here. Swerving. To try to avoid them. Others of you will have had to take time out to try and dislodge a sheep from being stuck in a fence.

Other times we arrive home and we're trying to persuade them out of the garden. Other times there are those who are trying with great gusto to persuade them not out of the garden but into the flank. So sheep are familiar animals to us. We're familiar with their ways. And I think we would all be agreed that sheep need a shepherd.

Sheep need someone who will look out for them and tend to them and care for them. And lead them.

And rescue them. And it's humbling from the outset for us to consider this morning that the Bible teaches us through the psalmist here that we are like sheep.

[2 : 2 8] David is the king. He's a man of great stature in terms of the status that he had in that day.

And yet before the Lord, he sees himself with great clarity as a sheep who needs a shepherd. We're not like powerful stallions.

That's not how we're portrayed here. We're not like majestic lions. We're not like the breathtaking eagles that soar through the skies. We are like sheep.

We need a shepherd. And so this morning we come humbly, remembering, and thankful for the fact that Jesus is the good shepherd.

Jesus said in John chapter 10 and verse 11, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[3 : 2 9] And that's what we come to remember this morning. The fact that he laid his life down for us. Then at verse 27 of John 10, which we read, Jesus says, My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

And that's why we come this morning. Because we have heard the voice of the good shepherd, who's called us to trust him.

And to put our faith in his finished work. And to come. Very particularly this morning.

To come and do what we will do. In taking the bread. In taking the wine. In remembrance of him.

We come in faith.

We come in obedience. We come to the good shepherd. Who leads us. And I'd like to consider for a few moments this morning.

[4 : 3 9] How Jesus, the good shepherd, leads us. How he leads us in life. And secondly, how he leads us through death.

And thirdly, how he leads us into eternity. So first of all, let's think about life. With Jesus as our shepherd.

Let's think about this life that we have in this world. That God has given us. And how that should look. As we seek to follow the good shepherd.

Though today, our focus very specifically is on communion. Communion. We're thinking about the communion that we enjoy with God.

We look forward to that special intimacy that we enjoy as the table is set. And as we partake of the elements. There is something very special about coming to the Lord's table.

[5 : 42] But for the Christian. Communion with God. It's not something that is limited to these moments.

But it is the theme of our whole lives. An ever closer walk with God. A growing relationship with Jesus.

That should be our chief end. That should be our primary focus. Every day. That we are given. Just as the shepherd leads the sheep.

Jesus. Is the one who is to lead us. Not just in this moment. But everywhere. Every day.

Every situation. Jesus. Is the one we look to. And who will lead us. So where does he lead his sheep. In life.

[6 : 43] Well there's two things to note. He leads us into contentment. That we can find nowhere else. And he leads us into a righteousness.

That we can find nowhere else. So first of all contentment. Verse 2. The psalmist says. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. And I am no shepherd. I am no crofter. But I know enough to know. That green pastures. And still waters.

Or quiet waters. Make for happy. Contented sheep. Green pastures. Are that place of. Of supply of food. And nourishment.

For the sheep. The still waters. Are that source of refreshment. And hydration. And when a sheep has. Food. And water.

[7 : 41] It has everything it needs. It lacks nothing. It lacks nothing. Running around after the latest gadget.

Looking for a bigger barn. Looking for a shepherd with a nicer quad bike. Daft illustrations I know. But. This is the simple reality of it.

If a sheep. Has green pastures. And still waters. It lacks nothing. And David the shepherd. Is saying.

That he. When he has the Lord. As his shepherd. He lacks nothing. I shall not be in want.

He says. I am. Contented. All my needs. Are supplied. By him. And in him.

[8 : 42] The sing. Psalms version of. Psalm 23. Says. The Lord. Is my shepherd. No want. Shall I know. And it fits so.

Powerfully. With what Jesus says. In Matthew 6. The sermon on the mount. Remember. He's speaking to those. Who are prone to worry. What does he say. Well he says.

Trust. The Lord. Trust my father. To give you. Food. And clothes. And then you'll have all you need. In this world. So worry about nothing else.

And think about Paul. In Philippians 4. Paul. Speaks. To the church in Philippi. And he. He says to them. I know what it is. To have plenty.

Maybe he's thinking about Lydia's house. And all that he would have enjoyed there. And he says. I know what it is. To have nothing. I know what it is. To be a rising star.

[9 : 41] In the world. Of being a Pharisee. And have reputation. And have money. And have respect. And I know what it is. To be in the dungeon. And he says. And he says.

I have learned. That the contentment. That I have. Is not found in the plenty. And it's not found. In the poverty. But it's found in Christ.

In having the Lord. As my shepherd. In the world. And it seems. So simple. Because it is so simple. It's so stripped down.

But that is the reality. Of where contentment. Is. It's in godliness. 1 Timothy 6. 6. Says. Godliness. With contentment. Is great gain. And there is no godliness. There is no contentment. Apart from godliness. And there is no person.

[10 : 41] Who is walking close. With the Lord. As their shepherd. Who does not know. The wonder. And the. The satisfaction. Of. Contentment. Of soul.

I remember. Being. Convicted. And stunned. By that truth. When I was in India. A few years ago. With Blytheswood. And we were asked to go to.

A seminary. It was called. Where there was some boys. Training to be. Ministers. Pastors. A seminary. Well. It was a.

It was a cave. Essentially. It was a concrete cave. With 40 boys in it. They had nothing. Absolutely nothing. They had no money. They had no stationery. They had no computers.

They had no. Tablets. They had. Very little books. They were all sharing. The same. Bank of clothes. First up. Was literally. Best dressed. And yet.

[11 : 41] They had such. Deep joy. And such. Visible. Contentment. Because. The Lord. Was their focus. And the Lord.

Was their shepherd. And all that. Such a distraction. To us. Was not a feature. Of their lives. And this is so counter. To everything. That this world.

Tells us. Is true. The advertising industry. Which we cannot help. But be affected by. Says to us. Contentment. Is just round the corner. It's in the next car.

It's in the next house. It's in the next. Promotion. It's in the next. Designer watch. It's in the next. Dress that you buy. One more thing. Say the advertising gurus.

And then you'll be happy. And Jesus says. No you won't. Follow me. Says Jesus. Into contentment.

[12 : 38] And rest. Come to me. All who are weary. And burdened. Says Jesus. And I. Will give you. Rest. And so as we come.

This morning. To the table. We come. Professing. That we are content. In Christ. We come. Confessing. Sometimes. With pain. In our hearts. That none. But Christ. Can satisfy. No other name.

For me. There's love. There's life. There's lasting joy. Lord Jesus. Found. In thee. So the Lord. Our shepherd. He leads us in life. Into contentment. And he leads us. In life. Into righteousness. Verse three. He restores my soul.

[13 : 38] He leads me in paths. Of righteousness. For his namesake. Now when we think about. A very simple illustration. When something. Goes wrong.

We want to put it right. If. A computer. Or. These phones that we have. Go wrong. We want it to be put right. And. These.

Phones that I have. In particular. If I want my phone. As malfunction. To be put right. I have to take it to the computer. I. I plug it in. And there's an option. That comes up on the screen. Restore.

To factory settings. And that's where I click. If I want my phone. That's wrong. To be put right. Needs to be restored. Antique chair.

That's been. On the go for years. And it's been battered. And it's. Been bruised. And it looks shabby. How can it be made right again? Well it has to be. Restored. And as we look.

[14 : 37] At our world. As we listen to the. The news. On the radio. As we read the papers. We see how far. The world has gone wrong. As we experience. The pain of.

Fracture. And relationships. And the sickness. And the illness. And so much of the hurt. Of this world. We see. How the world has gone wrong. As we examine ourselves.

As we must. Coming to the table. And we look into our own heart. We see how much. We have gone wrong. And strayed.

Into sin. But as McShane reminds us. For every look. We take at self. Take ten looks. At Jesus. And that's good advice.

For today. Yes. We must look at ourselves. But for every look at self. Take ten looks. At Christ. And what do we see.

[15 : 34] What do we hear from him? Well we see one. Who came to this world. To put wrongs right. We see one.

Who came to this world. To restore. So. John ten. And our verse ten. Which we didn't read. It says. The thief comes.

Only to steal. And kill and destroy. I came. I came. Says Jesus. That they may have life. And have it. Abundantly. I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd. Lays down. His life. For the sheep. So as we look to him. We see. That Jesus came.

To restore. We see that he came. To. To give life. And Jesus. Has given life to us. By laying down. His own life.

[16:36] He is the one. Who took. Our wrong. Our sin. Upon himself. And in exchange.

In that great. Exchange. He offers us. His perfect. Righteousness. Isaiah 53.

Verse 6. All we like sheep. Have gone astray. We have turned. Every one. To his own way. And the Lord. Has laid.

On him. The iniquity. Of us all. Second Corinthians 5.

Verse 21. God. Made. Him. Jesus. Who had. No sin. To be sin.

[17:34] For us. So that. In him. We might become. The righteousness. Of God. God. There is no.

Righteousness. That we can find. In ourselves. By our own. Manufacture. There is no.

Righteousness. That we can procure. Anywhere else.

In this world. There is no. Other religion. That we can go to. Where we will. Find a righteousness.

That fits us. For God's. Presence. Yes. But as we follow.

Jesus. And as we trust. In him. He is the one. Who takes. Our sin. From us. And who gives.

His righteousness. To us. And that's how we can come. Come. It's the only grounds. On which we can come.

[18:31] To God. And sit. At this table. It's because of Christ's righteousness. My hope. Is built. On nothing less. It says.

Than Jesus' blood. And righteousness. Spurgeon noted. That Psalm 23.

Is carefully placed. In this altar. He says. Psalm 22. Had to come first. We thought about that yesterday.

Spurgeon says. My God. My God. Why have you forsaken me? Christ's cry. Had to come before. He restores my soul. So when Jesus is our shepherd. He leads us. In life. Into contentment.

[19:28] That we find no other place. He leads us. Into righteousness. Into restoration. Of our souls. And we come to the table.

Now with that. Joyful. Thought. And profession. His righteousness. His worthiness. Not ours.

So life with Jesus. As our shepherd. Let's think. Secondly. And more briefly. Of death with Jesus.

As our shepherd. Today.

We think. We remember. Very determinedly. The Lord's death. Death. We focus on the fact. That he. Went ahead of us. He went for us.

Into death. We remember. That he did it willingly. In accord with the. The salvation plan.

[20:26] That was. That was formed. Within the Trinity. Before the foundation. Of the world. Jesus. And. Jesus. That he. Determined. That he would come.

To die. And we remember. That death. Today. When we think. About death. We are aware.

Of the fact. That every one of us. Has an appointment. With death. It's the. Ultimate statistic. One. Out of one. People die. We have no choice.

In it. But think about this. Think about. The fact. That Jesus. Did have a choice. Death.

Did not come. To Jesus. Against his will. Death. Did not. Overtake him. Like a wave. That was. Crashing in. But he.

[21:22] In love. Chose. To lay down. His life. He chose. To die. For us. We read it. In John 10. I lay down. My life. That I may. Take it up again.

No one. Takes it from me. But I lay it down. Of my own accord. I have authority. To lay it down. And I have authority. To take it up again.

As we survey. The wondrous cross. We see. Jesus. Lay down. His life. And as we. Think upon. The open tomb. On this.

Lord's day. This first day. Of the week. When we remember. That Jesus rose. We see. How he took. His life. Back. Up again. So what does that mean. For us.

If we are. Following Christ. Where does he. Lead us. In the face. Of death. Well. With Jesus.

[22:19] As our shepherd. He leads us. Through darkness. And into light. Through darkness. Verse 4. 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.

There is no doubt. About the fact. That death. Casts. A shadow. And the psalmist. Here. In verse 4. Talks about the valley.

Of the shadow. Of death. He paints for us. A picture. Of a dark place. And maybe. That's why. As a culture.

Today. We are so. Reluctant. To even talk. About death. Death. If you go back. A hundred years. Or so. In this country.

[23 : 18] People weren't slow. To talk about. Death. Christians. In particular. Often. Wrote books. About dying. And dying well. These books.

Are rare things. Now. And these conversations. Are conversations. We don't often. Hear. Or have. We are. Reluctant.

To talk. About the reality. Of death. But that leaves. That leaves. This world. Perilously. Unprepared. For what. Will come.

Today. We are prepared. For so many. Eventualities. That actually. Often. Never happen. We are insured. To the hilt. Today. We are insured.

For devices. And scenarios. And payments. We are insured. For eventualities. That. Often. We never experience. And yet.

[24 : 18] We are. We are so unprepared. For death. In our nation. In the conversations. That we. Don't hear. And yet.

Death comes to us all. So we need to be prepared. For it. We need to be prepared. And the good news. Of the gospel. Is that.

If we know Jesus. If we know. The good shepherd. If he is with us.

If he is leading us. We are ready. Even for death. Because when Jesus.

Is our shepherd. He guides his sheep. Through death. You see that in verse 4. Even though I walk. Through the valley. Of the shadow of death.

[25 : 15] Death. Not to death. Not in death. But even though I walk. Through. The valley.

Of the shadow of death. And that's the wonder. Of having the Lord. As our shepherd. With death. On the horizon. We can approach it.

Without fear. Because the good shepherd. Leads us. Through darkness. He leads us. Through the dark.

Veil. Of death. The dark. Shadows of death. And into light. Now you might say. Looking at verse 4. Where is the light.

In this verse. The good shepherd. As he leads us. In the face of death. He leads us. Through darkness. And into light.

[26 : 13] Now where is the light. Well verse 4. David talks about the valley. Of the shadow of death. What do we need.

If a shadow is going to be cast. There needs to be light. Without light. There is no shadow.

And even though in death. There are shadows of separation. Even though in death. There are shadows. Of the physical. And the mental. And the spiritual trauma.

That is linked to the event. There is light. There is light. There is light. On the other side. For those. Who are with the shepherd.

Lead. Led by the shepherd. There is resurrection light. There is the light. Of eternal life. When the Lord Jesus. Is our shepherd. When he.

[27 : 08] Is the one who walks with us. And that is why the psalmist. Can approach the valley. Of the shadow. Of death. Without fear. When the Lord. Is my shepherd. Says David. I will fear no evil.

For you are with me. And your rod. And your staff. They comfort me. And let's.

Let's. Take comfort from that. I don't. Know many of you. As. Congregations here. But I'm always conscious.

When we come to the Lord's table. Whatever we do so. There is blessing. In doing so. But there is always. A sense of sadness.

Because as we look around. We think of those that. Sat with us. At the table before. And who are no longer. In this world.

[28 : 11] And yet. There is the comfort. Even as we remember. Our Lord's death. Even as this. Psalm. Is open before us.

We remember. The fact that when. Jesus. Is our shepherd. Death is not the end. But death is that gateway. To eternal.

To eternal. Abundant. Life. When Jesus is our shepherd. He leads us. In life. Into contentment. He leads us. Into that righteousness.

Which only he can give. When Jesus. Is our shepherd. He leads us in death. Through death. Through darkness. Through death. Dark state.

A thought about that eternal life that is promised to the Lord's people. Today we remember the Lord's death.

[29 : 22] But we remember also the Lord's resurrection. Because we do so. We proclaim his death until he comes.

So this table speaks to us of the eternal life that Jesus has procured for those who are following him.

What does that look like? Where is that place that he leads his sheep to? What do we know about it?

Well we know that it's a prepared place. Verse 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil.

My cup overflows. And the table or the table land speaks to us about the abundance of provision. That the good shepherd has in store for those who love him.

[30 : 21] We experience something of that in this life. To our blessing. But how much more will we experience that?

In the new heavens. The new earth. There is a place of blessing. There is a place of life.

There is a place of peace. No war. There is a place of uninterrupted joy.

An unbroken communion with God. That Jesus has prepared. For all who love him. He said so in John 14.

Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so.

[31 : 20] Would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you. I will come again. And will take you to myself.

That you. That where I am. You may be also. So there is a prepared place. It's the promise of Christ.

For his people. For his sheep. For those who follow him. Through death. Into eternal life. And finally it's a protected place.

Surely goodness. Verse 6. In mercy. Shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell. In the house.

Of the Lord. Forever. The reality is. In this world. Jesus told us. In this world. John 16.

[32 : 19] You will have trouble. And in this world. We are exposed to sin. Around us. And in us. And in this world.

We are exposed to the attacks. Of the enemy. Satan. But beyond this world. In that place.

That Jesus. Has prepared. Satan. Has been banished. And sin is not present. And so goodness.

And love. Goodness. And mercy. Will be the constant. State. And the light. Of Christ. Forever.

Will shine. It is a protected. Place. No more battles. No more war.

[33 : 18] No more sadness. No more turmoil. No more turmoil. Of Romans 7. In our hearts. But blessing.

And communion. The light. Of Christ. Forever. Shining. Nothing. No one in the way.

I'm going to finish with a quote. From Spurgeon. As he reflects on this. He says.

Here. We are tired. And weary. But over there. Is the land of rest. Where the sweat. Of toil. Will no longer soak our shirts.

And fatigue. Will be banished forever. To those who are weary and worn. The word rest. Is full of heaven. We are always in the field of battle.

[34 : 17] We are so tempted. And so molested. By foes. That we have little or no peace. But in heaven. We will enjoy the victory.

When the banner. Shall be unfurled. In triumph. And the sword. Will be sheathed. And we will hear our captain. Say. Well done.

Good. And faithful servant. We have suffered bereavement. After bereavement. But we are going. To the land.

Of the immortal. Where graves. Do not exist. Here. Sin. Is a constant grief. To us. But there.

We will be perfectly holy. For there will be nothing. In heaven. To defile it. What a prospect.

[35 : 16] For the Lord's people. What. A joy. Awaits us. What. A privilege.

We have. To hear. And to follow the call. Of the good shepherd. The one who leads us.
In life. Into contentment. Into his righteousness. Righteousness. The one who leads us. Through
the dark.

Veil. Of death. And into the light. Of eternal life. And he is the one who bids us come.

To his table. Trusting. And. Trusting. In him. And doing all. That he has. Ordained. In remembrance.

[36 : 16] Of him. Let's pray. Lord God.

We remember. The words of the hymn writer. Nothing. In my hands. I bring. Simply. To thy cross. I
cling. Naked.

Come to thee. For dress. Helpless. Look. To thee. For grace. Foul. I. To the fountain. Fly.

Wash me. Saviour. Or I die. We thank you Lord. That you. Have. Revealed. To us.

The blood. That cleanses us. From all sin. The blood. Which we remember. As we will shortly. Take
up the wine.

[37 : 18] We thank you Lord. That you have. Revealed. To us. The body. That was broken. So that
we.

Could be saved. And Lord. As we look. At ourselves. We do see our sin. We confess our sin. We
thank you.

We thank you. But as we look. And look. And look again. To Jesus. We thank you. That we see.

Our saviour. And we hear.

The call. Of the good shepherd. And Lord. We thank you. That we are now able. To respond. And to
remember him.

And we pray. That we may have. A powerful sense. Of his presence. With us. As we do.

[38 : 14] All that we are called to do. And we pray this. In Jesus name. Amen.