

# Monday Evening - English

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Preacher: Rev R J Campbell

[ 0 : 00 ] Seeking the Lord's blessing, let us now turn back to the portion of scripture that we read in the book of Samson. We look at Psalm 23.

The book of Psalms, Psalm 23. The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

I suppose that this psalm is a very familiar psalm with most of us, if not the most familiar portion of scripture that we know.

And that for the simple fact that we were all taught the psalm from a very young age and probably was the first portion of scripture that we committed to memory.

It is a psalm that is often sung at marriages and funerals when many people take the words upon their lips and yet they may be quite ignorant of the shepherd of the psalm.

[ 1 : 12 ] They sing the psalm and yet they do not know it by experience. Now it is a psalm which has often been preached upon and much written about.

And tonight we do confess that probably we are not going to say anything new to you that you have not heard before about this psalm.

But it is always good for us to reflect and remind ourselves that the word of God is new to us each day.

We are immediately told at the beginning of the psalm that the writer is David, who himself was a shepherd tending to his father's flock.

It may have been that while he was sitting down one day watching his father's sheep that he wrote this psalm.

[ 2 : 20 ] Now scripture gives this title to David not only in a sense of looking after his father's sheep, but scripture gives him this title as he becomes king over Israel.

In 2 Samuel chapter 5 we read that all the tribes of Israel came to David at Hebron and said, Behold, we are your bone and flesh.

In times past, when Saul was king over us, it was you who led out and brought in Israel. And the Lord said to you, you shall be shepherd of my people Israel, and you shall be prince over Israel.

Now David was taken from tending his sheep to be shepherd over Israel.

That is shown to us in Psalm 78, where we read, He chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds. From following the nursing ewes, he brought him to shepherd Jacob his people Israel, his inheritance.

[ 3 : 34 ] With a bright heart he shepherded them and guided them with a skilful hand. So this psalm is written by someone who knew the skills of shepherding.

However, David confesses that he himself is in need of shepherding. And he confesses that he has found one that can truly shepherd him.

For he says, the Lord is my shepherd. Or Jehovah is my shepherd. Now this theme of God shepherding his people is a theme that runs throughout the Bible.

When Jacob came to bless the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, he used these words. And he blessed Joseph and said, The God before whom my father Shabram and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day.

[ 4 : 51 ] So we have the theme of God shepherding his people right there back in Genesis. Again in Psalm 80, we have God taken before us as a shepherd.

Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, you who let yourself like a flock, you who are enthroned upon the cherubim shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.

Stir up your might and come to save us. So the theme of God shepherding his people is found throughout the Bible.

In the prophets, there is, for instance, that well-known text of Isaiah 40 where the prophet is showing forth the greatness of God. And what is he saying? He will tend his flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs in his arms. He will carry them in his bosom and gently lead those that are with young. And of course, when we come to the New Testament, well, Jesus himself refers to himself as the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.

[ 6 : 06 ] But as we look at Psalm 23 and these words, the Lord is my shepherd, have you ever stopped to see the significance of where Psalm 23 is placed?

That is why we read Psalm 22 and 24, along with 23. Obviously, Psalm 23 comes between Psalm 22 and 24.

But Psalm 22, as you will know, is the psalm of the cross. And that brings before us the sufferings of Christ.

Psalm 24 is the psalm of triumph, of the cross. And between them, 22 and 24, we have Psalm 23. And Psalm 23 brings before us the pilgrim's journey, along with the shepherd, until finally they are in God's house.

[ 7 : 16 ] Until finally they have reached home. One commentator says, Psalm 22 reveals the good shepherd away from home.

Psalm 23, the great shepherd bringing home. And Psalm 24, the chief shepherd at home. At the very outset of the psalm, he is bringing before us that intimate relationship that exists between the shepherd Jehovah and himself.

He says, the Lord of Jehovah is my shepherd. And without that special relationship existing, the rest of the psalm would make absolutely no sense whatsoever.

For what the psalm brings before us is the journey of the shepherd and sheep together until at last he brings them home.

The psalm is the pilgrim's song. The shepherd is caring and he is leading the sheep for the purpose of bringing them home with himself.

[ 8 : 42 ] That is the main principal purpose of the shepherd to bring the sheep home with himself.

That's the main principal purpose for why if you are a believer in Jesus tonight, why you have been saved. That is why you have been redeemed.

Not to be left in this world, you have to travel through it, but the chief purpose is to bring you home to be with the shepherd himself.

The shepherd and the flock together. We can call as I say this psalm the Christian journey. Something similar to the great classic of John Bunyan which we call Pilgrim's Progress. And this special relationship between the shepherd and the sheep began with the shepherd himself.

[ 9 : 52 ] It began with Jehovah. It was not the sheep that went to seek the shepherd, but the shepherd came to seek the sheep.

He purposed according to the good pleasure of his will to elect and call a people who would constitute his special flock.

In the parable of the lost sheep that we have in the Gospel of Luke, we read how the shepherd took the initiative to go and seek the sheep that was lost.

The initiative to bring sinners to salvation began with God himself. In the history of this world it all began when he came into the Garden of Eden after Adam had sinned and he said, where art thou? If the Bible is about anything, it's about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, it is about the shepherd.

[ 11 : 02 ] So many people get caught up with other details and they miss the point that the Lord Jesus Christ, the shepherd, is the chief subject of the Bible.

From Genesis to Revelation, it is all about Jesus Christ. It is all about God's redemptive plan. It is all about the shepherd coming to seek the lost sheep. That plan that began in the covenant of redemption before the world was revealed in the promise of the Garden and all embodied in Jesus Christ in his coming into the world and it will be completed in the return of Jesus Christ.

That plan that began in eternity before the world was in the covenant of redemption promised in the Garden all that purpose embodied in Jesus Christ in his coming into the world and it will be completed in the return of Jesus Christ.

aren't you looking forward to that day when Christ shall return? What a promise has been left for the sheep?

[ 12 : 30 ] What a promise has been left to the people of God and all the struggles that you have and all your own failings that you are so conscious of.

You have this great promise that he is going to return and he is going to complete your redemption and your glorification.

What a day to look forward to. What an encouragement for us in the midst of the hostility of the environment in which we have to take our journey through this world.

That we have this hope that shall not be put to shame. The hope of the glory of God.

The hope of being with the shepherd. Oh in the garden it was the voice of the shepherd coming to seek the lost sheep.

[ 13 : 33 ] And I believe that Adam was the first sheep that he found and that he brought him within the fold of faith. And the evidence is the name that he gave to the woman that was given to him.

It was after the promise being given regarding the seed of the woman that Adam named the woman and he called her Eve. Meaning that through her life was going to come.

And he did that by faith. He named the woman given to him by faith. Although Abel obviously was the first sheep to be brought home, into God's house.

The very title or the name Jehovah brings before us the covenant name of the triune God. Jehovah is my shepherd.

So at the very commencement David is telling us that this relationship that is between himself and the shepherd is a covenant relationship.

[ 14 : 41 ] relationship. It's a covenant relationship. Jehovah the covenant God is my shepherd.

In this covenant it was agreed that the father would send the son as his shepherd to seek and to save the lost sheep. in this sense the father can also look upon Jesus Christ his son and say that he is my shepherd.

I have given my son this role and he has willingly undertaken this role in the covenant of redemption.

therefore God can speak in the prophecy of Zechariah in this fashion a way goes sword against my shepherd against the man who stands next to me declares the Lord of hosts strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered I will turn my hand against the little ones.

Words which were fulfilled in Jesus as he reminds the disciples as they left the other room when they had sung a hymn they went out to the mount of all of and Jesus said to his disciples you will all fall away because of me this night for it is written I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

[ 16 : 15 ] Jehovah is my shepherd. Thus David's shepherd was God the father who has chosen his flock sovereignly in his beloved son before the foundation of the world God the holy spirit who brings all the chosen into the flock at the appointed time and God the son who has paid the ransom price for the flock Jehovah is my shepherd shepherd the new testament describes for us the threefold shepherd ministry of Jesus in the gospel of John Jesus calls himself the good shepherd the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep in a letter to the Hebrews Christ is entitled the great shepherd of the sheep through being brought again from the dead and in first Peter the Lord is designated as the chief shepherd both reference to his second coming when he shall give to his own a crown of glory that fadeth not away thus

Jesus is the good shepherd in laying down his life for his sheep he is the great shepherd who has risen from the dead and he is the chief shepherd who is to return and to reward his people the sheep is precious to the shepherd because they are the father's gift to him thine aware he says and thou gavest them to me and so as the father's gift every sheep is precious to the shepherd they belong to the shepherd as the father's gift and he's always mindful of that very fact he's always mindful of the fact that the sheep are his father's gift to him father i will he says that those whom thou has given me be with me where i am father i will that those whom thou has given me be with me where i am isn't that amazing to think of the desire that there is in the heart of the shepherd tonight in glory the desire that he has in his heart that the sheep given to him by the father be with them where he is no wonder then that the sheep rejoice in the hope of the glory of

God that they have that desire to be where the shepherd is that is why they set their affection on the things that are above and not on the things of this earth at the very heart of the electing love of God towards the lost sheep was his beloved son at the very heart of giving them to his son was his own love to the son it was his love gift to his son the father in expressing his love to the son gave him a flock which no man can number in order to shepherd them and to bring them home he was given that when the father gave him the sheep in the covenant of redemption he was given the sheep to shepherd them and to bring them home to bring them home and he is concerned to bring them

home because it is only then that he can say to the father behold I and the children the flock the sheep that you gave to me they are all here not one of them is lost yes they may have wandered off the path at times but I took them back I took them back into the path and now here they are none of them is lost this gift is a marvel in itself for where do we find the sheep well they are astray they are lost they are as some said in a slimy pit that is where he finds them all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way to go astray is to wander to depart to move away from something and this indeed speaks of our original sin in Adam who as our covenant head or representative failed to keep the commandment of God and sinned against God we fell with him in his first sin and we partook of his guilt therefore we are constituted as sinners or lost sheep and as a result of that every day and continually we break God's law we increase our debt this is what we call actual sin our actual sins flow out of our original sin so that leaves us guilty before God it leaves us liable to punishment it leaves us exposed to God's judgment and such was the father's gift to the son the gift on the part of the son as we said is the love gift of the father but on the part of the sheep it is an act of grace and a demonstration of his love to us in giving us to his son in order to shepherd us and to bring us home is always always a demonstration of his grace it is always the undeserving favor of

[ 23 : 30 ] God on the part of the sheep the sheep belongs to the shepherd in covenant love as the father's love gift but also as his own covenant purchase as the sheep were guilty before God liable to punishment and exposed to God's judgment the shepherd had to redeem them and he had to redeem them by paying the ransom price and what was the ransom price that the shepherd had to pay well Peter says to us you were not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold but with the precious blood of Christ with the precious blood of the shepherd in other words the laying down of his life as a sacrifice to

God in order to pay the ransom price an amazing thing took place however much shepherds in this world love their sheep and I know that they do there is one thing that they cannot do and that is take the nature of the sheep unto themselves but that's exactly what our shepherd did in order to pay the ransom price it meant that the shepherd had to take upon himself the nature of his sheep he had to humble himself and take on the nature of the ones that he had come to redeem Paul writing to the church at Philippi says who though he was in the form of God did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but tempted himself by taking the form of a servant been born in the likeness of men and been found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross the word was made flesh

God manifest in the flesh God incarnate death and dead and dead and dead and the covenant shepherd who had come to make a covenant purchase the son of God the ransom price and to pay the ransom price it meant for the shepherd that he had to learn obedience by the things which he suffered he had to become obedient unto death for this reason he says the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again no one takes it from me but I lay down on my own accord I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it again this charge I received of my father so to pay the ransom price meant that the shepherd had to meet with what the sheep deserved he comes to where we are our sins laid upon him and he dies what a shepherd was there ever such a shepherd there never was and there never will be a shepherd who loves the sheep so much that he lays down his life for them he lay

God lays on the shepherd what our sins desired so that we shall be made free for our sake he made him the shepherd to be sin who knew no sin the suffering of the shepherd was awful so terrible because he was bearing the punishment of the sins of his people of his flock he was stricken he was smitten he was afflicted he was wounded he was bruised he was crushed he was beaten all that suffering for a sheep all that suffering for me and you if we are members of the flock of Jesus Christ and the worst aspect of his sufferings was not the physical sufferings which he endured at the hands of men but those that he suffered at the hands of

God God was the one who put him to grief not Pilate not the Jews not the crowds not the Roman soldiers but God was dealing with his shepherd with my shepherd and this was all part of the ransom price the shepherd bore our punishment he dies for his flock he is buried for them and he rose again and he ascended to the right hand of the father for them and he is going to return again for them because his pleasure is when the whole flock are home with him with him in the meantime he is preparing a place for them in my father house he says and many rooms if it were not so would

[ 29 : 57 ] 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 where I am you may be also the shepherd's desire to have his flock home with him Jesus there is using the Jewish custom when a boy and a girl met they became betrothed and that was something much deeper than what we call engagement because betrothed was really looked upon as if they were married but they were not living together it could only be dissolved by divorce betrothal and when they became betrothed the man would return back to his father's house and he would put an extension on to his father's house and when the extension was ready he would come back for his bride and the two would then go together to live in the father's house in the extension that he had prepared for them and

Jesus is using that imagery regarding himself and that's what he's comforting his disciples with on this night in which they were all so confused at what was happening they just could not understand and this is the way that he comforts them he says in my father's house are many rooms and I'm going and I'm going to prepare a place for you and when it's ready I will come and I will receive you to myself yes we are betrothed to the Lord Jesus Christ yes he has gone he's preparing a place but he's returning and he's returning to receive us and we'll all go in to the marriage feast of the lamb the marriage feast is yet to come the betrothal has taken place between yourself and the shepherd by faith but the feast is still waiting for us we're waiting for his return the shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep has become unseparable from them so that his very identity is bound up with them as the writer to the

Hebrews remind us when he says he's touched not merely by but with the feelings of our infirmities as we already said there's this intimate relationship between the shepherd and his sheep he has taken the nature of the sheep upon himself therefore he is able to be touched with the feelings of our infirmities he has a shepherd's heart that is continually filled with love towards his sheep towards his flock as he took the nature of the sheep in his incarnation he hasn't abandoned it at all in his glorification he as the lamb is in the midst of the throne and as such he will lead us to living fountains of water he came as the shepherd to lay down his life for the sheep he as the shepherd through the spirit is guiding his sheep and protecting his sheep and feeding his sheep you find that in the rest of psalm 23 how he is protecting his sheep how he is leading them and when they go through these dark valleys that may instill fear in their hearts like the dark valley of the shadow of death it is fear don't fear because

I am with you I am the good shepherd I am your shepherd I am with you I will prepare a table for you goodness and mercy will follow you and I eventually will bring you home to be with me I will bring you home to be with me well most of us have probably memorized the entire 23rd psalm but friends I ask you in earnest seriousness do you know by experience that first line of the psalm the Lord is my shepherd for to know the shepherd is eternal life is Christ your shepherd do you belong to him can you say with your whole heart and by experience with David the Lord is my shepherd we always say that personal pronouns are so important when we begin to think of our relationship with God and here

David stresses his relationship with God he stresses his relationship with the shepherd he says the Lord is my shepherd yes he is mine and there is an obvious sense in which he is also saying and I am his like the church in the song he cries my beloved is mine and I am his in us there is no possibility of being saved from what our sins desire for we are all like foolish sheep that have gone astray and had and continue to go astray each turning his own way but with God and in God what we have made impossible God has made possible when we tore asunder God in Christ brings together as the redeeming shepherd he humbled himself and came into this world of pain grief and suffering he willingly gave his back to the smiters but his thirty-three years of suffering was only an introduction to the last week of his spiritual and physical sufferings but he suffered not only at the cruel hands of men but at the invisible hand of his own father as church where he heard the awful summons of his own father awake goes hard against my shepherd against the man who stands next to me declares the lord of hosts but he gave himself willingly and he gave himself lovingly in order to save his sheep was there such love ever expressed as the love that has been expressed by the

[ 37 : 39 ] Jehovah shepherd he drained the dregs of the bottomless wrath of God to make available for his sheep the cup of salvation he took our damnation and he exhausted that damnation the shepherd died the curse of death so that the sheep might live has his love lessened well he loved his sheep with an everlasting love his love is like himself infinite for God is love what bound the

shepherd to the cross was it the nails oh no he was bound by his love for his sheep that they might be set free he was condemned so that the sheep might be acquitted he was cursed so that the sheep might be blessed he was rejected so that the sheep might be accepted what a shepherd what a shepherd and now as you go out into the hostile world what do I say well I say this to you stay close by the shepherd hear his word in reading the word in the preaching of the word and speak often to the shepherd in prayer and stay close in fellowship with the rest of the flock you know naturally enough when we when we look at sheep they always flock together we see a sheep going apart from the rest of the flock it can be a sure sign there is something wrong well the same is true regarding the spiritual flock of

Jesus Christ it is important that we stay close in fellowship with the rest of the flock we can sum it up in the words of the church in the song tell me you who my soul loves where you pasture your flock where you make them lie down at noon for why should I be like one who veils herself beside the flock of your companions to which the shepherd replies if you do not know oh most beautiful among women follow in the tracks of the flock and pasture your young goats beside the shepherd's tents it brings before us the importance of being close to the flock of being close to one another so stay close in fellowship with the rest of the flock stay close by the shepherd hear his word in preaching and preaching and often speak to the shepherd or you might be here and you might be saying oh my heart

I am so sinful how often I have wandered away how often I thought that the grass was greener on the other side maybe you went to taste it and you found it not so good after all and you might be saying well what shall I do well hear the words of the shepherd oh Israel return unto the Lord thy God for thou has fallen by thine iniquity take with you words and turn to the Lord say unto him take away all iniquity and receive us graciously so we will render the calms of our lips hear what he says I will heal their backsliding I will love them freely for mine anger is turned away from him I will be as a Jew unto Israel he shall grow as the lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon his branches shall spread and his beauty shall be as the olive tree and his smell as Lebanon they that dwell under his shadow shall return they shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine the scent thereof shall be as the wine of

Lebanon yes maybe we have wondered maybe we have been following the shepherd afar off that happens to us and it is not for our good we must stay close to the shepherd we must have our ears open to hear the cry of the shepherd to have our ears open to hear the voice of the shepherd and say it's the voice of my shepherd it is the voice of my beloved so there is one there is one tonight at the right hand of the father in heaven who is concerned about you you are his sheep he died for you he rose again for you he ascended it and this is the great news he's going to return for you because his pleasure is that his flock for whom he died and from he rose that they will be with him where he is that he will be able to say to the father behold

I and the flock that you gave me whom I have purchased by dying for them behold here they are and not one of them is lost so as you go out now from the mount of ordinance from the blessings that I believe you received in the last days the last few days as you came to remember the price that the shepherd paid and as you go out now into the world may you rise up and go out and be enabled truly to say from the heart the Lord is my shepherd I shall not want he will help me he will protect me he will provide for me and at last he shall take me home to be with himself with all the flock shall be gathered together and not one will be missing what a promise what a hope let us rejoice in it let us pray eternal and ever blessed

[ 44 : 35 ] God we give thanks that thou has provided a shepherd for us in the person of thine own son that he came and that he's purchased his flock and that he has that desire to bring his flock home to be with him and we pray that it may indeed be a means of strength and encouragement for us as we journey on through this world we ask oh lord that thou would continue with us forgive us for our sins in Jesus name amen we shall conclude by singing to the lord's praise from psalm 73 and at verse 23 that's psalm 73 on page 316 and at verse 23 nevertheless continually oh lord i am with thee thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me thou with thy counsel while i live will me conduct and guide and to thy whom have i in the heavens high but thee oh lord alone and in the earth whom i decide besides thee there is none my flesh and heart doth faint and fail but god doth fail me never for of my heart god is the strength and portion forever we shall sing these verses to the lord's praise verse 23 to 26 of psalm 73 nevertheless continually o lord i am with thee never thou less continually o lord i am with thee thou other who bear me lord he i am with thee counsel

while moral will me conduct and guide.

And to thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

Home of thy in the heavens I birth thee, O Lord, alone.

Amen. There is no whom I desire besides thee there is none.

My flesh and heart doth faint and fear, but God doth fail me never.

[ 47 : 56 ] For of my heart God is the strength and portion of the earth.