

Knowing Our Shepherd | Psalm 23

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[0 : 00] Amen. Let's head back to Psalm chapter number 23. As you're turning there, Psalm chapter 23, thank you for that song. He is most certainly worthy. The Lord is my shepherd.

First statement in this chapter, it was also the words that I was looking for when I was about 10 years old, and we were having a play at the church, and so I was standing in the back wearing some type of robe, and I had a harp that was made out of cardboard, and it was dark in the back of the auditorium, and I had memorized Psalm chapter number 23, but I just forgot how it started, you know?

If I just had a few words to prime the pump, I was going to be okay, and so I took the big decorative Bible we had in the auditorium that was massive. It was like the size of the top of this pulpit here, and I was flipping through it, but I couldn't read it, so I was carrying it around and trying to find some light so I could find those words, the Lord is my shepherd, and I found it, and I ran through the church and found my part, and I did my job.

But the Lord is my shepherd are words that we don't want to forget at any time in our lives. That moment was frightful for me to not remember them, but there's other times in my life where I need to hold on to those words very tightly as well, that He is my shepherd.

David Dubois sent me a text this week, and I had a great thought. You know, we often say you've got to go deep if you want to go wide. When it comes to ministering to people or in teaching or whatever you're doing, that before you can have wide influence, you have to go deep in whatever subject it is that you're studying.

[1 : 25] How many of you have heard that before? Well, good. Y'all looked at me like you hadn't, okay? You have to go deep before you can go wide. Well, he made a great point, which is to say you also have to go wide before you can go deep when it comes to Bible study.

And what he was referring to is the more times that I've read through the Bible and the more of my life that I have lived trying to adhere to the Bible and be obedient to it, the more a psalm like Psalm 23 is sweet to me because the word shepherd has a deeper and more rich meaning to me.

The more I read through the Bible, the more I would understand the role that He has in my life. So this psalm, we see the steadfast love of our God and a confident trust as a response.

And could there be anything more needed in our lives than that right now? It's to say the steadfast love of our God and how we are supposed to respond to Him in trust. So let's, verse number one, the Lord is my shepherd.

David is going to be very familiar with what it means to be a shepherd. First Samuel chapter number 16, we know the story where they come to find the new king and where is David? They say, you don't want him, he just keeps the sheep, which is saying that he was a shepherd.

[2 : 34] And it seemed like it was not what the future king should be doing. But after we see more of the story, we realize that was exactly what the future king of Israel needed to be doing, was caring for sheep, was being a shepherd, which was learning to take care of them and understand it.

So the word shepherd would have been very familiar to David. Throughout the Bible, Psalm 95, 7, it says, For he is our God and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand today if we will hear his voice.

We as well should be very comfortable and familiar with the thoughts of shepherd and sheep. We might not have grown up on a farm caring for them as David did, but because we are people of the book, we ought to be very familiar with speaking like that.

Moses and Jacob and all through the Bible, we find people using this analogy and understanding what it's like. Couldn't be any more clear that he's speaking of people in Ezekiel 34, 31.

And ye, my flock, the flock of my pasture are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God. Speaking of the children of Israel, he said, I want to make it very clear to you.

[3 : 40] You are my sheep and I am your shepherd. And this is the mindset that every Christian ought to have today, that we are sheep in need of guidance from our shepherd. It's the mindset we should live with.

It's been mentioned that this is often something that you would hear at a funeral. I've heard it many times, recited it many times. At a gravesite, it brings great comfort. But we know the last words of it tells us that this would be for all the days of my life.

So not only at the end of our lives for this very great comfort, but today knowing he's our shepherd should do the same. David meditates on this. The Lord is my shepherd, and as a result, I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. I forget who told me, but somebody's kid was trying to memorize this. And it says, the Lord is my shepherd. I do not want him to be. Right? If a kid understands, I do not want, all they know is to say, I do not want broccoli.

I do not want vegetables. They do not. That's the only way they would understand that word, want. But we understand it to say here that we have no need for anything, that provision is made for us completely.

[4 : 46] Brother Brett's going to show you a picture here. But the truth that's being declared of a pastor of a green field, Brother Brett, if you wouldn't mind showing that, he declares that when the Lord provides, there is nothing he lacks.

And the image that has been given is a lush green meadows. He asserts that the Lord provides only the best provision. You know, sheep and goats, they often eat whatever is available to them.

You know, they'll take about anything. Me and my kids are about the same way. You know, Stephanie doesn't want to go through the drought through at Crystals, but we are okay with it. All right? But sheep and goats, they're not going to eat anything.

They're not going to call an Uber and be asked to take to another place. You know, they're going to eat what's as rare available to them. So they're dependent upon the shepherd to guide them to green pastures. I was looking at pictures of nature scenes because it's therapeutic.

Now, I was looking at pictures of nature scenes for the night in Psalm 24. It talks about the creation. And I couldn't believe in this picture as I was looking. It's probably hard from you as far away as you are. But right here is a shepherd with his sheep.

[5 : 46] You know, he hit the jackpot, didn't he? Look at the place that he is at. I mean, in every direction, there is green pastures as far as you can go. So instead of describing it for you today, I wanted to show that to you.

That shepherd led that sheep to a place where they are surrounded by these things. It tells us in the Bible in Psalm 84, 11, For the Lord God is sun and shield. The Lord will give grace and glory.

No good thing will be withheld from them that walk uprightly. That we can trust that what God has provided for us is what we need. And what do we say about the things that we think we need that we don't have?

That we shall not want. That God has provided all that we need in our spiritual provision in lives. But you know, there's times when the sheep aren't aware of the lushness of their location and they want to roam.

Maybe they want to hurry the shepherd to the next place and they're moving because they don't realize where they are at. Or sometimes they wander in the poison ivy. And I wonder if Andrew Pearson is listening today. He has one of those crazy sheep that wandered in the poison ivy.

[6 : 46] The shepherd had the responsibility of taking his sheep to places that they needed to eat and to graze and to avoid the places of danger that they shouldn't be. And that's why as sheep we can say about the shepherd, I shall not want.

I shouldn't worry. I shouldn't fret. Because I know my shepherd is going to lead and he's going to guide me. And then more in this verse it says, He restores my soul. He affirms that the Lord will lead him to full restoration.

This truth declares that the Lord restores the soul. The picture given there is of water that isn't moving. That is at peace and at rest where the shepherd would take them. So we know what is the role of a shepherd.

In a literal sense, when we look at the Bible or look into life, we know the role of the shepherd is to feed his sheep. Ezekiel 34 verse 2. The whole chapter of Ezekiel 34 gives us understanding of sheep and shepherds.

But it says, Ezekiel 34 2. Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God unto the shepherds, Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves.

[7 : 49] Shall not the shepherds feed the flocks? Isn't it the job of a shepherd to feed the flocks? So there's these shepherds that were sitting back, taking care of themselves and eating, but they weren't getting up and leading their sheep to a place to be fed.

And this was an indictment against them to say, That is not what a good shepherd would do. Then Jesus speaking to Peter in John chapter number 21 verse 15. He said, He saith unto him, Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.

And he saith unto him, Feed my sheep. When Peter was telling Christ that he loved them, Jesus says to Peter then, Well then feed my sheep. And then we get an understanding of what it looks like as us as sheep to be fed.

What is it that Peter is going to do? So we know Jesus is a shepherd. We know we're the sheep and we know he's going to feed us. But how is he going to feed us? It gives us insight on how we receive our spiritual nourishment.

1 Peter 5, God is providing food to a sheep when the word is being taught. It says, The elders which among you exhort, who also am elder and a witness of the suffering of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed, feed the flock of God which is among you.

[8 : 57] Is that when people teach us the word, it is the good shepherd feeding us through them as our under shepherd. Brother Brad, if you'd put that picture back up again of that lush meadow, you know, and knowing that we're surrounded by it.

So when I think about God's care for me, I had many thoughts immediately of all great God's care for me, not only physical, but also spiritual. This week I built this gate, and now I call it a wall because it's a little bit taller than a gate.

And after I got done with it, I was so proud of it. And Salem, my five-year-old said, Dad, that sure was a lot of work so that the neighbors can't see our trash cans. And I thought about it for a little bit. I'm thinking, you know, you're right.

That was a lot of work just so our neighbors can't see our trash cans. And I've told you before how fascinated I am about the fact that somebody comes to my house and picks up trash because that wasn't a luxury we had in Kentucky.

And I watched it for a long time. Every time I put it out there, I wanted to watch the guy come and get it for me. You know, I couldn't believe that. And so now I find myself building fences so that people can't see the trash can. And she said that, and then she laughed at me and ran off.

[9 : 55] But it left me standing there just thinking, man, what kind of life am I living where I have the luxury to build fences around trash cans so that my neighbors don't see the trash cans? God has taken very good care of me.

And maybe the fences around your trash can isn't something you've thought about today, but it's one of the many ways that we've just been absurdly blessed in our lives. We're absurdly blessed to even be, to worry about things that most of the world has never worried about.

And if you're a believer today, God has taken care of you. But much more than that, I stand in a meadow, been led by a shepherd, because I am surrounded by opportunities to be fed spiritually.

Logging in this morning, you can log into a life group this morning, you get to come to church. When you're done, you can go home. The rest of your day, in your language, you can hear Bible teaching. Many of you had it as a child growing up.

Some of you know Psalm 23, and it didn't come easy to you, and somebody helped you. Our God cares for us, and He leads us to places where we can be spiritually fed.

[10 : 56] So why would we ever walk around weak, and anemic, and not being fed spiritually, when our shepherd gives us, so that we should not want, that He has provided for us.

The Word is Scripture. Hebrews 5, Hebrews chapter number 5, verse 12. For when the time you ought to be teachers, you have need, that one teach you again, which is the first principle of the oracles of God, and are become such as need of milk, and not of strong meat.

For everyone that uses milk, is unskillful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. The strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses, and exercise to discern both good and evil.

You know, oftentimes we come to this passage when we can make an argument and say, hey, James, it's time for you to be ready for the meat of God's Word, and not just the milk, because you ought to be maturing as a Christian. But isn't it incredible that from the very beginning of our Christian life, God has something to feed us, and to grow us, and he knows exactly what we need at that stage in our life, and it's available to us.

Silas at our home, newborn, six, I guess you can't be a newborn for your whole life, six months, newborn, and in our home, you know, and sometimes in the middle of the night, he'll start making noises and saying, hey, pay attention to me, I'm hungry, and if by chance I get up and he sees me, he's like, oh, it's Stephanie's bearded child, okay?

[12 : 13] He isn't going to be, you know, he isn't any help to me. He just keeps on doing whatever he's doing. He doesn't think much about it. But if Stephanie gets near the crib and he sees Stephanie, he just goes berserk because he says, that's the lady that provides me with six ounces of milk whenever I do this thing that I'm doing right now, all right?

And it's been interesting to watch him go from three ounces, the four ounces, the six ounces, the eight ounces, or more, whatever he needs so he sleeps through the night, all right? And so we keep providing more for him over time, and he grows, and it's wonderful to see.

And we don't despise him where he's at. He's eating where he's at and he needs to, but he constantly needs that. You and your life need it as well. You may say, I'm not ready for some of the things that are being talked about here, but you know what you could be ready for?

Just reading the Bible 15 minutes a day and talking to somebody. You must feed yourself. The shepherd's leading you to green pastures. He's taking the places that you can feed yourself. We could talk about all the effects upon a sheep if they're not eating, but every one of you know what it's like in our lives.

Any of you ever get hangry in life, right? The combination of hungry and hangry. I have to explain it because you're like, Trent's just saying hungry, but we don't understand him again. All right? I'm saying hangry on purpose here. All right? Hungry and hangry, it affects you.

[13 : 28] You know, one of the first things that happen is, you know, if I'm getting that way, somebody will hand me something to eat, and I'm amazed that it just, it goes to that in our lives. You suffer from the lack of not receiving God's word in your life, and everybody around us feels it, and so we ought to let the shepherd lead us here, and he guides us, and we got to say, I shall not want.

How could those sheep surrounded by that green meadow ever say, I need more than this? You know, I want to go to another place that everything available for them, and it says that he leads them to a place of rest.

He leadeth me beside the still waters. Throughout the Bible, it says, we see that this water that's not settled or that's shaken is a cause of chaos.

Isaiah 43, verse 2, When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the waters thou shalt not overflow thee. And so, calm waters are going to represent spiritual cleansing.

The Lord cleanses his people from sin and provides spiritual refreshment and renewal from the chaos of life. God brings restoration and cleansing from the chaos of life.

[14 : 34] Can we say amen to that? How many of you are experiencing the chaos of life? I was speaking to Brother Halberg earlier, and we were going to get together for something, and I had missed an opportunity to talk to him one day.

And I said, have you ever been to the circus and there's that person that rides the motorcycle and they ride in circles over and over? How many of you have seen this before? If you haven't, your childhood wasn't all that it could have been, okay? I'll just go ahead and let you know.

It's a big circle and it's made and the motorcycle rides around. Well, we're at a time where we're all experiencing that together. This is the chaos of life that is going on, but God leads us from chaos to place and he says, I will give you rest.

I will restore your soul. You're beat up from the circumstances of life. You're dealing with fear. You don't know what's going on. You can go to your shepherd and your shepherd can take you to a place where there's still water.

He can restore your soul. There's no reason to live in that constant chaos. This word of restore your soul, this restoring, we find it throughout the Old Testament. First Kings, it's a restoring of a withered hand.

[15 : 32] In Isaiah, it's the restoring of captives in the land. Also in Isaiah, it's the repairing of walls. In Daniel, we're seeing a rebuilding of a ruined city. That God can make things complete.

Now we often think of rest as we've been exhausted, but think about rest as completeness. On the seventh day, God rested. It wasn't that he was exhausted in creating the world with his spoken word, but it was complete and he was done.

That God can bring wholeness and completeness in our lives because he's the shepherd and he knows how to lead us and to guide us to these places of still waters. Fellow believers in here, I can tell you from life experience that some of you need to be led to still waters in your life.

That you need to let him take you there to calm your emotions in your life and to spend time with him. Reasons that sheep might need restoring in Ezekiel chapter number 34.

I told you that chapter gives us so much about sheep and shepherds. It says they were scattered because they had no shepherd. People need to be gathered because they don't have a shepherd. If you don't have God as your shepherd in this world, you live as somebody who does not have anybody guiding them.

[16 : 39] You are on your own and you need that. You need that. In verse number 16 of that chapter, it says, I will seek that which was lost and I'll bring again that which was driven away and I will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which is sick.

That is the work of the shepherd and that is the work of God in our lives is to find those that are lost and bring them that have been driven away, bind them up that was broken and the strength of them lost and driven away and broken and sick.

The good shepherd is able to care for all people in those positions of life. With God as our shepherd, we can have, be at a place where we can say, I do not want.

He provides all that we need and he restores us when we go astray and that truth ought to transform our lives and the way that we live.

Some groceries bags in my back seat and we're laughing about this and we're like, Miss West, this is overkill. It's just a 10-hour trip and we can get food on the way but she just filled the back of our car because she was worried that we wouldn't get enough to eat.

[17 : 42] So we're like 18 and 20 so we get about 15 minutes down the road before we were hungry again, right? And so we reach to the back and we have some deli meat and we make some sandwiches going down the road, you know, we make some sandwiches there and then we're going and saying, man, that was great.

I sure wish we had some dessert. He opens up a cooler and there is a complete chocolate cake there for us, all right? And so here we are eating chocolate cake with our hands, probably still not out of our county yet and we're going down the road and we're saying, man, you know what I have to have if I have chocolate milk, I mean I have chocolate cake, I have to have what?

Milk, right? Milk. Whole milk is preferred, all right? And sometimes whole milk will trick you. I think it's supposed to have a red tab. It usually has a red tab but sometimes that can be 1% or 2% milk but on special occasions I get whole milk and this doesn't do anything for the rest of you but Miss West, she had provided not just a gallon of milk but she had provided two gallons of whole milk for a 10 hour journey to Florida.

So here we are eating our cake and now we both have a gallon of milk going down the road and drinking it. You know, there's a lot of things you're not allowed to do. You can't text and drive but nobody said you can't have chocolate cake and drink a gallon of milk as you go down the road and so we laugh about that today about how Miss West seemed to be over prepared for our journey in life.

Can I tell you none of that even gives a near comparison to what God has done for you in your journey of life. He is completely able to help you with whatever you have going on right now and how does He want to feed you and how does He want to nourish you?

[19 : 14] He wants to do it from His Word. Every one of us love the idea of chocolate cake and every one of us love the idea of being led by a shepherd but we must not forget that the way that the shepherd leads is He's going to guide us with His Word.

So to talk about Him being your shepherd and love that but to ignore God's Word is to ignore His guidance in our lives. So the closer we draw to Him the closer we draw to His Word.

So we all love this idea of being a shepherd but we have to hear His Word. Notice that the shepherd provides nourishment. It tells us where we will graze and where we should go and be fed.

And as the shepherd He restores our soul in chaos and we should let Him lead us and choose the places and our lives that we would go. So, so far we have seen the psalmist he receives teaching of the Lord green pastures and still waters and His teaching leads him to a spiritual renewal.

This restores his soul and the spiritual renewal ensures that He will follow He leads him in these paths of righteousness. Verses 2-4 He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

[20 : 20] Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil for thou art with me thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. So, David affirms that the Lord leads him because of his reputation.

This is so wonderful. He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness and for what reason and to what guarantee that we know that He will lead us to right places for His namesake. He declares, David, that the Lord leads him in the right way and as a good shepherd He chooses His way.

King David is in many different places. Many think He's written this at a time where Absalom's rebellion's happening but all through David's life He is constantly at a crossroads. He is constantly at a path where He says do I go this way or should I go this way?

Will I be honoring the God? Will I throw back the javelin that's been thrown at me? All these different things are going on. He's making decisions and He has full confidence that with all the different ways He can go in life and all the different decisions that He can make that God never will make a mistake, that God will always lead Him in the right direction.

How many of you in here would admit that you're a backseat driver? You're constantly telling the driver what they should do. All right? I will give an invitation for those of you here in a moment. My wife likes to be a backseat driver at intersections.

[21 : 33] All right? She likes to tell me the light's green or red when it may or may not be green or red which is very scary, isn't it? If you're going through an intersection and somebody screams, that is not what you want to have going on.

And so being a backseat driver, some of you are teaching your teenagers to drive and you're pushing the gas pedal or the brake on your side of the road, of the car. And so David here says, I have full assurance that my shepherd is good and what kind of guarantee do we have on our shepherd?

He does it for his namesake. What kind of reputation would a shepherd have if he doesn't have any sense of direction? Oh, Jedediah over there, he's a great shepherd. Sounds like a shepherd, right? Oh, Jedediah, he's a great shepherd.

He just has no sense of direction though. He just never knows where he's going. He just never knows where to take the sheep. Well, the priorities of a shepherd is to know where to lead the sheep and to know the land, to know the terrain, to know where to go through a valley, where to avoid, to know where there'd be poisonous things that the sheep would eat and to guide them.

And so he says, based on his reputation, he is a good shepherd and it is for his namesake and for his reputation. He has connected his ability to guide us with his reputation.

[22 : 43] He knows that the shepherd will lead him safely through dangerous circumstances. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me. Thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

The conditions, he explains, there may be life-threatening circumstances. Throughout the Bible, this valley of the shadow of death is seen in Amos. It's a deep darkness of night where Job speaks about it as being a land of darkness, the place of the dead.

Jeremiah, when he refers to it, it's talking about extreme danger. We know it's the shadow of death. It's not death that they're going through it and God brings protection for them. But he says, I trust my shepherd not because I don't go into those places and not just because he delivers me out of those.

But why does he? He does it because he is with me. His presence is what helps us. He declares that the presence of the Lord dispels fear. We may not be free of our circumstances, but we can be free of the fear of our circumstances because we acknowledge that the shepherd is with us, that he is leading and guiding us, not as cattle that are driven, but as a shepherd that leads us along and he is there with us.

Brother Brad, if you wouldn't mind showing that picture of a rod and a staff, and I imagine you know what this looks like in your life because in this passage there's the image of a rod and a staff and the search that the Lord will use these for comfort.

[24 : 04] In Isaiah chapter number 36, you'll see the word rod and staff show up in the Bible, typically in a literal sense being used, but in Isaiah a very clear picture of how it's being used in this passage. Isaiah 36, 6 says, Lo, thou trustest in the staff of a broken reed on Egypt, whereon if a man leaned on it he would go into his hand and pierce it, so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

So it's saying that Pharaoh, the one that he is leaning on, it isn't any good. If you leaned upon it, it would break and in its breaking it would go into your hand because it isn't strong and able to provide, but our shepherd has a staff and a rod to bring us correction and to give us guidance.

The two instruments that a shepherd would use as they're taking their sheep out, a rod and a staff. You know, the rod being, the staff being reached down to be able to grab the sheep and draw it closer to them, this rod being used for protection.

So in Isaiah it was saying you can't trust Egypt, their rod and their staff isn't going to care for you, but here in Psalms we know that our shepherd his rod and his staff, they lead and they guide us and they care for us.

Our shepherd has a great reputation even to this day. Romans 8 chapter, chapter number 8 verse 14, For as many are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Since the age of nine I've been able to recognize our shepherd's voice and he's been able to guide me.

[25 : 22] From the time that I became a believer God is able to lead me by his word and be my shepherd and led by the Spirit of God. How do we make choices throughout the day?

How do we choose the path that we were to take? God leads us through the word and through the Spirit and he guides us. Some things in the Bible, many things in the Bible are taken care of for us already and I really love that.

It's one of the things that I love about Sunday. You make a lot of decisions throughout the week where you should go and what you should do but don't you love the rhythm of Sunday? Don't you love the fact that you know that today either at home, online or here that you're supposed to be with your family, have the word of God open?

That's in our Bible. It's in black and white and even in red, you know, in the words of Jesus that we are supposed to be around the word as a church family. But there's other times that we don't have things written out for us in black and white and we have to make decisions and so we look to the shepherd that leads us and how does he lead his children?

He leads his children by the Spirit. How does the Holy Spirit lead us? He leads us from the word that he has taught us. He leads us by the principles that are being taught. He is very much alive in our lives today, guiding us as a shepherd and directing our paths but so many times we just live as people and have nobody to guide us.

[26 : 37] The Lord defends his people in times of danger. I will fear no evil for thou art with me. And Abby Cofield in her room, we put, I helped her cut some vinyl out.

It says, when I am afraid I will trust, what time I am afraid I will trust in you. What a great memory passage for a young kid. When they're afraid, you don't fight fearful facts with other data.

You fight fearful facts with the presence of God knowing that he is going to be there for us. God is with us is a common statement. Jacob hears it first in Genesis 28, 15.

He says, I am with thee. In Exodus, Moses, he said, certainly I will be with thee. And Emmanuel, the name that was prophesied of Jesus and Isaiah, which means God is with us. And in the great commission that is so familiar to all of us in here, in Matthew 28, verse 20, it says, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always, even until the end of the world. Amen. You know, a commission to take the gospel into the world, a commission to do all these things, if we did not have the promise that was given, lo, I am with you, it would leave every one of us without guidance.

[27 : 47] It would lead every one of us to a place that we could not go and do the things that he's doing. We're empowered by that fact that he says, lo, I am with you always. This is more than a statement about his omnipresence, right?

We say, of course he's with us always. David said, wherever I go, I make my bed, you'll be there. And we say, we know God's everywhere. We teach that to our kids. But more is being said here than that God is everywhere at all times.

But it says that God can intervene in our lives as a shepherd. He's there in a very real sense in your life. He can work. How many of you have met the shepherd in hard times?

You can go to those places where you are wondering and you go to him and from his word he leads and he guides you. I remember a story that I'll just never forget and I'd almost thought about not to share it with you today.

It's just so, just such a strong and intense picture here for you. But a young boy about the age of 10 years old was dying of cancer in his home and when he was in the last days of his life the pastor came to his house and he went into the room and he shared some verses with the kid and as he talked to him he left and in the middle of the night the kid passed away.

[28 : 58] The pastor gets a call from the family and he comes over and they said our son passed away in the middle of the night the kid was a believer and he says there's just something we don't understand. He said that throughout the night he just kept pulling on his ring finger.

All throughout the night he just kept pulling upon his ring finger. The pastor shared with him a story. He said as I stood there with him and I read Psalm 23 to him he said I told him to remember this the Lord the Lord is my shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd. That young man was holding on to that word my. The Lord is my shepherd. God is seen throughout the Bible as a shepherd and children as a sheep but here David was saying the Lord is my shepherd.

My personal shepherd. Not just the one that orders the steps of this church. Not just the one that leads your family but everybody from young to old in here he can be your shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

What an incredible word in that. That personal leading that he would have. Pray that in here today you could say that the Lord is my shepherd. That you wouldn't leave without knowing that he is your shepherd and he led you here today and he wants to know you.

[30 : 08] How aware of you of his presence in your life and in your troubles. Do you recognize the comfort of this rod and staff today that you're not alone. Verse number 5 the scene changes from the pasture to a banquet hall and the image of the Lord will change from a shepherd to a host.

So now picture with me a great banquet hall and there's many people seated at the table. If you're thinking of a great banquet hall and you're at Golden Corral or Ryan's you might be a redneck like me.

Okay? Maybe think about something a little bit fancier here. And so there's David that's picturing a banquet hall set out. From God's good care for me I can rest assured that his care will be all sufficient and unwavering.

Thou preparest the table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thou anointest my head with oil my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

So he uses this image of a gracious host and his guest and David can reflect on this and know that God will provide all of his needs even in a dangerous circumstances. So not only is there a banquet table that is there but it says that it happens in the presence of his enemies.

[31 : 15] We learn from the Bible that throughout the custom there was that if you were the host then you took on the responsibility of the safety of your guest. And I'm sure that's the same today.

It's kind of unspoken you know. If you never have anybody come to your house and say hey I'm so glad that you're here the whole time that you're here I will protect you from anything that might go wrong in my neighborhood. Alright? If you said that a few times you'd probably have less guests come over to your house.

But it's an unspoken noun but it's very clear in that day that if you were to come into somebody's home that they were to provide protection for you. Remember Lot when the angels come to his door and the people in the city said they want to take him he would not let that happen.

That is very serious for him the idea that he had to provide protection to the people that came into his home. That is the responsibility of a good host is to provide protection for those that come into their home to have a meal.

God is saying that I will host you. I will set out a banquet before you. I will protect you. And that even before your enemies I can provide protection for you. The host will anoint the head with oil and affirms that he welcomes us into his presence.

[32 : 23] Once again this is something not common to us but living in a dry and a desert place they would come into there they would clean their hands they often been offered some kind of oil given to them to help with all the dryness and a good host to do that.

In the Bible we said as a token a happiness or symbol of prosperity or as a treasure or as a tribute given. Jesus in Luke chapter number 7 when he goes into the house there and they're all criticizing the woman because she is washing the feet of Jesus he looks at them and says I came into their house and I was your guest but you didn't even offer me these things you didn't even offer me oil because a good host would do that.

He is a gracious host that welcomes us into his presence and so it's no wonder that David would say my cup runneth over. Ever been somewhere and the hospitality was just so much and you just were fed well and they were taking such good care of you and you just said this is too much you push back from the table and you just say this is too much that you have done that is the kind of host that God is for us that our cup is overflowing with his goodness towards us verse 6 surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life you know if it was left to us to chase after him we would never catch it but it says that goodness and mercy it follows don't think about it as something that lags behind as if it's running it never catches up with you but think of something that pursues you heard the story that illustrates this week of a person that you're driving down the road and you see those blue lights behind you and you think I'm not going to stop you know I'm just going to gun it I'm going to go for it not a good idea Jonathan alright if you see the blue lights pull over this I'm just going to go for it and they keep going the police officer finally pulls them over and walks up to the door and they say sir you left your wallet back there at the last place you're at and I wanted to return that to you and not only do I want to return that to you but you won a sweepstakes at the restaurant you were at and I wanted to give you this money how amazing would that be that what pursued you was mercy and it was goodness then that person that police officer says hey why don't you come with me drives you to his house beautiful mansion so I want to provide this for you to live in you know what's fall short in this story is it's about winning you're getting your wallet back and it's about a mansion but more than not we get to be in the presence of our

God his goodness and mercy it overtakes us that when we sin his grace abounds in our lives his goodness and mercy it follows us in Luke chapter 19 we know that he came to seek and to save that was lost and he did he came after and he found and I pray that's true of your life Romans 8 38 39 for I am persuaded that neither death nor life nor angels nor principalities nor powers nor things present nor things to come nor height nor death nor any creatures shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord our cup overflows his goodness is there for us he pursues us with goodness and with mercy he sets out a banquet table and no enemy that we have could come against us he protects us you know when we think about a table and we have our enemies and maybe what my kids think when we have family dinner their enemies are at the table their brothers and sisters they fight with but as an adult we don't really imagine who our enemies would be but you wake up in the middle of the night and you can't go back to sleep because of all the anxieties of your life all the things that you're worried about are sitting at the table with you you went to bed fine but now it's four in the morning and every possible scenario in life is now sitting at a table with you and you're thinking about it and you're dealing with anxiety and they're right there at the table with you instead of counting your sheep you should invite the shepherd to the table that God is there with you you can pray to him you can have those things going on yes you're going to wake up and the problems are still going to be there but you can sit at that table and you can know that the shepherd is there and that he's going to lead and he's going to guide you and he's going to protect you because in his presence he is a host and he gives us all things good he said he would withhold nothing good from us so David was in need of spiritual renewal he might have been in a place where he needed being restored or it might have been simply that he just couldn't get back to that formal place of worship as he was running and that's very applicable for all of us today whatever David's spiritual condition was

God in his mercy followed him and would draw him so in this psalm there is no plea there's no request that's being made psalm 23 is actually just a story the story of a journey it's the journey of faith and it's just real life for all of us that are pilgrims in this world and we ought to be led by our shepherd Jesus said when he looked out that he had compassion on them because they were people without a shepherd which is to say that all people in this world need the guiding of a good shepherd so if you're an unbeliever in here today I would like to introduce you to the good shepherd because we first entered in the Bible we know him to be the lamb of God when John the Baptist saw him he said behold the lamb of God that takes away the sins of the whole world because in the Old Testament they took the sacrificial lamb and the sins of the people were placed upon him and it took the place to make atonement means it took the place of the people and their sins and what that was is getting the people ready because the day would come that Jesus would take our place upon a cross and when he died that day he was sinless but he was dying for our sins and now he can lead us and he can guide us in this world he didn't leave us alone the Holy

[37 : 47] Spirit is now leading us in this world and we would love to take the word of God and show you how Jesus Christ died for you and how he could be your shepherd but believer in here you know Psalms 23 you learned it in Patch the Pirate or Awana or something growing up you've heard it in this church before but are we living as people who do not have a good shepherd he stakes his reputation on the fact that he is a good shepherd and we should not have fear he does it for his namesake and I want to encourage you to take some time and meditate as David did upon the goodness of your shepherd are you living at somebody by the still waters that is being fed and then there's some practical application here how is he going to guide you he's going to guide you with his word and he's going to guide you into his word so that you can be spiritually fed maybe you're at a place that's needing the milk of God's word maybe you're needing to move on to the meat of God's word but wherever you're at God's word has something for you and needs to nourish you do you know what it feels like to be hungry today do you know what it's like to be hungry in need of God's nourishment that he gives you

I tell you to look to the good shepherd and encourage you in that so we're going to take a moment and pray if you're an unbeliever in here I'm going to pray for does for you what he did for me and was that he was long suffering that he gave me opportunity to respond to his goodness and that his goodness had pursued me and I learned of his mercy and I responded to him in faith and that's what I want to pray that you do today I want to pray that you respond to him in faith and those of you that are believers in here I want to pray that we live as sheep who recognize the fact that we have a good shepherd and let him lead and guide moved with compassion for those that do not have a shepherd Lord it is our prayer that your word today would find itself to the ears of people who do not know you that are sheep without a shepherd and Lord I pray for them Lord I pray that you'll continue to be long suffering towards them allowing them opportunity to respond to your goodness

I thank you for your death upon the cross Lord to die for our sins and that you have now restored us and reconciled us to the father and I pray that for every day would be the day of salvation that they would find somebody before they leave here today they would call into the church that they would find what they need and that they would find you as a guide and shepherd in their lives. Heavenly Father now I pray for my believing friends my brothers and sisters in Christ those that are mature in their faith Lord that have walked for you many years but I also pray for my younger brothers and sisters in Christ Lord I pray that they won't live life ignoring you and your guidance.

that they will love the fact that they will love the Lord that they will love the fact that they will love the fact that you're a good shepherd. Father Lord I ask that you forgive me in times that I have lived as if I did not need you as if I did not need guidance in my life. Lord you are my shepherd. Pray that everyone in here today Lord can recognize that fully.

Father Lord can recognize that fully.