

The Lord my Shepherd

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[0 : 00] What a new term with me to say that, the book of Psalms and Psalm 23. The book of Psalms and Psalm 23.

I'm going to read the whole Psalm. Psalm 23. A Psalm updated.

The Lord is my shepherd and shaman one. He makes me lie down in green pasture. He leads me beside still water. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear the leader. For you are with me. You rod in your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You align to my head with oil. My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord.

[1 : 17] Now in the context and culture in which we live, the shepherd theme of Scripture is one in which we can very easily relate to. And for that reason I want us to turn our attention to the shepherd's Psalm of Psalm 23.

Because it's a Psalm which has been precious to us down throughout the centuries. Of course all the Psalms they're precious because, well, the gods weren't. And they have the Psalms, they have this unique ability to address every area and every circumstance and every feeling and every emotion that we go through in our lives.

And this is what makes the Psalms so wonderful that they're able to speak to our soul in a way in which no one else can. But as individuals who go through different experiences and who encounter different providences, there are certain Psalms that we would maybe consider particularly.

Precious to us, either because it encouraged us during a time of difficulty or the Psalms spoke to us powerfully, or it was used by the Lord to shape our life in a particular way.

And because of that there are certain Psalms that we might describe as our favorite Psalm. My favorite Psalm, as I mentioned before, is Psalm 51. That was my mother's prayer. Verse 1 was my mother's prayer after I was born, after thy loving kindness, Lord, have mercy upon my Lord.

[2 : 44] It was my prayer. Verse 10 was my prayer when I was seeking the Lord, create a clean heart. Lord, renew a right spirit within me. And then verse 13 was my call to the ministry.

And what it says, then will I teach thy ways unto those that transgressors be, and those that sin or genre shall then be turned unto thee. And so you can see why Psalm 51 is my favorite Psalm.

And God willing, every Thursday evening that I'm with you, I'd like to consider a favorite Psalm of someone from the congregation.

I've already asked two men, I've asked Angus. It is Angus, isn't it? Not all. Angus and Dole, I've asked them for their favorite Psalms. And I'll try and go through all of you all, ask you all of your favorite Psalms.

So we can look at them, and every time you read that favorite Psalm of someone, or when we sing it, you are to think of that person, and you're to pray for them.

[3 : 44] My mother has this love and affection for Psalms, and everywhere she sees numbers, she's always thinking of somebody, and this is their favorite Psalm.

Like, well my father's Psalm is Psalm 19, my uncle's Psalm, who's a fisherman, Psalm 107. There's all these different Psalms, they're all favorite Psalms, and it always reminds my mother to pray for them.

That's what I want us to do, that when we see or hear somebody's favorite Psalm, that we think of them and we pray for them. And it's always good to know something about someone, especially their favorite Psalm.

But this evening I just want us to consider Psalm 23, which should be everyone's favorite Psalm. And I believe that the reason Psalm 23 is so well known, and because it's so precious to people, is because it's so personal.

Psalm 23 is a personal Psalm, and it addresses the soul in a personal way, and that's how Psalm 23 opens. It opens with this personal proclamation, a personal proclamation where David says, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

[4 : 57] Now being a shepherd in ancient Israel, that was considered to be one of the lowest of all the family tasks. If the family needed a shepherd, it was always the youngest son who was given the unpleasant job of looking after the family flock.

And the shepherd, he would have to nourish and guide and protect the sheep all year round. And such a, you could say, such a menial task, it begs the question, who would want to be a shepherd?

Who would want to own dirty, disobedient and determined sheep? And who would want to look after them all day, every day? And yet David's personal proclamation here, it affirms to us that that's what the Lord does with us.

He takes dirty, disobedient and determined sheep, and he claims us as his own. And we belong to this shepherd only because the shepherd laid down his life for the sheep.

That's what we read earlier in John chapter 10, where Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. I know my own and my own know me.

[6 : 08] So the only way we are able to make this personal proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd. The only way we're able to make that proclamation is because the shepherd has made the personal proclamation about us, you and my sheep.

And you know, this is what David is proclaiming that he has discovered for himself. David had come to know and experience this personal relationship with the Lord. He had come to realize that the good shepherd knew him personally.

And that's the key word in this personal proclamation, the word my. The Lord is my shepherd. And Jesus says about us, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

And so what is that about proclamation? The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

And you know this personal relationship between the shepherd and the sheep, it always reminds me of the story of the young shepherd boy from Wales. This young shepherd boy, he was both deaf and he was unable to speak.

[7 : 22] And this young shepherd boy, he was once met, he once met two Christian men who were walking in the Welsh Moor. And these two men, they explained to the shepherd boy using sign language.

They explained to him that Jesus wanted to be his shepherd. And they told the boy that Jesus was the good shepherd. And as a good shepherd, he would always look after him.

Jesus would always take care of him and Jesus would love him just like he loved and cared for him after his own sheep. And although this young shepherd boy couldn't speak, the two men taught him to repeat the words, the Lord is my shepherd.

They taught him to repeat these words using his fingers, the Lord is my shepherd. And they told him to always pause on the fourth finger and remember the importance of claiming the Lord as my.

My shepherd. That when the shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, he died for me. He is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd.

[8 : 28] And the story goes that some years later, one of the Christian men, he was passing through the same village near to the Welsh Moor, which where he had met this young shepherd boy. And he was at one of the local shops and the Christian man, he asked the shopkeeper if she knew the young shepherd boy and wondered if that boy was still around.

And it turned out that the shepherd boy was the shepherd boy's mother. And she explained that he was in a terrible storm during the previous winter. And the boy had sadly died because he was buried in a snowdove.

But you know, the mother of the shepherd boy said that there was one thing that she couldn't understand. And it was that when her son's body was finally discovered in the snow, he was found holding his fourth finger.

And it was then that the Christian man, he went on to explain to the grieving mother what he had taught her son. That he had taught him to make this personal proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd.

The Lord is my shepherd. I know it's, it begs the question, is that our personal proclamation tonight? The Lord is my shepherd.

[9 : 44] You know, in this opening verse, David not only makes a personal proclamation about his shepherd, he also draws attention to the personal provision of his shepherd when he says, at the end of version one, I shall not want.

And in these words, David affirms that when the Lord is his shepherd, he will not lack in any way. He will never be deprived or disadvantaged because he's a sheep of the good shepherd.

Of course, the word will tell you that when you make the Lord your shepherd, that you're losing out, you're losing out on the fun and the entertainment, or even the real enjoyment of life. But the truth is, when you make this personal proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd.

You have the assurance that you will have the personal provision of the shepherd. You will not be in one. You will not lack anything. And throughout the rest of Psalm 23, David highlights some of these personal provisions of the shepherd.

Because he says to us in verse two that when we make the personal proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd. We have the personal provision of his peace. The personal provision of his peace. He says in verse two, he makes me lie down in green pasture.

[11 : 00] He leads me beside still water. The first provision that David highlights is the peaceful locations that the shepherd would lead his flock.

Because the shepherd would lead his flock to green pasture, which in the hills of Israel, was a lush green area of grazing that would flourish after the rainy season.

It would be a pasture land that would provide food and nourishment for the sheep. And the fact that David says he makes me to lie down in green pasture, it indicates that he was full.

He was satisfied. And what do sheep do when they're full and they're satisfied? They lie down. They chew the cud. And you know, that's what we have to do as sheep off the good shepherd.

We have to feed upon the abundant provision of the gospel. We need to feed upon the Lord. We need to fill ourselves with the Word. We need to read our Bible. We need to be in church. We need to enjoy fellowship with the Lord's people.

[12 : 00] And when we're filled, when we're satisfied by the Word, we have to lie down. We have to sit and chew the cud. We have to pond and reflect and meditate upon what we've been reading or hearing or discussing.

And consider how we're going to apply it in our lives and live it out to the glory of God. You know, notice David says that the shepherd not only leads us to green pasture, she also leads us besides still water.

He leads us to a place of peace where there is peace in our heart and peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And it's a piece that the apostle Paul says is indescribable because it's a piece that passes on under snow.

But you know, it's when we experience the still waters. That's when we're refreshed in our soul. And that's when we see the glory and the wonder that the Lord is our shepherd.

That's when we see that and realize that this shepherd would look upon us at all. Because when we consider ourselves, we see all our waywardness and all our lostness, where we once were, and we were once so far away from him.

[13 : 14] And yet, when we first tasted that life giving, giving sleep, it quenched everything and satisfied the deep desires of our soul. And that well, it became in us that spring of water unto eternal life.

You know, my friend, it's only our good shepherd who could make this personal provision of his peace. But you know what's interesting is that the good shepherd leads his sheep to the provision of his peace.

He leads them by his voice. He doesn't drive us. He doesn't force us. He leads us by his voice. That's what Jesus said. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me.

So hearing the voice of Jesus is what brings peace into our life. And you know that you're a sheep which belongs to the good shepherd when you hear the word of God and your desire to obey it.

You know that Jesus has claimed you as his own when you can say with the hymnator, I heard the voice of Jesus say, come unto me and rest. Lay down the way you want, lay down my head upon my breast.

[14 : 27] I came to Jesus as I was weary and worn and sad. And I found him a resting place and he has made me glad. And you know what has made you glad is that he brought peace into your experience.

And you now love the voice of the good shepherd because it's that voice which speaks tenderly to your soul. It's that voice that speaks peace to your soul.

When we make that personal proclamation for Lord his nightingale, we have the personal provision of his peace. But then secondly David reminds us that we have the personal provision of his pardon.

The personal provision of his pardon. He says in March 3, he restored my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. In this verse David draws attention to the personal dealings which the Lord has with his sheep.

And David is talking about the occasion when the Lord sought him personally. And when the Lord found him and when the Lord provided his pardon for him. You can see it's just like the parable of the lost sheep.

[15 : 39] The shepherd left in 99 in the field and he went in search of that one lost sheep. And he personally sought the lost sheep and dealt with them personally.

And that's how the Lord deals with all of his flow. He deals with us at a personal level because he knows us and he knows how to deal with us.

And he knows what he needs. That's why David says he restores my soul. He restores my soul. The phrase can also be translated as he brings me to repentance.

He brings me to repentance. And what David is saying is that we don't come to a knowledge of our lost state by ourselves. No, the shepherd brings us to that point.

He leads us to that point in our lives through all the different events and providences that we encounter. And each and every one of these events in our lives, they're all put there.

[16 : 37] Because the shepherd put them there. And you know, when you look back, you make your own life and how the Lord has walked in your life. You can see that everything was there for a reason.

It was all there to bring you to a knowledge of your lost state and your need of this shepherd. And it was when you were brought to that point in your life. That's when you cried out to the shepherd.

That's when, and when you cried out to him, he found you and he drew near to you and he reassured you of his forgiveness. He lifted you up by his mercy. He held on to you by his grace.

And in that moment, as David says, he restored your soul and he began to lead you in paths of righteousness. And he did it all, says David. He does it all for his name's sake.

For his name's sake, he did it. The shepherd did it. He saved you so that he would get all the glory in your salvation.

[17 : 39] My friend, when you make the partial proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd. You have the partial provision of his peace and his pardon.

And in merch form, you have the partial provision of his presence. David says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

For you're with me. You're raw in your staff. They comfort me. You know, David, he outbrings us in merch form. He brings us into new territory. He brings us into the valley of the shadow of death.

And the vivid description of this valley, it seeks to emphasize that there's no other route that can be taken. Because we can't go over the valley. We can't go around the valley. We can't turn back from the valley.

We're told that we have to go through the valley of the shadow of death. And by calling it the valley of the shadow of death, it gives the idea of a deep darkness. In which the darkness gets deeper and deeper the further you go to the valley.

[18 : 43] Because in the valley of the shadow of death, there's no hope. There's no light. There's no life. There's no peace. And that's because death is the enemy. It's the valley of the shadow of death.

And even though many people try to make the land of death and the reality of death, the only reality of death is that it destroys homes and tears families apart.

It brings chaos into people's lives. And all it leaves behind is nothing but sadness and heartache and sorrow. And you know, when we're confronted with death, it casts this frightening shadow over us.

Because we can't prevent its arrival. We can't delay its visitation. And when it comes, we're always made to realize that we're absolutely helpless in its presence.

Death is the last enemy. And it's a powerful enemy. But you know what David emphasizes to us here is that it's in the presence of death that the presence of the shepherd is made known.

[19 : 52] It's in the presence of death that the presence of the shepherd is made known. And because of his, this personal provision of his presence, David can say, I will fear no evil. I will fear no evil.

And notice, when it comes to going through the valley of the shadow of death, the shepherd is no longer leading his sheep like he led them to green pastures and still water.

The shepherd, we're told, is now walking side by side with his sheep. And David, he has comfort and peace not only because of the presence of the shepherd, but also because of the rod and the staff of the shepherd.

He says they comfort me. They bring comfort. And the reason the rod and the staff bring comfort is because they are both being held in the caring hand of the divine shepherd.

That hand which feeds and helps, that hand which leads and guides, it's that hand which restores and renews, that hand that gently pushes and prongs, that hand which protects us and keeps us.

[21 : 09] You're rod and your staff, they comfort me because they're in your hand. And you know, I love that phrase from John 10. Jesus said, my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give to them eternal life and they shall never perish.

Neither shall they be plucked out of my hand. They shall never be plucked out of my hand. I find even in the body of the shepherd who has conquered death in the grave, he is by our side.

Because when we make that partial proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd. We have the partial provision of his peace, his pardon, his presence.

And in verse 5 we have the partial provision of his protection. His protection. David says, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Now in eastern countries, after a difficult day's walk, the shepherd would then lead his sheep into a sheepfold and they would rest there for the night.

[22 : 26] And a sheepfold, it was like a large stone walled ping. But the thing about a sheepfold was that there was no gate, there was no door to keep the sheep in.

And the shepherd would keep the sheep in and he would keep all the enemies out by lying across the doorway. He would lie across the opening.

The shepherd would be the door. And that's what Jesus was talking about when he said in John 10, I am the door. By me if any man enters in, he shall be saved.

And we'll go in and out and find pasture. Jesus said, the thief, the enemy, he comes only to steal and to kill and to destroy. But I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

And so when David makes this statement about preparing a table in the presence of his enemies, he's drawing attention to the shepherd's personal provision of his protection.

[23 : 23] That the Lord will not allow an enemy to come near his flock. He will not allow the thief to get in, to steal, to kill or to destroy.

He will not allow it. Because the shepherd's personal provision is a provision of his protection. And you know I was thinking that we ought to view coming to church as entering the sheepfold.

A sheepfold that is guarded by the good shepherd. He's in the doorway. Because every time we're led into worship, we're being led, not only into the presence of the shepherd, but we're also being led into the protection of the shepherd.

And it's in here that the shepherd, he prepares for us the gospel table. A table with all its blessings and benefits. And the shepherd does all this in the presence of his enemies.

They're all around us. They're all outside. All the enemies are outside, but inside in here, there's an opportunity to come and feast upon his pure delights.

[24 : 29] That's why coming to church is so important. That's why coming to the prayer meeting is so important. Because it's here that the shepherd, he brings us into the sheepfold.

And we're able to stand in the presence of the shepherd and experience the protection of the shepherd. But you know what's interesting is that the sheep, the sheep are always ushered into the sheepfold at night.

Not only to be fed by the shepherd, but also to prepare them for going back out again. And you know the shepherd, he prepares us for going back out again by anointing our head with oil.

A shepherd anointed the heads of his flock with oil at the end of a day. He would do that in order to protect them from the heat of the sun the following day.

And you know what we ought to see in his personal provision of protection is that the shepherd protects his sheep day and night. He will not slumber.

[25 : 34] Neither slumbers nor sleeps. And you know it's no wonder David says, my cup runs over, my cup overflows. He's aware of the Lord's protection of him both day and night.

While he's sleeping, the shepherd slumbers not nor sleeps. He has his protection day and night. He's aware that the Lord does in us and for us, exceedingly, abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think.

And so when you make the personal proclamation, the Lord is man's shepherd. You are given the personal provision of his peace, his pardon, his presence, his protection.

You have the personal provision of his promise. Verse 6, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

You know after reflecting upon all the personal provisions of the good shepherd, David is assured that the shepherd will meet his every need. Because the shepherd's provision is an abundant provision.

[26 : 51] Which is why David says, Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. And David says, Surely, when he says that, he doesn't say it out of uncertainty or doubt.

David says, Surely, because of absolute certainty, absolute surety. He says, It is with surety that goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.

Literally, David is saying the goodness of God and the covenant love of God, they will pursue me. Every single day of my life. They will come behind me and assure me all of all the shepherd's provisions.

And what David says here, you know, not to remind us of the all encompassing provision of the shepherd. Because throughout this Psalm, David has told us that the shepherd led him. He led him to green pastures to still water.

Then we were told that the shepherd walked beside him. He walked beside him through the valley of the shadow of death. But now he says the shepherd follows him. He follows behind him with his goodness and his covenant love.

[28 : 06] And this David is affirming to us that the partial provision of the shepherd, it's all encompassing. It's all encompassing. But more than that, David is affirming that the partial provision of the shepherd is never ending.

It's never ending because the promise of the shepherd is not only relevant to us now. It's also relevant to us all the days of our life. And this promise is not only dependent upon our knowledge or our feelings or our circumstances.

The promise of the shepherd is only dependent upon the shepherd. And the amazing thing about the good shepherd is that he doesn't change. He remains the same.

Which means that the promise will remain the same. The promises of the shepherd will continue to follow behind us all the days of our life. And they will follow behind us all the days of our life until at last this shepherd takes his precious sheep out of this wilderness and home to be with himself.

And you know, when you go to the end of the Bible, you see that that's what John saw when he was given that revelation of heaven. He looked at the sheep of the good shepherd and he said, these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation.

[29 : 33] And they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb. And John says they shall neither hunger any more nor thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them by day nor any heat for the lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of living water.

And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Oh my dear friend, isn't anyone there that Psalm 23 is everyone's favorite song?

Psalm 23 is everyone's favorite song because when we make the personal proclamation, the Lord is my shepherd.

We then have the partial provision of his peace, his pardon, his presence, his protection, and his promise. So who bent a false to proclaim and this good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep?

A wonderful song, everyone's favorite song. Amen, Lord, bless these things to us. Oh Lord, the gracious God, we give thanks to thee that the Lord our shepherd, and we pray that you would hear thy voice day by day, that we would keep coming to thine word, that we would keep coming to thy word, that we would keep longing to hear the voice of the good shepherd speaking to us, to lead us and to guide us, to encourage us, to challenge us, to shape us, to mold us.

[31 : 23] We thank thee, Lord, that the Lord one who is a faithful shepherd, a shepherd who does in us and follows exceedingly abundantly above all, more than we could ask or even think, and help us then to follow him, help us to walk with him, help us to lean upon him, help us to keep looking to him, to know his promise that goodness and mercy shall surely follow us all the days of our life, and that in God's house forevermore, our dwelling place shall be.

Bless us then together we pray thee, and help us to keep our eyes firmly fixed upon the shepherd, for we ask it in his name and for his sleep. We're going to sing again.

It's time for Psalm 23, that's Sam. We're working on Psalm 23, the Scottish Psalter. We'll sing the whole Psalm.

The Lord's my shepherd I love one, he makes me down to life, and past your sins with me the quiet waters find.