

# Our Shepherd

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[ 0 : 01 ] This chapter seems to be a cornerstone for comfort for so many occasions. And as we look at this chapter, the main theme is the Lord being our shepherd.

So we know a shepherd takes care of his sheep and provides food and guides them and protects them. In David's case, he even played music for his sheep, although I don't think all shepherds did that.

But as we look at the Lord as our shepherd, he's not just the shepherd overall of the church, of his people, but he's our individual shepherd.

He's my shepherd, he's your shepherd. And he provides for each one of our needs and he guides us and he protects us. And those are the three things that I wanted us to look at tonight from just these six verses.

How he provides for our needs and he guides us and he protects us. Before I do that, what I wanted to look at was the very first verse.

[ 1 : 06 ] The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. And, you know, we all know that we are sinners in a fallen world. And there are lots of things that we want.

They're not always good. They're not always bad, right? But we have a lot of wants. We want to be popular. We want to be liked. We like to be rich.

We like to have a good job. We like to live long. We like to have more money. I mean, the list can go on and on. But that's not the want that David is talking about here.

Because if we spend our lives chasing all those wants, then where we'll end up is not following God. We'll end up following the world and we'll be away from God.

So God knows this and he wants us to go after him. So he provides for us what we need. So when it says, I shall not want, a better interpretation really is to say that we're lacking nothing.

[ 2 : 09 ] It would be like if we were referring to, say, a child that was taken into an orphanage and they said that he is not wanting.

He was before and now he's not. So basically they're taking care of his needs. So verse 1, we could read, we could kind of rephrase that a little bit and say, the Lord is my shepherd and I lack nothing.

So I think if we start out with that, it will help us to see how God provides all the other things when we're not looking at all the stuff that we want to bring and all the stuff that we want to want.

So as we look at verse 2, we see how he provides what we need to survive. So look at verse 2 with me if you would.

He makes me lie down in green pastures and he leads me beside the still waters. So this is a picture, a quick picture of the shepherd providing food and water for the sheep.

[ 3 : 10 ] And we also pick up that there's comfort that he is supplying to the sheep. He makes them lie down in green pastures.

It's almost like the Lord is telling us to take a break and enjoy what he's given to us. Lay down and eat your food. Don't be in such a rush.

And he also leads us beside still waters. So the waters aren't a raging river that we're kind of skeptical to come up to and drink. But they're calm.

We can come by them and relax. And he provides nourishments to our bodies and to our souls by restoring us. We also, if we look at verse 5, he's preparing a table before us.

So this is kind of a different picture than the shepherd. This is almost the Lord being a host to us as he prepares a table and provides us food. And he anoints my head with oil.

[ 4 : 15 ] And what that is supposed to portray is a caring, loving host. If you, you don't have to turn to it, but I'm going to turn back to Luke 7.

This is where the woman, the sinful woman comes in and she's crying on Jesus and pours ointment on him. Verse 44.

Then turning toward the woman, he, Jesus, says to Simon, Do you see this woman? I entered your house and you gave me no water for my feet. But she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

You gave me no kiss, but the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss me. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. So we kind of get a picture that putting ointment on somebody's head, it really isn't like a weird thing, like we would think it is now. But something that would picture acceptance and loving. If somebody comes into their house, they may have oil placed on them. And so that's what the Lord, the host, is doing for us, is he's anointing our head with oil.

[ 5 : 23 ] He is overflowing our cup. He is keeping it full. So he's providing what we need and it's ongoing. It's something that's not stopping. He doesn't just fill us for a moment and then we're done.

And we also notice that he's prepared the table in the presence of our enemies, which sounds odd, but I think there's a comfort there in saying that even amongst our enemies, they're powerless to the enjoyment that we can have in what God's given us.

So he's prepared this table for us and there's enemies around us, but we're still able to sit and enjoy God's generosity even amongst that. So I think we can probably, that probably fits a couple of different situations, whether at work or family, where you don't feel like you fit in, and yet we're still able to enjoy God's goodness to us as his people.

Next we're going to look at how he guides us. So in verse 3, he said, He leads me in paths of righteousness, which basically is a way of saying he leads us down right paths, right?

So it's not just something we're going down, but through our life he leads us and takes us into directions that teach and grow us and makes us more like him.

[ 6 : 59 ] So as we follow him, he's sanctifying us and he's changing us to be more righteous and more like him. And when I say more righteous, at least in my head, it brings up the connotation that that can be a boastful bad thing.

Like I don't want to be more righteous. We do, but not in a boastful way. More righteous in the sense of not worldly. So as we are living, we're becoming more like Christ and less like the world. And that happens by him leading us and us following him through these right paths. And then in the end of verse 3, it actually tells us why that even takes place.

Why does he lead us down right paths? And he says, For his name's sake. You can remember from several passages in the Old Testament that God is making for himself a people, right?

A people that love and obey and follow after him. And so if he has a people that follow after the world, that think the world is more glorious and wonderful than he is, then what does that say about God?

[ 8 : 16 ] So he leads us for his name's sake, for his glory, for his renown. And then the last point is how he protects us.

So we see in verse 4, that even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. And that shadow of death can be any number of things.

You know, we all go through trials. It could be a trial. It could be persecution. It could be depression. That can be a death of a loved one, someone close to us.

It could be our own death if we're going through cancer or something like that. So we see ourselves going through a trial, and I kind of picture this synods as us going through a valley as the sun is starting to go down.

So the light is starting to lessen, and shadows are starting to appear. And we don't really know who or what are behind those shadows. But he's still walking through that with us, and tells us not to fear.

[ 9 : 23 ] And that's where we can find assurance and comfort, knowing that God isn't just sending us out on our own, but he's going with us through that time. He doesn't... The previous verse when he talks about taking us down paths of righteousness, he doesn't do that and then leave us when we get to the valley of the shadow of death.

He also never promises that he will take us over the valley or that he will take us around the valley. He's going to take us through the valley.

And that's part of what he's trying to accomplish in our life. Right? He's taken us through the valley, and part of our growth in our life is trusting in him, knowing that we're going through and he's got us. Because... And the next verse says our rod. And your rod and your staff, they comfort me. He has a rod and a staff.

And it's used in different ways. You guys, I'm sure, have seen the shepherd's crook that kind of looks like a candy cane. And it's used to grab sheep when they need to be picked up or pulled in. [10:40] And that's kind of a picture of what Jesus does to us, whether we need saving or he just needs to pull us closer to him. And it also mentions a rod, which a rod is more for defending.

So he could be defending us from things. He could also use the rod to help, not to help, but to discipline us. You know, if we're wandering off in a direction we don't need to go in, and he uses a rod to get us to come back, it may not seem pleasant, but the other side of that would be is if he didn't love us and we fell off the cliff, then what kind of God would we have?

Would he really love us? So we see Jesus as our shepherd using a staff to rescue and also to pull us close and also using a rod to protect us, but also to teach us at the same time.

And so as we look at this Psalm 23, we see how the Lord provides for our needs, both our physical needs and restoring our soul, whatever is needed for that.

And he also guides and protects us. And I think it ends it up, it ends perfectly with verse six. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

[12:11] That phrase, surely goodness and mercy, I changed it when I say that in my head because when I think of goodness, I often think of all the good things that God gives me and not the bad things.

So when things that are not pleasant come along, that doesn't seem to fit in my head. I'm like, well, that's not goodness and mercy. And another rendering of that phrase, goodness and mercy, is steadfast love.

So if we were to say that steadfast love is surely steadfast love shall follow me all the days of our life. Well, we know that's true.

We know that God's steadfast love is with us. Whether we're going through good times and bad times, his steadfast love is always on us. And it will be all of our life.

And when that's done, we get to dwell with him forever. So there's so many situations that you can plug into this psalm, and it's fitting.

[13:09] This was written by David, which you guys know went through a lot of things. So this is one that is popular so much because it is so comforting.

You can read it and just feel the calmness of the phrases that are being used, but then to dig into what it means about what the Lord is for us, it's even more comforting to that.

So when we pray tonight, I don't know if anybody has done this before, but there's a lot of psalms that make a good foundation, a good framework for prayer that I think you can use.

Obviously, you can use any of the Bible, but they say to help people keep from praying the same thing over and over in their own personal time, they say that praying through the Bible or praying through psalms is something that is helpful.

So tonight as we pray and the different aspects of our prayers, feel free to look over Psalm 23. And as you read it, if there's something that matches up with your life and you want to praise God for it, if you want to ask God for help or if you want to confess and it's there, just bring it out.

[14:28] And I would encourage you to do that. So I think what we'll do is... Let me just stop this one second.