

April 26, 2026

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ³ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁴ Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Scriptures for further study:
John 1:16

“The scene has changed from the field to the house... from the care of the shepherd to the welcome of the host...the enemies are not removed; they are simply rendered irrelevant.”

-Derek Kidner

“The point of the overflowing cup is that God’s goodness is not barely enough, it is lavish!”

-John Piper



The Shepherd’s Presence Psalm 23

BIG IDEA: If the magnanimous, protective, and personal presence of God is mine in Jesus Christ, I can face even the darkest of days with Gospel confidence knowing that the grace needed to survive and thrive will never be lacking.

Or to say it more simply: The Shepherd’s presence guarantees sufficient grace in every season of life!

OUTLINE

- God’s Care (vv. 1-3, 4b)
- Our Dark Days (v. 4a)
- Gospel Confidence (vv. 5-6)

DISCIPLESHIP DURING THE WEEK

These “Sermon Discussion Questions” are designed for study during the week for believers in a wide variety of ages & stages in their walk with Christ.

1. What happens in your home when the power goes out? Have you got a power outage plan? What does it look like? Do your preparations calm fears?
2. In what ways does Psalm 23 lead you to think of Christ?
3. Read verses 1-3 and 4b (“you are with me...”) out loud. Listen and list what the shepherd provides for his sheep. Which provision stands out to you? Why?
4. Think about verse 4a. “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.” The second point of the sermon is “Our Dark Days.” Pastor Bill lists three aspects of darkness. What is it about the shepherd’s presence in darkness that is far better than a candle, flashlight, or generator?
5. How did Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection secure His presence with His sheep?
6. Read verses 5-6 out loud. List what the Shepherd does. What phrases does David use to describe the Shepherd’s provision? Are you pursuing or being pursued by goodness and mercy? What difference does it make?

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Shepherding was one of the most common occupations in ancient Israel — virtually everyone had direct contact with a shepherd or the trade. Some shepherds cared for family flocks near farming villages, often a younger family member (as with David). Others lived a seminomadic life, moving through arid lands and trading milk and wool with villagers for food and water rights.

Flocks typically included both sheep and goats. Sheep in particular required constant attention — they had little ability to defend themselves or avoid danger. A shepherd had to be strong, resourceful, and alert, guiding the flock to water, keeping it together while grazing, and protecting it from predators. At night, he led the sheep to a stone enclosure or cave, often topped with thorny branches as a kind of natural barbed wire.

A good shepherd came to know each of his sheep individually, and the sheep, in turn, recognized and responded to his voice alone. This intimate bond became a natural metaphor for God's relationship with his people — one that runs from Genesis to John's Gospel and into the New Testament letters (Gen. 48:15; Ps. 23:1; John 10:1–18; Heb. 13:20).

-ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible

Praise to Jesus – Praise the Lord today, for Psalm 23 assures us that we are never alone in hardships. Praise God for Jesus, who is our faithful shepherd who restores our souls, prepares a table before us, and fills our cup to overflowing. Praise Him for unlimited grace and certain care, which provides the quiet confidence of knowing we have everything that we truly need.

Repent through Jesus – Lord, we confess when we have forgotten your presence and allowed the dark days to rule our thoughts, emotions, and actions. Lord, for the times when we have been bitter towards you because you did not provide what we thought we needed, please forgive us. Lord, lead us to true repentance, which leads to confidence that your grace is all we need.

Consecration for Jesus – The magnanimous, protective, and personal presence of the living God is ours through Jesus Christ. Because He is ours and we are His, we go into even the darkest of days with Gospel confidence — knowing that the grace sufficient to survive and to flourish shall never be lacking, never be withheld, and never run dry. He revives us. He restores us. He leads us into paths of righteousness — not for our glory, but for His Name's sake. And so we live directed by grace, shaped by grace, and sustained by grace — that we might be salt and light in a world that desperately needs both, and that all glory might ascend to God in heaven, where it has always and forever belonged.

FOR FAMILIES AND YOUNG CHILDREN

These questions are written to aid parents in leading family devotions with their children.

1. What is a shepherd? What kind of tasks does a shepherd do? (Shepherds lead sheep. They protect them from animals like wolves that seek to harm the sheep. They also feed them and make sure they have water.)
2. What does it mean in verse 1 when King David wrote, “I shall not want”? (This means that everything we need is provided to us by the Lord, who is our shepherd.)
3. What do we learn from verses 2-3 about the role our Lord has as our shepherd? (These verses show the shepherd leading his sheep to food, water, and places to rest.)
4. Are you scared of the dark? What does verse 4 teach us about when we face the fear of the dark parts of our faith journey? (We learn that God is going with us, which is the reason we cannot fear.)
5. What is the new imagery in verses 5-6? (God is described as a host for a feast. In the first century, when you are invited to a feast, you are treated as family. This feast has an interesting part. This feast is in the midst of enemies. The imagery tells us that this is a victory celebration. Make sure to point out to your children that God, as the host, makes sure that we are anointed and that our cup “overflows”. Also, make sure to tell your children that the word “mercy” is the Hebrew word for God’s covenant love. Because God is faithful and can always be trusted, we can begin to understand the wonderful promise that we will be with God forever.)

Scriptures for further study:

John 10:11-16

Psalms 95:7

Philippians 4:11-13

Romans 8:32

FOR STUDENTS

Scriptures for further study:

John 10:1–15

Psalms 23

Ezekiel 34:11–16

Luke 15:4–7

Hebrews 4:14–16

Romans 8:28–39

1. Psalm 23 opens with David saying, "The LORD is my shepherd." This is a personal claim, not just a general statement about God. What does it look like to personally claim God as your shepherd — not just acknowledge that He exists?

2. In verses 2–3, the shepherd leads, provides rest, and restores the soul. Where in your life right now do you most need God to restore or lead you? What makes it hard to let Him?

3. Read verse 4. David walks through the dark valley — he doesn't avoid it. How does the promise of God's presence change the way you face hard or scary seasons? Have you experienced that?

4. Look at verse 5. God sets a table for David in the presence of his enemies — He provides in the middle of opposition, not just after it. What does that tell you about how God works in your life?

5. There is a clear shift in tone from verse 1 to verse 6. David moves from describing what the Shepherd does to making a bold personal declaration: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Do you actually believe that? What makes it hard to hold onto?

FOR NON-BELIEVERS OR NEW BELIEVERS

1. An experience of sheep and shepherding is not a common one for most of us today, but even a moment's consideration of these things shows us just how fitting it is as a metaphor and description of people and God.

Question: Sheep are unquestionably needy and totally dependent animals. Just like sheep, in what ways are we as people totally dependent on God? In what areas would you acknowledge your own daily need for God? Where are we tempted to think we don't need him or that we are quite self-sufficient and independent?

Question: Our ultimate need is for the salvation that only God can provide. Have you acknowledged your desperate need for God to save you?

2. Just as sheep perfectly illustrate our needy human condition, so shepherding perfectly captures the nature of God's all-encompassing care for us.

Reflect: One commentator describes the main theme of Psalm 23 as "God's providence in the lives of people." (Ryken) Note how this beloved Psalm highlights the many and varied ways God cares for us, by providing: rest, refreshment, peace, freedom from fear, nourishment, guidance, comfort, discipline, presence, healing, protection, fellowship, and security. Take a moment to thank God for all the specific ways he has and does give you all these things!

3. The phrase "I will dwell" (v.6) is probably best translated "I will return." This Psalm has basically taken us on a journey from the time the shepherd leads the sheep out for the day to when he safely brings them back home at night, making sure that all "return" safely to the fold. In other words, just as God faithfully shepherds us all throughout our lives, he will also faithfully bring us to our new home at the end of our lives, where we will always be with him.

Question: Do you know him personally as your Lord and Shepherd in this life? Do you desire to have the security of knowing where you will go when you die and where you will dwell for eternity?

Scriptures for further study:

Psalm 95:7

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Luke 15:4

Mark 6:34

Hebrews 13:20

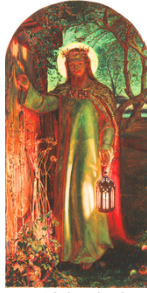
1 Peter 5:1-4

Acts 20:28

John 21:15-19

John 10:1-15

The Blessed Life: A Study of the Psalms



"The Light of the World" (1851-1853) by William Holman Hunt

Psalms Introduction

The Book of Psalms is the sacred place where the living God meets His people in the most intimate and personal of ways. He invites them to know Him not merely as an idea, but as their refuge, portion, shepherd, and King. From the opening doorway of blessedness in Psalm 1 to the climactic Hallelujahs of Psalm 150, the Psalter reveals that the truly happy life is one rooted in the person and work of Almighty God, whose steadfast love holds His people through every season of the soul. As the Psalter moves from anguish to adoration, from darkness to dawn, it becomes a mirror of the Christian life itself. It teaches us to pray honestly, to hope stubbornly, and to sing faithfully, even when night seems long. In the deepest valleys, the Psalms give voice to the church's groan; on the highest heights, they train the church's doxology. And in every line, every cry, and every hallelujah, Christ Himself comes near, revealing the light of the world in the dark night of the soul and leading His people into the blessedness that only His grace can give.

– Pastor Bill

About the artwork and artist.

The Light of the World, 1851-1853, is an iconic allegorical painting by William Holman Hunt. The painting depicts Jesus Christ as a regal figure in flowing robes, wearing a crown of thorns, holding a glowing lantern, and preparing to knock on a weed-overgrown wooden door with no external handle. This illustrates Revelation 3:20 from the Bible: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." The artist William Holman Hunt is showing us that Jesus is the divine door to the living God who meets His people in the most intimate and personal ways. The closed, overgrown door → representing the human soul or "obstinately shut mind" that has long ignored spiritual calling. There is no handle on the outside → the door can only be opened from within, emphasizing free will and personal invitation to faith. The lantern → Christ as the light of the world (John 8:12), illuminating darkness and offering salvation. The work marked Hunt's deepening Christian faith (from earlier agnosticism) and became one of the most reproduced and devotional images of the Victorian era, inspiring oratorios, hymns, and widespread popular piety. It's often called a visual sermon on personal salvation.