

The Compass:
Encounter-Examine-Explore-Embrace God's Word
on
Your Discipleship Path

Sermon Series: "Summer Psalms."
(Pentecost, 2026)
"Peace." Text(s): *Psalms 23*.

**□ Day #1—Monday, June 15th. Read: Psalm 23.1; Psalm 34.4. —Encounter: God's Word and your life—
What do you Hear and/or See?**

Our Psalm for this week is Psalm 23. Psalm 23 is perhaps one of the most well-known and beloved texts of Scripture. This Psalm is often read at funerals for the hope, peace, and promise it describes concerning God's character and our relationship with God. The writer of this Psalm, King David, would know exactly the responsibilities of a shepherd because he was one! David knew first-hand that God's constant presence and care was his only true hope; just as a "good shepherd" would be the only true hope for helpless sheep. Additionally, describing God as a "shepherd" was:

...a common metaphor in the ancient Near East, as many kings compared themselves to shepherds in their leadership capacity. The prophecy of the coming Messiah incorporated the same (Isa. 40:11), and Jesus identified Himself as that expected "Good Shepherd" (John 10:14). He is also called the "Great Shepherd" (Heb. 13:20) and "the Chief Shepherd" (1 Peter 5:4). Because the Lord was David's Shepherd, his needs were met.¹

This image of God is carried over into the New Testament as Jesus is described as the "Good Shepherd" who cares for His sheep (See *Hebrews 13.20–21*). Jesus, being our Shepherd, ensures us that as we follow Him, He cares, guides, leads, and heals us. Warren Wiersbe rightly notes:

Christ did not simply die for us; He rose again and lives for us. He is the Great Shepherd, the Great High Priest. "I shall not want" is the theme of Ps. 23. "I shall not want" for: rest and refreshment (v. 2), restoration and righteousness (v. 3), protection in trouble (v. 4), provision in the wilderness (v. 5), and a home to go to at the end of the day (v. 6)²

Consider/Reflect: "In faith, David declares that since Yahweh is his shepherd, he "shall not want" (v 1). Our Good Shepherd lovingly provides everything that we need in this life, but we often fail to recognize that these gifts come from Him. Instead, we focus on things that we want, but do not need. How wonderful that our Shepherd does not withhold His blessings from us, but still cares for these needs and more: He gives us His own Son! [Pray]: Good Shepherd, open our eyes to see Your blessing. Open our ears to hear Your voice. Open our hearts that we may love You. Amen."³

□ Day #2—Tuesday, June 16th. Read: Psalm 23.1; John 10.14. —Examine: The Text and its Message.

The fresco below comes from a Christian catacomb. It reflects Jesus as the Good Shepherd who takes care of his sheep. The metaphor of a Shepherd was used in antiquity for Kings and was spread throughout Egypt and Mesopotamia already in the 3rd millennium BC. It symbolized that a good ruler would take care of his people. This image was likewise used for deities who were concerned with the welfare of their worshippers, and thus could easily be applied to Jesus. Later, as the church became more organized, the image was used for leaders in the Christian communities, i.e. "pastors."

¹ J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1985).

² Warren Wiersbe. *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1993).

³ *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).



...[David]...employed the figure of a shepherd to recall the blessings he enjoyed from the LORD...The metaphor was a natural one for David, the shepherd-king. It was also a common metaphor in the ancient Near East, as many kings compared themselves to shepherds in their leadership capacity. The prophecy of the coming Messiah incorporated the same (Isa. 40:11), and Jesus identified Himself as that expected “Good Shepherd” (John 10:14). He is also called the “Great Shepherd” (Heb. 13:20) and “the Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4). Because the Lord was David’s Shepherd, his needs were met.⁴

God’s peace comes to us through God’s nurturing us spiritually through His Word and Sacraments. As a shepherd leads his sheep to fresh grass for food and rest, so does God lead and provide for His people as we follow Him as Lord and Shepherd. Again, God does this through His means of grace: Word and Sacraments!

One who follows the Lord does not lack any spiritual nourishment. Under-shepherds [pastors] (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) are expected to feed the flock (Ezek. 34:1–10; John 21:15–17) as well. Food for the soul is the Word of God (Heb. 5:12–14; 1 Peter 2:2)...A second blessing that comes from the Lord’s leading is spiritual restoration. As a shepherd leads his sheep to placid waters for rest and cleansing, so the Lord restores or refreshes the soul. Here the spiritual lesson is clear: the Lord provides forgiveness and peace for those who follow Him.⁵

Consider/Reflect: As you look at the graphic above, imagine Jesus carrying you and leading you. What burden and/or fear do you need to give to Jesus today? Where do you need Jesus’ peace?

□ Day #3—Wednesday, June 17th. Read: Psalm 23.1-3. –Explore: The background to this text(s).

The past two days we have studied the first few words of *Psalm 23.1—the Lord as our shepherd*. Today, we examine the second part of this powerful verse: “*I shall not want.*” King David, who wrote this Psalm, knew that with God, he had no want or lack. What this Psalm reminds us is that, while we may fear that we will lack something that we absolutely need, God will always provide because He loves us. King David knew...

His needs were met by his shepherd. Although he most certainly did not have everything he could desire, he had everything he needed. And God’s people of every generation do not lack...This has to do with finding rest in the Word of God...All God’s people have been given rest from the guilt of sin and the fear of condemnation through the redeeming work of Christ...They do not lack direction and guidance because they are led in paths of righteousness...It is important to notice that the Lord always leads his people...The fact that the Lord leads his people “For his name’s sake” means that he guides them according to all that his

⁴ Walvoord & Zuck, Eds. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*.

⁵ Ibid.

name represents. His guidance is, then, in keeping with his holiness, his love, his faithfulness, his wisdom and all that he has revealed himself to be.⁶

Psalm 23:1-3 both describes *the blessings* that come when God is our Shepherd, as well as *the means* through which these divine blessings come: *Spiritual nourishment*. As a shepherd leads his sheep to fresh grass for food and rest, so does God lead and provide for His people as they follow Him as Lord and Shepherd. Again, God does this through His church, particularly through His *means of grace*: God's Word and Holy Sacraments.

These verses focus on experiences of abundance and security: “*green pastures*” (a quiet place of refuge for sheep); “*still waters*” (Lit. “waters of rest” i.e. “peace”); “*restores my soul*” (personal renewal). The truth behind the experiences David describes here is that God is leading the believer along the “*path of righteousness*,” paths that are “*right with Him*.” As our Good Shepherd, God is acting *for His name's sake*; in accordance with his *revealed character*.

Consider/Reflect: “Each of the OT names for God is seen in this psalm: *Jehovah-Jireh*, “The Lord will provide” (Gen. 22:13–14); *Jehovah-Rapha*, “The Lord will heal or restore” (Ex. 15:26); *Jehovah-Shalom*, “The Lord our peace” (Jud. 6:24); *Jehovah-Tsidkenu*, “The Lord our righteousness,” (Jer. 23:6); *Jehovah-Shammah*, “The Lord is there,” (Ezek. 48:35); *Jehovah-Nissi*, “The Lord our banner” (Ex. 17:8–15); and *Jehovah-Raah*, “The Lord my shepherd” (Ps. 23:1). In other words, Jesus Christ is to His sheep all that they ever need. As the little child said when misquoting this psalm, “The Lord is my shepherd—what more shall I want?”⁷

□ **Day #4--Thursday, June 18th. Read: Psalm 23.4-5.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

There is an old Arab parable that says: “All sunshine and no rain make a desert.” If we never experience struggle, challenge, and/or difficult times, we will never grow in depth and maturity. The truth is, through both good times and bad times we mature. Life is a mixture of pain and pleasure, of victory and defeat, of mountain tops and valleys. In *Psalm 23.4*, the Bible tells us that we will go through dark valleys of life. Yet, even in our darkest valleys and darkest days, God is there!

In Israel, there is a literal “Valley of the Shadow of Death.” It’s a steep, deep, and narrow canyon. The sun only hits the bottom of it when it is directly overhead at high noon. The rest of the time, the bottom of the canyon is dark. In Hebrew, the literal rendering is “the valley of deep darkness.” David probably led his sheep through this valley as he was growing up. Additionally, in Scripture, the term “valley” often refers to various kinds of difficult times in life...

- In *Joshua 7.26*, Joshua talks about the *Valley of Calamity*...
- *Psalm 84.6* talks about the *Valley of Weeping*...
- *Hosea 2.15* talks about the *Valley of Trouble*...

While often, these valleys lead us to feel stress, fear, and uncertainty, even in life's most frightening situations we can be confident of God's *guiding presence*. Indeed, when God is with us, even the valley of the shadow of death becomes one of the “paths of righteousness” that God lead us through. The Good Shepherd does not send His sheep into places He will not go; He leads and is with us always (*Matthew 28:20*).

Consider/Reflect: What “dark valley” are you going through right now? Thank God that He is with you in that valley.

□ **Day #5— Friday, June 19th. Read: Psalm 23.5-6.—Explore: The background to this text(s).**

In *Psalm 23.5*, the scene changes from a field to a feast. David uses the image of a banquet and he gives us three illustrations or symbols that illustrate three ways God cares for us. And, because He cares, we trust Him with our lives: God *prepares a table for us*; *He anoints us*; and *He fills our cups to overflowing*. Trusting God is handing over our fears, dreams, thoughts, concerns, resentments—all that we hang on to—to our Heavenly Father, knowing that because we have a loving heavenly Father, He will provide what we need, giving us peace! *Psalm 23.5* reveals a description of

⁶ Wiersbe. *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*

⁷ Ibid.

God “...*prepare (ing) a table before me in the presence of my enemies...*” This reflects God’s overall care and concern for us. Sheep have many natural enemies—wolves, coyotes, bears, snakes, ticks... Sheep are very defenseless animals. A sheep is not safe unless somebody protects them. The job of a good shepherd is to go find a good source of food—a mesa, a field of green grass (*Psalms 23.1-2*), and then drive out all the enemies.

Shepherds put oil on the heads of sheep for two reasons: to sooth and to heal. The worst enemy of sheep is flies. Sheep can’t shake off the flies either by their hooves or their tail. During the heat of summertime, it could get worse. The flies get up in their nose and lay eggs. What shepherds do is take olive oil and mix it with sulfur and anoint the head of the sheep and it’s like an insect repellent. The other way oil is used is as a salve, an ointment. When a sheep has an open wound the shepherd would use it as an ointment. It would protect them and it was soothing. When David says, “You anoint my head with oil” he is saying God is going to sooth my wounds.

“*My cup overflows.*”... In the Bible, an overflowing cup is a symbol for total satisfaction. It means, “I’ve got everything I need.” The geography in the Middle East is mostly desert—very dry. If someone gave you a cup that was overflowing, it meant they’re wasting something—water or wine. You don’t waste water or wine in the desert unless you’ve got more than you need. Our Good Shepherd knows our needs and will never “run out” of love, grace, mercy, and power for us!

Consider/Reflect: When God says to you, “I’m going to fill your cup to overflowing” it means that you matter to God and you’re special to Him. If you’re hurting because somebody has hurt you badly, Jesus invites you to a banquet. He says “I’ll prepare a table before you in the presence of your enemies. I’ll anoint your head with oil. Your cup will overflow.” This is a relationship you can trust. God offers you a banquet of *wholeness, help, salvation—and peace!*

□ Day #6-Saturday, June 20th. Read: (Again) Psalm 23.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.

David expresses no anxiety, fear of the future, or worry about tomorrow. David is confident—“*surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.*” David does not say “maybe” or “hopefully” goodness and mercy will follow me. David is *surely* confident in God! Surely! Where do you get that kind of confidence? If you are a believer, there are three reasons why we do not need to doubt God’s concern, care, and provision for us...

- Because God is *watching* over me.
- Because God’s grace is *working* in me.
- Because heaven is *waiting* for me.

“*Surely goodness will follow me all the days of my life.*” Because God is good I can expect His protection and provision. I can expect that no matter what happens to me, God will work *in and through it for our good*—somehow! It will either be for my own good, for the good of other people, or for the good of His kingdom. God is a *good God*. “*Surely goodness will follow...*” What does David mean by that? Obviously, David had disappointments in life. Not everything good happened to him. He is not saying, “Surely, only good things are going to happen to me.” That is not true. Bad things happen to good people. What he is saying is that only *goodness* will follow God’s people because God is at work in our lives and cares for us. *Good* will always come out of what God desires for His people—even the bad, the evil, and the difficult circumstances in our lives.

David realized that God’s loyal love (Hebrew: *hesed*), translated in this text as “mercy,” would go with him everywhere through all of his life. God’s blessings on His people remain with them no matter what their circumstances may be. God’s blessings are so certain, so sure, they are awaiting us in the future as well! Some scholars suggest that David’s reference to the “house of the Lord” could refer to the Temple in Jerusalem. For the people of Israel, the Temple was where God “lived,” His presence on earth. Because Jesus is the “new Temple,” God is with us now, every day. Moreover, as this verse is often interpreted, one day we will *dwell in God’s eternal house forever—heaven!* Whether this text originally referred to the Temple or Heaven, what is true of both views is that, because God is our Lord and Shepherd, God will always have a home for us with Him! This is the source of our peace!

Pray/Consider/Reflect: [To “prepare a table...” would be an]... “Emblem of hospitality and trust. In Christ, God gives us not only ordinary food but also the gift of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper...”[God does this in the] ‘...presence of my enemies.’ David, like all of God’s people, experienced God’s providential care even when facing adversity.”⁸

Pray and Prepare for Worship Tomorrow...

“Summer Psalms”

Scripture Texts:

Psalms 91.1-6, 9-10, 14-16;

Romans 6.12-23

Luke 15.1-10

⁸ *The Lutheran Study Bible.*