Guest Preacher - Rev. Roddy John Campbell (Retired)

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Date: 01 November 2026

Preacher: Rev. RJ Campbell

[0:00] Let us now return to the portion of scripture that we read together and with the Lord's help and blessing. We shall turn to Psalm 23 and we shall read again verse 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.
We are all very familiar with this psalm, often sung at weddings and at funerals.
But what Psalm 23 portrays before us is the journey of the shepherd and sheep together until at last he brings them home.
The psalm is the pilgrim's song. It is the Christian's song. It is a psalm that belongs to those who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.
[1:06] For at the very beginning we have these words, The Lord is my shepherd. And the sheep are precious to the shepherd as they are the Father's covenant gift to him.

When the shepherd enters into a covenant to redeem the sheep, and so the shepherd had to condescend to take the nature of the sheep and unite that nature to his own person.
In the words of the catechism, Christ the Son of God became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary and born of her yet without sin.
In taking to himself the body that was prepared for him, he came unto and shared our environment, both physically, emotionally, and spiritually.
He became Emmanuel, God with us. Now let us note the significance of where Psalm 23 is placed.
[2:22] Obviously Psalm 23 comes between Psalm 22 and Psalm 24. And Psalm 22 is the psalm of the cross that brings before us the sufferings of Christ.

It brings before us the cost that the shepherd had to pay to redeem the sheep that he came to save.
One writer says that Psalm 22 reveals the good shepherd away from home, while Psalm 23 is the great shepherd bringing home, and Psalm 24 is the chief shepherd at home.
Psalm 24 is the psalm of triumph, and coronation, and between them is Psalm 23, the psalm of the pilgrim's journey along with the shepherd, until finally they are brought home, until finally they are in God's house.
The shepherd is caring and leading the sheep for the purpose of bringing them home to be with himself. The writer of the psalm, of course, was a shepherd himself, and he is aware of the fact that he himself needs to be shepherded.
And so at the very beginning of the psalm, he tells us that he has found a shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd, who provides for his every need, who guides him to the green pastures and the still waters, and who restores him when he wanders away, and who is with him as he walks through the deep, dark valley, even the darkest part of the valley, which is death.
[4:14] It's made to be a shadow for him. The shepherd's staff and rod are a great comfort to him.
The Lord prepares a table before him in the presence of his enemies.

He annoys his head with oil so that his cup overflows. In the first three verses, the sheep is speaking about the shepherd. But from verse 4 of the psalm to the end of the psalm, the sheep is speaking to the shepherd.
In the first three verses, the psalmist there is speaking about the shepherd. But now, from verse 4 onwards, he is speaking to the shepherd.
And here in verse 6, the sheep says to the shepherd, and reflecting on the shepherding that he has received, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the

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house of the Lord forever.
I like the way we have this version, Sing Psalms, which brings before us its rich meaning. So surely your covenant mercy and grace will follow me closely in all of my ways, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord all my days.
[5:37] He says, surely, surely goodness and mercy. He says, surely a word that is expressive of the strongest confidence and certainty.

No doubt whatsoever existed in his mind. Faith was an exercise, so there was no doubt regarding the ability or the willingness of the shepherd to supply all the needs of his sheep.
And what has it been the basis or the foundation on which he could exercise such confidence? So surely your covenant mercy and grace will follow me closely in all my ways.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. As I've already said, the Sing Psalms brings out so beautifully the essence of the words, your covenant mercy and grace.
David understood that it was all of the Lord's covenant mercy and grace. That the Lord had condescended to become the shepherd.
[7:04] Earlier in the Psalm, he says that the shepherd restores our soul and leads us in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

This is what made it all possible. Our relationship with the shepherd gives us spiritual refreshments and rest.
It gives us our restoration. It gives us the forgiveness of our sins. It is all made possible by the riches of his covenant mercy and grace.
God's goodness and mercy are always found together. And sinners can only experience them by grace based on the covenant, which we call the covenant of grace.
This is how our catechism puts it. God, having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a Redeemer.
[8:16] The riches of God's grace are like himself. They're infinite. They cannot be measured. And it is all of grace. This is the source from which David received his assurance and could express his confidence and certainty and say, surely, because it was all found in the covenant of mercy and grace, surely.

Having been brought into our relationship to the shepherd through faith, he could say, surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
His assurance was based on his covenant relationship with the shepherd. In 2 Samuel 23, chapter 23, we have recorded for us the last words of David.
For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.
David, who penned this psalm, was aware of God's goodness and mercy throughout his life. Despite his sins and failure, God showed his goodness and mercy towards him when he repented sincerely.
[9:51] David's life and experience testifies to us the unconditional love and grace that God extends to his people, even in their darkest moments.

We learn that God's goodness shines through even in moments of moral failure, moments of giving us and offering us hope and a path to renewal for all who repent and seek his forgiveness with a contrite heart.
It teaches us how we can experience God's goodness by seeking repentance and turning back to him during times of spiritual struggle or moral failing.
But David's assurance found in the word, surely, goes beyond his feelings and experiences. And it is founded solely upon the covenant of grace.
For instance, in Psalm 89, a psalm that speaks of the steadfast love of the Lord, David says, I will sing of the steadfast love of the Lord forever.
[11:12] With my mouth I will make known your faithfulness to all generations. For I said, steadfast love will be built up forever in the heavens. You will establish your faithfulness.

You have said, I have made a covenant with my chosen one. I was sworn to David, my servant. I will establish your offspring forever and build your throne for all generations.

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All based on covenant love, covenant mercy, covenant grace. Although we cannot be sure of the precise time when this psalm was penned, there seems to be a good reason to conclude that it must have been composed at a time when the honour and power of David's royal line had been reduced to a very low ebb.
Everything looked as though the divine promises to David had failed. It was then that faith took refuge in the covenant goodness and mercy of God.
God's faithfulness to his covenant would not fail. The words of Psalm 89 again, I have made a covenant with my chosen one.
[12:35] I have sworn to David, my servant. You see, David was the Lord's elect. And with him a covenant was made, which ran along the line of his seat until it received its ultimate fulfillment in the greater son of David, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So based on the covenant of goodness and mercy and his own awareness that it was all of grace and being sure of God's faithfulness to his covenant promise, David could say, Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
In Jesus Christ, there is a covenant established with all the Lord's people, a covenant of the Lord's goodness and mercy, which are ours by grace alone.
In Isaiah chapter 55, we have these words, Incline your ear and come to me, here that your soul may live, and I will make you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.
Or as we have it in the King James Version, Incline your ear and come unto me, here and your soul shall live, and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.
[14:09] The opening words is a gracious invitation for those who felt their need to partake of spiritual blessing.

What about the sure mercies of David? Well, Paul saw these mercies as fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For in Acts chapter 13, we read, And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.
Or again, as we have it in the King James Version, And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David.
The sure mercies, or the sure blessings of David, is the blessings or mercies of the covenant. In other words, all the saving benefits of the atoning work of Jesus Christ is bestowed on all believers.
Those who are fluent in Hebrew points out that the word follow here, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.
[15:31] That the word follow here is a poor rendering of the Hebrew word. That a better rendering would be pursue, so that the goodness and mercy pursues David.

It is not something that is tacking along with him, but God's goodness and mercy is in a lifelong pursuit of David.
And this may seem strange to us, but we always comment on the fact that in the Eastern world, the shepherd went before a sheep. But here we find something that is following behind the sheep.
Goodness and mercy. It is the shepherd's goodness and mercy that is following or pursuing. So sometimes reference is made that they are like shepherding dogs coming behind the sheep.
Why follow or pursue the sheep? Well, it is important that when we review our own lives and think of what we have done, the psalmist says, remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions.
[16:49] He was fully aware of his past, things he had done, and of his present. For he says, for my iniquities have gone over my head like a heavy burden.

They are too heavy for me. I have sinned. I have transgressed today. Is there any hope for me?
Well, here it is. Here it is. What could be more hopeful than to know the shepherd's goodness and mercy is pursuing or following us?
What could be more assuring to us than to know that it is goodness and mercy that is following?
The shepherd's promise not only to go before his people, his sheep, his flock, to lead them, but also to follow them.
He goes before them, but he also comes after them. By coming after them, all that other needs are being covered.
[18:03] By coming after the sheep, he covers all that needs to be covered. Tonight, your experience may be struggling with that weight and sin which clings so closely.

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Maybe tonight you are disappointed with yourself. You may say, I haven't made the progress that I thought I would have made and promised myself when I was converted.
I am daily conscious of my sins. I am daily conscious of my shortcomings. At times, I feel that I am losing the battle. But look at who is pursuing you.
The shepherd's goodness and mercy. Remember, Psalm 25, that we have already quoted.
Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions.
According to your steadfast love, remember me for the sake of your goodness. O Lord. The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us, let us lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking into Jesus the founder and the perfecter of our faith.
[19:27] And that is continuous. So we read, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

God's goodness and mercy, the shepherd's goodness and mercy is pursuing us, is coming, like it were, behind us all the days of our life.
Goodness and mercy pursue us, they follow us today, tomorrow, and the next day, and all the days of my life.
If the shepherd was to withdraw his goodness and mercy from following me, all would be lost. There would be no hope for me, but a fearful look into God's wrath and condemnation.
The psalmist was aware, as we all need to be, that the shepherd's goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. This was not something for a moment, this was not something for the present, but it was for all the days of my life.
[20:45] And if the Lord withdrew his goodness and mercy from us for one moment, then we would not be saved. The psalmist, as well as God's flock, learn that there will never come a time when they have no need for the shepherd's goodness and mercy to follow them.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus could say, Of those whom you gave me, I have lost not one. As a shepherd, he goes before them and his goodness and mercy, they follow him.
You know, he has a shepherd's heart, continually filled with goodness and mercy and love towards his sheep.
The shepherd's love that he, as the redeeming and purchasing shepherd, was willing to bear what the sins of his flock deserved, to bring the satisfaction of God's justice to the very end.
Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. The psalmist was so assured of that, for he said, Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
[22:09] In the words of Paul, he who did not spare his own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. He gave the greatest of all.
He gave his son. The son gave his life. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.
Jesus tells his disciples not to be anxious. He said, Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.
Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
[23:17] Are you not of more value than they? And the psalmist has been assured, been confident, that goodness and mercy would follow him all the days of his life, that they would pursue him, becoming, as it were, behind him all the days of his life.

Then he looks forward and he says, And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The sheep are brought home.
They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more. The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. The lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.
You see, the shepherd himself has taken the nature of his flock, so he set before them here as the lamb in the midst of the throne.
See the connection that the psalmist makes between the shepherd's goodness and mercy following us and our dwelling in the house of the Lord forever.
[24:43] It is because of the very fact that his goodness and mercy follows us that we shall come to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

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It is if his goodness and mercy did not follow us, we would never come to dwell in the house forever. remember the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15.
There we read that the shepherd went out into the open country after the sheep that was lost until he found it, and when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders rejoicing and brings the lost sheep home, and our shepherd also brings his sheep home.
that is his desire. Father, I desire that they also whom you have given me may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
We refer to that as the priestly prayer of Christ as found in John's gospel chapter 17. When did he offer this prayer? Well, probably in the Kidron Valley, just before he entered the Garden of Gethsemane, and there are two things briefly to note there.
[26:09] Firstly, his love for his sheep. The shepherd was arrested that evening, and the next day he met with the cursed death of the cross, and that because he who knew no sin was made sin for us.

And secondly, our need for the priestly ministry of Christ. You know, Matthew Henry says something that is really beautiful. He says, Christ speaks here as if he did not count his own happiness complete, unless he had his elect to share with him in it.
In other words, that Jesus did not count his own happiness complete in heaven. unless he had his sheep, his people, his flock, to share with him in it.
I desire that those whom you have given me be with me where I am. his desire is that they be with him.
One writer says regarding this petition and his prayer, that his desire for our presence burnt in his heart in the shadow of the cross.
[27:38] this desire and petition has not diminished or weakened although he is now in heaven, yet his desire is that his people be with him, that the sheep whom he has redeemed be with him.

Jesus says before us the crowning gift of what we are to look forward to when we come to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.
What's the crowning gift? To see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.
We shall behold the glory given to Christ when he ascended to heaven. In Romans chapter 8 Paul writes but we ourselves who are the first fruits of the spirit groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption of sons the redemption of our bodies.
There are many things that can make the Christian groan. There are things that are common to all mankind like grief or physical sufferings and the Christian is not immune from them.
[28:59] There are also groans that are peculiar to the Christian especially as they groan over the presence of sin in their lives. But I think that the groaning that Paul speaks of here in Romans chapter 8 has much to do with the future because we know what is coming.

The first fruits of the spirit refer to both the beginnings of a process and the unbreakable connection between the beginning and the end.
We groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons the redemption of our bodies. In other words our full redemption or we can use the theological term looking for our glorification.
what does glorification mean? It means the full complete and entire deliverance from sin and from all its effect in every respect the whole person body and soul will be entirely delivered from all the effects of sin and we shall become like the Lord Jesus Christ.
We shall be glorified with him he is already glorified and we shall be glorified with him and our glorification happens because we are joint heirs with Christ we are united to him by faith and this is the ultimate end of our salvation and redemption to be made like unto him.
[30:44] Paul writing to Timothy says for I am already poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure has come I have fought a good fight I have finished the race I have kept the faith henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the Lord the righteous judge will award to me on that day and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing there was something that had been set apart for him henceforth it is laid up for me the crown of righteousness which the righteous judge will award to me on that day notice he says that this crown will be given to him on that day which day the day of his death no this is reference to a day beyond his death it's a reference to the day of his resurrection when the body and soul will be fully saved and glorified our bodies will be made like into his glorious body

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Paul could say and that rightly for me to live is Christ and to die is gain my desire is to depart and be of Christ for that is far better nevertheless he often spoke of another day beyond death namely the day of resurrection the day of the Lord's return the great promise that is given to his church given to his people that he is going to return and the crown is not just for Paul but to all those who love his appearing there are those who look to the appearing of Christ what will his appearing mean for you can you see like David in the psalm surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever with your likeness we have said a little about the benefits that will be ours as we come to dwell in the house of the
Lord forever but I think the ultimate benefit is that we shall be forever with the Lord the shepherd and the sheep forever together and with this glorious anticipation with which the psalmist ends the psalm and this anticipation makes all the difference to us in this present world in the words of Paul so we do not lose heart though our outer self is wasting away our inner self has been renewed day by day for the light affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen for the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are not seen are eternal and here we find the psalmist and he is so confident he is so assured surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life you notice at the beginning of the psalm he says he leads me besides still water he leads me in the paths of righteousness he's going before them but now he's coming behind surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and
I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever the shepherd has brought home his flock he has brought home the sheep the sheep that he came to seek and to save and now he brings them home and that is his desire tonight in heaven that the sheep would be where he is that they may behold his glory that they may be made like unto him as he took the likeness of the sheep now that the sheep takes the likeness of the shepherd they shall appear with him and reflect the glory that he has received it is a psalm as we said at the beginning that is often sung at weddings and funerals but to experience the psalm it must be true the
Lord is my shepherd personal pronoun is very important he is my shepherd he is mine and I am his and unless you can truly say that tonight you have often sung the psalm maybe the first portion of scripture that you ever learned on your mother's knees but unless you can truly say he is mine and I am his then the rest of the psalm doesn't belong to you it belongs to the children of faith those for whom the Lord is their shepherd they are the ones that is pursued by goodness and mercy all the days of their life and they are the ones that will come to dwell in the house of the Lord forever does this psalm with all its promises does it belong to you if you're a believer tonight if you're a
[38:26] Christian tonight if he is! truly your shepherd tonight this psalm belongs to you and you can sing it with all your heart because it is your song but if he is not your shepherd that what is given to us in this psalm does not belong to you my dear friend why not even at this very hour why not take this shepherd to be personal for yourself that you would be unable to say as you exercise your trust upon him the Lord is my shepherd and everything that belongs to the 23rd psalm belongs to me I I shall sing it now like I have never sung it before because I know the shepherd the story is told of a great singer who sang this psalm in a most beautiful way and then an old man got up and he sang the psalm not as beautiful as the other person did but everybody began to weep and so the question was asked at the end why did people weep when the old man sang this psalm and nobody wept when this beautiful psalm was sung by another person and the one who sang the psalm so beautifully said

I know the psalm but he knows the shepherd do you know the shepherd may the Lord bless our thoughts we shall bring our service to conclusion by singing that psalm psalm 23 the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in pasture screen he leadeth me the quiet water spy my soul he does restore again and made to walk with me within the paths of righteousness even for his own name!
sake may we sing the whole psalm to the Lord's praise psalm 23 the Lord's my shepherd I'll not want he makes me down to lie in the Lord's my shepherd I not want he makes me down to lie in pastures!
He leadeth me the quiet waters by my soul he just restore again and he to want of me within the paths of righteousness in for his own name say he though my walk in death star fill yet will
I fear not him for thou walk with me!

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[42:44] me and thy road and shall be come for still my table thou hast fern he shed in rest of thy foes my head thou doth with oil and eyes and my cup over clothes!

goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and in God's hands forever more my dwelling place shall be the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more Amen Joseph said his son He said he said he said he said he said he said he he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said he said fathers could say he said he he he said he fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers heard fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers fathers

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