

Psalm 24: The Sovereign Shepherd

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[0 : 00] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Psalms and Psalm 24.

The book of Psalms, Psalm 24, I want us to look at the whole Psalm, but if we read again at verse 7. Psalm 24 at verse 7.

Where David writes, He is the King of glory.

As you know, over this communion weekend, we've been asking the question, how good is the good shepherd? How good is the good shepherd?

And from Psalms 22, 23, and 24, we've said that they form a trilogy of shepherd psalms. A trilogy of shepherd psalms.

[1 : 26] Where last night we saw in Psalm 22, we saw the suffering shepherd. The suffering shepherd who suffered for our sins by encountering and experiencing the darkness, the dereliction, and even the death upon the cross at Calvary.

And were it not for the suffering shepherd in Psalm 22, we wouldn't have the saving shepherd in Psalm 23. Because as we saw this morning, the saving shepherd, he's a personal shepherd.

He's a peaceful shepherd. He's a promising shepherd. And he's a preparing shepherd who not only prepares a table for us in the wilderness, but he also prepares a table for us at his table in glory.

So, in Psalm 22, we have the suffering shepherd. In Psalm 23, we have the saving shepherd. And this evening, as we see in Psalm 24, we have the sovereign shepherd.

We have the sovereign shepherd. And he's the sovereign shepherd. Boys and girls, these are the headings. He's the sovereign shepherd because he's our maker, our mediator, and our majesty.

[2 : 37] He's the sovereign shepherd because he's our maker, our mediator, and our majesty. And there are three headings this evening.

So, first of all, our maker. He is the sovereign shepherd because he's our maker. And we see that in verse 1. The psalmist says, The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein.

For he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the river. Psalm 24, it begins by asserting and affirming that the Lord is the sovereign shepherd.

And I say that because, as you know, whenever the name Lord, whenever the name Lord appears in the Bible written using capital letters, that refers to his title.

And I'm sure maybe you've noticed that over the past 24 hours. Psalm 22, we saw that there. We read in Psalm 22, in the suffering shepherd psalm, we read that kingship belongs to the Lord, and he rules over the nations.

[3 : 48] In Psalm 23, we have that confession of faith. Psalm 23 is the psalm of the saving shepherd. And the profession of faith in verse 1, The Lord is my shepherd.

And now here in Psalm 24, the psalm of the sovereign shepherd, it begins by asserting and affirming that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

My friend, whenever we see the name Lord written in the Bible using capital letters, it refers to his title, Lord. And the title, Lord, it means the one who keeps covenant.

The one who makes promises and keeps his promises. He is the one who makes covenants with his people, and he keeps his covenant promises with his people. He's the one who keeps covenant. It's the title of the covenant king. Because as Lord, he is king of kings, and he is Lord of lords. He's sovereign over all things. He's superior over all things.

[4 : 53] And he reigns supreme over all things. He rules over, and he overrules in all things temporal and spiritual. Isaiah reminds us that heaven is his throne, and the earth is his footstool.

Therefore, nothing is out with his control or his command. He's the sovereign shepherd, and he's in control of his creation. Because his creation, believe it or not, his creation doesn't belong to the governments and kingdoms and empires of this world.

No, the psalmist reminds us that the earth belongs unto the Lord. The earth belongs unto the Lord, and all that it contains, the world that is inhabited, and all that there remains.

And you know, this is why our catechism, our Westminster Shorter Catechism, wonderful document, our catechism tells us and teaches us that the decrees of God, which are the commands of our sovereign shepherd, the decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby for his own glory, he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass.

In other words, our sovereign shepherd, he is in control, absolute control, of the plan, the path, and the purpose of this entire world.

[6 : 29] Our sovereign shepherd is in control of the plan, the path, and the purpose of this entire world, because he executes his decrees, says the catechism, he executes his decrees through his works of creation, and his works of providence.

And that's what I love about this psalm of the sovereign shepherd. What I love about it is that you look at the opening verses, and the opening words of this psalm, they echo the opening words of our Bible.

This psalm begins by asserting and affirming that the Lord is sovereign. He's sovereign over all.

And you look at Genesis chapter 1.

You go back to the beginning of beginnings, to the beginning of your Bible, and Genesis 1 begins by asserting and affirming that the Lord is sovereign over all.

Because we read there, right, in Genesis 1, verse 1, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. And don't you find it fascinating that from the very outset of our Bible, the Bible just asserts and affirms the existence of God.

[7 : 46] In the beginning, God. In the beginning, God. The Bible never disputes. It doesn't discuss. It doesn't even debate the existence of God. The Bible just declares God is there.

God is real. God is fact. God is true. And God is sovereign. Sovereign over all. And God says that it's only the fool who says in his heart that there is no God.

My friend, the God of the Bible is sovereign. And this is what we always need to remember. This is the greatest comfort in our lives. That the God of the Bible is sovereign.

And he's the Lord God who made all things out of nothing by the word of his power in the space of six days and all very good.

He's our covenant king. And he's our creator king. And as our creator king, he's in control of all things. He is the Lord.

[8 : 49] He is the Lord. And as Lord, says David, in Psalm 24, as Lord, the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains.

And that includes you and that includes me. The earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains. So it includes you and it includes me.

We belong to this sovereign shepherd because he's our maker. He's our maker. We sang that in our opening item of praise this morning that without our aid, he did us make.

My friend, the sovereign shepherd is our maker and he formed us and fashioned us from the dust of the ground. But more than that, he made us and he molded us in his own image and his own likeness.

And you know, that's what makes us distinct from the rest of God's creation because we're made in his image and his likeness. And because we're made in his image and his likeness, it not only makes us distinct from the rest of creation, it also gives us dignity as God's creation.

[10 : 03] Because unlike, unlike all the insinuations and indoctrinations of the media, we're not some random chance of biology. we're not some scientific accident that they portray to us on the news at six o'clock almost every evening.

No, our origin, our genesis, our beginning, it began with this sovereign shepherd. Because the biblical emphasis of God's word is that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made.

We have been sculpted and shaped in the image and likeness of our sovereign shepherd. And it's in him, it's in him and him alone that we live and we move and we have our very being.

And you know, my friend, the Lord is our maker and we belong to him. We belong to him. And you know, this is what I keep coming back to all the time.

I keep coming back to this thought. The Lord is, as the psalmist says, the earth belongs unto the Lord and all that it contains. So the Lord is our sovereign shepherd.

[11 : 20] He's the one to whom we belong and he's the one from whom we have been blessed. He's our sovereign shepherd and he's the one from whom, the one to whom we belong and the one from whom we have been blessed.

And this is what I keep coming back to. He thinks so highly of the dignity that he has given to us and the life that he has given to us that one day he will ask us what we did with it.

One day, the Lord, our sovereign Lord, our sovereign shepherd is going to ask us to give an account of our life in this world.

And you know, my friend, Psalm 24 is reminding and reaffirming to us that we are to submit. We are to surrender our lives to this sovereign shepherd.

We are to live our lives for his glory and his glory only. Soli Deo Gloria to the glory of God alone.

[12 : 29] And we're to do it because he's our maker, but also because he's our mediator. That's what we see second. He's our mediator. So our sovereign shepherd is our maker and he's also our mediator.

Our mediator. Look at verse 3. David asks the question, Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord and who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully, he will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob. Now as we said earlier when looking at verse 1, we said that whenever we see the title Lord written in the Bible using capital letters, it's the title of the covenant king.

But of course that title Lord, whenever you see it, you have to see that it refers to Jesus because Jesus is Lord. Jesus is the king of kings.

Jesus is the lord of lords. Jesus is the one who is sovereign, superior, and supreme ruler over all things. Jesus is the covenant king.

[13 : 48] He's in control of his creation. He's our maker, but he's also our mediator. And he's our mediator for a reason. He's our mediator because sin, sin has infiltrated and infected his perfect creation.

Sin has stained and spoiled his creation. Sin has ruined and ravaged his creation. Sin is what now separates us from our sovereign God.

Sin has brought all the days of life disaster, destruction, devastation, and death. Because as Paul reminds us, the wages of sin is death.

The wages of sin is death. But you know, that's not how Paul finished that sentence, is it? He said, the wages of sin is death, but, but, and you know, it has to be the best but in the Bible.

The wages of sin is death, but, the free gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

[15 : 01] And this is why the sovereign shepherd is not only our maker, he's also our mediator, because as our sovereign shepherd, he has executed his decrees.

He has executed his perfect plan, path, and purpose. He has worked it all out, not only in his works of creation, but also in his works of providence.

His works of providence. And you know, out of all the doctrines taught in the Bible, the doctrine of providence is my favorite doctrine. I love it. I think it's the most fascinating doctrine.

In fact, it was Liam Golliger, Dr. Liam Golliger, he's a Presbyterian minister in America and Philadelphia. He wrote that providence is a word that every Christian should know, because it refers to God's good government over our lives.

Providence is a word that every Christian should know, because it refers to God's good government over our lives. Because, you know, the word providence, it means seen beforehand.

[16 : 10] Seen beforehand. Where our sovereign shepherd, he has seen every detail in our lives, and he has seen it all take place beforehand, before the foundation of the world.

Which, as you know, it means that nothing in our lives is as a result of luck, or chance, or fate, or fortune, or karma. No, it's all according to the perfect plan, path, and purpose of the providence of our sovereign shepherd.

Even our disappointments are his appointments. And sometimes that's hard to get our head around. But that's what we're being taught here.

Even our disappointments are the Lord's appointments. They're all according to the Lord's providence. Because as we've said many times before, he is the director in the drama. He sets the stage. He writes the script. He is the one who is the author in the story of our lives. And it's all according to his perfect plan, path, purpose, and providence.

[17:19] The providence of our sovereign shepherd. And you know, I don't think I'll ever tire of being reminded. Reminded and reassured that the Lord is the divine weaver.

We have a plaque that's in our kitchen of the divine weaver. And you know, it's one of the best reminders every day, especially when you have a bad day, to be reminded that my life is but a weaving.

Between my Lord and me, I cannot choose the colors. He weaveth steadily. And sometimes he weaveth sorrow. And I, in foolish pride, forget that he sees the upper and I the underside. And not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly, shall God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why the dark threads are as needful in the weaver's skillful hand as the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

It's a wonderful reminder and reassurance that our sovereign shepherd is working all things together by his grace for our good and to his glory.

[18:33] It's all to his glory. It's all according to his perfect plan, path, and purpose. It's all according to his providence, the providence of our sovereign shepherd.

And that's what we've been shown in this psalm because our catechism teaches us, and I always go back to the catechism. Our catechism teaches us that it was through a special act of providence that our maker became our mediator.

It was through a special act of providence that our maker became our mediator. Our maker became our mediator by becoming man.

That was the special act of providence. Our maker, the Lord, became our mediator, Jesus, by becoming man. And you know, with so many people consumed by the consumerism of Christmas, you know, the Bible reminds us, the Bible reaffirms to us that the Christmas story was a special act of providence.

The Christmas story was a special act of providence because the Lord, the covenant King of heaven, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the one who is enthroned in glory, who is sovereign, superior, supreme ruler of the entire universe.

[20:00] Not even a hair can fall from our head without him knowing. Not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without him knowing. And yet, he's the one who humbled himself from the crown of glory down to the cradle in Bethlehem to take our nature upon himself.

It's the story, you know, the Christmas story is a special act of providence where our maker became our mediator by becoming man.

And you know, in his classic book, *Knowing God*, I always come back to this quote that J.I. Packer made. It's a wonderful statement where he wrote, the mystery with which the gospel confronts us is not in the Good Friday message of the atonement or the Easter message of resurrection, but in the Christmas message of incarnation, God becoming man.

God becoming man. You know, my friend, we needed a special act of providence from our sovereign shepherd and it was all because of our sin. We needed a special act of providence from our sovereign shepherd all because of our sin.

And we can see that from the questions that are asked in verse 3. He asks in verse 3, Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?

[21:27] And of course, they're rhetorical questions because the answer is no one. No one is able to ascend the hill of the Lord. No one is able to stand in his holy place.

No one is perfect in righteousness and holiness. No one is worthy to stand before the throne of the Lord except the Lord. Which is why we're given that answer in the following verses.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart. Who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.

He is the one who will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation. It's describing Jesus.

He is the one who has clean hands and a pure heart. He does not lift up his soul to what is false. He does not swear deceitfully. You know my friend our sinless sovereign shepherd is our mediator.

[22 : 37] And he's our mediator and I think we should never lose sight of this. He is our mediator because he is both God and man. He is two distinct natures in one person forever.

And you know in order to reconcile and restore the ruined relationship between a holy God and sinful mankind. We needed a mediator. We needed a mediator to fill this chasm. We needed a mediator to stand in the gap. We needed a mediator who could relate to this holy God and also to mankind. We needed a mediator who could relate to God in his divinity and to us in our humanity.

And that mediator is our mediator is our mediator the sovereign shepherd Jesus Christ because our Bible tells us and teaches us that there is one God and there is one mediator between God and men.

And he is the man Christ Jesus. There is one God and one mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus. My friend, our mediator is the sovereign shepherd which is why.

[23 : 54] And this is what the psalm keeps coming back to. It's why we need to humble ourselves before him and acknowledge that he is our majesty.

He is our majesty. Our sovereign shepherd is our maker he's our mediator and he's our majesty. That's what we see lastly.

He's our majesty. Look at verse 7. David writes, Lift up your heads O gates and be lifted up O ancient doors that the king of glory may come in.

Who is this king of glory? The Lord strong and mighty the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads O gates and lift them up O ancient doors that the king of glory may come in.

Who is this king of glory? The Lord of hosts He is the king of glory. Do you know the closing verses of Psalm 24 are well known probably more because of the Psalm tune that's often associated with them.

[25 : 04] The tune boys and girls is St. George's Edinburgh. And the tune St. George's Edinburgh has been almost coupled and connected to these verses at the close of Psalm 24.

Now the tune St. George's Edinburgh it was composed by the Reverend Dr. Andrew Thompson. And Andrew Thompson he became a minister at St. George's Church on George Street in the centre of Edinburgh in 1814.

And on his arrival at the congregation they became immediately aware that he was not only an influential preacher but he was also an influential Psalm singer because he sought to improve congregational Psalm singing by introducing new Psalm tunes.

And one of the Psalm tunes he introduced was St. George's Edinburgh. And you know it's interesting Andrew Thompson he was a close friend of Thomas Chalmers who was the first moderator in the free church and he would have played a crucial role in the free church disruption although he died prior to the disruption.

But you know St. George's Church it became St. George's Free Church when the congregation left the Church of Scotland at the disruption in 1843. However St. George's Free Church it returned to the Church of Scotland in the Union of 1929.

[26 : 30] And I say all this because when the Union took place some of the Communion cups were going spare and you'll never guess where they ended up.

You'll never guess where they ended up. They were here in Barber's Free Church. Yes our Communion silverware is from St. George that's what it says on the front St. George's Free Church Edinburgh 1845.

It's amazing in the providence of God they ended up here. But Andrew Thompson's resounding and reviving tune that's what lives on. That's what we're going to sing in a moment at St. George's Edinburgh.

And it lives on especially because in these verses verses 7 to 10 of Psalm 24 Andrew Thompson he sought to implement what's called antiphonal singing.

Antiphonal singing. Now I'm not very good with music and singing isn't my forte but antiphonal singing is where there are two choirs. So when it's sung as a huge choir there are two choirs that are singing alternately.

[27 : 40] You can probably find it if you look on YouTube or something you'll hear the tune being sung with two choirs. The two choirs sing in turn. It's antiphonal singing. And so by introducing and implementing antiphonal singing Andrew Thompson sought to highlight that there's actually a conversation taking place in the closing verses of Psalm 24.

And the conversation is between one of the hosts of heaven and the gatekeeper of heaven. And their conversation is about the royal entrance of our majesty King Jesus. And you know it's actually a beautiful image and illustration that's presented to us in these closing verses. Because in verses 7 and 8 you have the royal entrance of our sovereign shepherd into heaven where he's returning following his first advent his first coming into the world. As you know his first advent in that first advent our sovereign shepherd he humbled himself down, down, down from the crown to the cradle to the cross. But on the third day he was highly exalted. He was raised and resurrected from the dead. He put all his enemies under his feet and on his ascension and his arrival into heaven after his first advent. [29 : 03] The sovereign shepherd he returns victorious from battle. And he returns with the heavenly hosts leading our majesty in this royal procession. And what the psalmist describes he describes that on the approach to the gate of heaven one of the heavenly hosts that is in this procession he calls out to the gatekeeper on the top of the gate and he says to the gatekeeper ye gates lift up your heads on high ye doors that last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me.

And then there's this voice from the top of the gate where the gatekeeper is standing there and he responds by asking but who is he that is the king? Who is he? Who is the king of glory? And the heavenly hosts they call back and say the mighty Lord is this even that same Lord that great in might and strong in battle is. And you know it's a beautiful image and illustration of the arrival of the king of glory into heaven. But the psalm of the sovereign shepherd it doesn't end there because that's not the end of the story of salvation.

The story of salvation as you know it will end with the second advent. It will end with the second coming of Christ when our majesty the sovereign shepherd will return. [30 : 31] And as Jesus describes his return in Matthew chapter 25 he describes the return in the glory of his father and the heavenly hosts with him where he returns to judge the living and the dead.

And in Matthew 25 Jesus says on that day he will separate people. And how will he separate them? Jesus says he will separate them just like a shepherd.

Like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will separate people like a shepherd separates sheep from goats. and he will say to the goats on his left hand depart from me you cursed into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

But the sovereign shepherd will say to the sheep on his right hand come come you blessed of my father inherit the kingdom prepared for you from before the foundation of the world.

And then with this royal procession and his heavenly host our sovereign shepherd he will fulfill his promise. His promise that we mentioned this morning of a place prepared at the table in glory.

[31 : 52] He will fulfill his promise by taking his people home to be with himself. And so on approach to the gate of heaven one of the heavenly hosts again verse 9 will call out to the gatekeeper and he will call out and say ye gates lift up your heads ye doors doors that do last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me.

And from the top of the gate the gatekeeper will respond again by asking but who is he that is the king of glory? Who is this? And the heavenly hosts will give this resounding response in confirmation the lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is.

The lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is. And then as the gate of heaven opens a multitude which no man can number will enter through the gate of heaven.

And do you know what will be said of them? Do you know what will be said of all those who enter the gate of heaven with the king of glory? It will be said as John wrote it these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb therefore they are before the throne of God and they serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd.

He will be their shepherd and as their shepherd he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

[33 : 56] My friend that's how good our good shepherd is. He's the suffering shepherd of Psalm 22 he's the saving shepherd of Psalm 23 and he's the sovereign shepherd of Psalm 24.

How good is the good shepherd? He's that good. He's that good. But the question always remains doesn't it?

He's a good shepherd but is he your shepherd? Is he your shepherd? Can you say tonight as others have said today already the Lord is my shepherd?

The Lord is my shepherd. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord we give thanks that he is a good shepherd that he is the suffering shepherd for his sheep.

He is the saving shepherd of his sheep and he is the sovereign shepherd over his sheep. And we thank thee and we praise thee that his name is Jesus and that he is in control that we might look at our lives and wonder and see that the things might be spiraling out of control.

[35 : 28] And yet we thank thee that even tonight we know that he is enthroned on high that he is in control. He is working all things together for good although we cannot see it now as Jesus said you shall know it hereafter.

O Lord we pray that thou wouldst bless us that thou wouldst keep us that thou wouldst enable us to keep looking to our shepherd because as we mentioned this morning how Jesus says to us so clearly my sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow me and I give to them eternal life and they will never perish neither shall they be plucked out of my hand.

O Lord go before us bless us we pray and do us good for Jesus sake. Amen. We're going to bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 24 the closing words Psalm 24 in the Scottish Psalter singing from verse 7 and down to the end of the psalm but before we sing we have some questions so do you have some answers yeah no maybe okay what is the trilogy of the shepherd Psalms Psalm 22 23 24 so what is

Psalm 22 can you tell me that one it's the suffering shepherd Psalm 23 saving shepherd Psalm 24 the sovereign shepherd good okay what are our three headings maker mediator and majesty so the sovereign shepherd is our maker our mediator and our majesty so we have to humble ourselves and bow before him as king now last question who wrote the tune that goes to Psalm 24 no say it again Andrew Thompson yep well done so the tune is called St.

George's Edinburgh and it was written by Reverend Dr. Andrew Thompson well done so we're going to try and sing that tune now okay no pressure Ivan so we're singing Psalm 24 so this is the tune with the hallelujahs and the amens so Ivan tells me there's five hallelujahs and three amens right you've heard this tune before I'm sure so help your presenter we're very thankful for him especially doing this tune so Psalm 24 verse 7 ye gates lift up your heads on high ye doors that last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me but who of glory is the king the mighty lord is this in that same lord that great and mighty and strong in battle is ye gates lift up your heads ye doors doors that do last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me but who is he that is the king of glory who is this the lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is we'll sing these verses in conclusion to god's praise amen ye gates lift up your heads on high ye doors that last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me but who of glory is the king the mighty lord is this he must say lord that great in might and strong in battle is ye gates lift up your heads ye doors doors that do last foray be lifted up that so the king of glory enter me but who is he that is the king the king of glory who is this the lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is the lord of hosts and none but he the king of glory is alleluia alleluia alleluia alleluia alleluia alleluia alleluia amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen

[42 : 08] amen amen the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen amen