

# The Best Shepherd

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[ 0 : 00 ] Anyway, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to the portion of Scripture that we read in the book of Psalms and Psalm 23.

If you're using the church Bible, it's on page 458. Psalm 23. We're just going to read from the beginning.

A Psalm of David, where David confesses, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd.

You know, I often wondered what I would preach about on my last day in Barvis. I thought about preaching on the parable of the sower and asking you one last time, how's your heart?

How's your heart? Is it a hardened heart? Is it a shallow heart? Is it a hungry heart? Or is it a healthy heart? How's your heart?

[ 1 : 20 ] Then I thought preaching about my unconverted friend and my Christian friend, because I'm thankful for the privilege of watching and witnessing some of you become my Christian friend.

But after 10 years, there are still far too many of you who remain my unconverted friend. I thought about preaching what Jesus said, you must be born again, because you must be born again.

Jesus says that unless a man or woman, boy or girl be born again, they cannot enter the kingdom of God. I also thought about preaching on the Bible in miniature, which is found there in John 3, 16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

I also thought about my last public sermon would echo the last public sermon of Jesus, where Jesus wept over the people of his day.

And he said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, I thought about preaching, O Barvis, O Barvis, how often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing.

[ 2 : 41 ] You know, I often wondered what I would preach about on my last day in Barvis. But when it came to it, I had to realize and recognize that the only person I can ever point you to is the best shepherd.

The best shepherd. And as you know, Jesus, he is the best shepherd. Because he's revealed to us in our Bible as the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

He's the great shepherd, says Peter, who rescued and redeemed his flock by his blood. And he's the chief shepherd, says Paul, from whom his flock will receive an unfading crown of glory.

So my friend, Jesus is the best shepherd. And once again, that's who I want to point you to this morning. Who better to point you to than the best shepherd?

Because as the best shepherd, we're reminded here in the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23, we're reminded here about the importance of three things. And of course, it's going to have alliteration because that's how my mind works.

[ 3 : 46 ] Confession. Then there is comfort. Then there is commitment. Confession, comfort, and commitment. That's what we see in the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23.

So first of all, confession. David confesses there in verse 1, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd.

Now after 10 years as your minister, I've learned a lot about you. But one thing I've loved learning about many of you is your favorite psalm. And why it's your favorite psalm.

And for many of those throughout the years whom we have loved and whom we have lost, we read their favorite psalm at their funeral service. And we reminded ourselves as to why it was their favorite psalm.

And what it meant to them as they journeyed through the wilderness of this world. But it's safe to say that whether you have a favorite psalm or not, the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23 is you could say everyone's favorite psalm.

[ 4 : 51 ] And it's a favorite psalm because it's a familiar psalm. We memorize this psalm in Sunday school. We sing it often in church. Even those who don't go to church, they've heard of the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23.

And that's because the beautiful thing about Psalm 23 is that the best shepherd is needed in every circumstance and every situation that we find in life. Whether it's the blessing of a baptism or communion around the Lord's Supper or even the joy of a wedding or the sorrow of a funeral, Psalm 23 is, you could say, the most applicable and appropriate psalm to every circumstance and every situation in life.

Because Psalm 23, it's a unique psalm. Everyone will admit it's a universal psalm because it presents to us the best shepherd, Jesus Christ.

In fact, this unique and universal psalm, it reminds us that every servant and every shepherd of God's people is an under-shepherd.

Every servant and shepherd of God's people is an under-shepherd. And we see that when we study our Bible because there's a shepherd theme in Scripture. We've mentioned this before.

[ 6 : 07 ] And when we look at the shepherd theme of Scripture, we see that it shows us that every servant and every shepherd of God's people is actually an under-shepherd. We see it right at the beginning of our Bible.

We see it in the book of Beginnings, the book of Genesis. We're told that Adam's righteous son, Abel, was a keeper of sheep. Then all the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, they're all shepherds.

Moses was a shepherd. The Israelites were shepherds. David, we read here in Psalm 23, he was a shepherd. Amos was a shepherd. The prophets were all shepherds.

who prophesied and pointed to the best shepherd. Isaiah said that the Lord will feed his sheep like a shepherd. Ezekiel claimed that the Lord will rescue and redeem and restore his sheep as a shepherd.

And Ezekiel promised that there will come a shepherd who will be smitten and stricken for the sake of his people. And then when you go into the New Testament, even the New Testament preachers, they were shepherds.

[ 7 : 09 ] They were all shepherds. You remember when Jesus restored Peter after denying him three times? Jesus asked Peter three times, Do you love me?

Do you love me? Do you love me? And each time Peter said, Yes, Lord, you know that I love you. You know that I love you. You know that I love you. And every time Peter answered, Jesus said, Well, feed my sheep.

Feed my lambs. Shepherd my sheep. And from that day forward, Peter knew that as a preacher, he was a shepherd and a servant of God's people.

And so when we look at the shepherd theme in Scripture, we see that all the patriarchs, all the prophets, and all the preachers in the New Testament, they all saw themselves as under-shepherds. They were shepherds and servants under the godly guidance of the best shepherd.

They were all under the godly guidance of the best shepherd. They were under-shepherds who preached and proclaimed and pointed to the one good shepherd, Jesus Christ.

[ 8 : 17 ] And you know, that's all I am too. That's my job. That's my calling. Called to preach and proclaim and point.

Point you to the best shepherd, Jesus Christ. Because there's only one shepherd of the sheep. There's only one shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep.

There's only one shepherd to confess as your Savior and as your shepherd. And in the opening words of the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23, David reminds us yet again about our need.

Our need to confess the Lord as our Savior and as our shepherd. He says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

The Lord is my shepherd. Now, I'm sure that we've all heard of the saying, confession is good for the soul. Confession is good for the soul. And it's certainly true when it comes to confessing our sin.

[ 9 : 18 ] Because, well, it's good to confess your sin. And the promise of the best shepherd is that when we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness all because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.

So, it's good to confess our sin because confession is good for the soul. But, you know, it's also good to confess Jesus as our Savior and as our shepherd.

It's good to confess our sin. But it's also good to publicly confess Jesus as our Savior and our shepherd. Which is what David is reminding us here in Psalm 23.

That we need to personally confess Jesus as our Savior and as our shepherd. And it is personal. Let's make no mistake about it.

It is personal because we need to personally confess our sin. And we need to personally confess Jesus as our Savior, our shepherd. He's my shepherd.

[ 10 : 23 ] We need to personally confess that the Lord is my shepherd. He's my shepherd. And, you know, this is why I've said to you, I think, at almost every funeral service over the past ten years, I've said it and I've repeatedly said it because it's so key to understanding salvation.

Because it's one thing to know Psalm 23 and it's one thing to sing Psalm 23, but you need to personally confess the shepherd of Psalm 23.

You can be good at singing the shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23. You can sing it off by heart without looking at the words. But the thing is, my friend, you need to know. You need to know the shepherd of Psalm 23 in your heart.

You need to know him in your heart because the emphasis of the Bible is that in order to be saved, in order to be a Christian, in order to be a sheep of this good shepherd, the best shepherd, you must believe in your heart and you must confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord.

You have to believe in your heart and also confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord over your life. So that's the first thing.

[ 11 : 45 ] Confession. Confess your sin. Confess Jesus as your shepherd. Second thing we see is comfort. So confession and comfort.

Look at verse 4. It says there in verse 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.

You know, when you confess the best shepherd as your personal shepherd, as your personal saviour, you're given the promise of all these provisions. You're blessed, as Paul says in Ephesians chapter 1, you're blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ.

And that's what David is saying here in the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23. He says, The Lord is my shepherd. There's the confession. I shall not want.

There's the promise. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. And you know, that's the thing. When you claim Jesus as your saviour and your shepherd, you also confess, I shall not want.

[ 12 : 53 ] I shall not lack or lose out. I shall not be deprived or disadvantaged in any way. And you know, many people will tell you, and they will tell you.

I was told that when I first became a Christian. They'll tell you that when you claim and confess Jesus as your shepherd, you are lacking. You're losing out. You're deprived and dispossessed and disadvantaged because if you become a Christian, your life will be so rigid and so restrained and so restricted.

It will remove all these freedoms. And I've mentioned the F's of life to you. I don't know how many times before. It'll take away all the freedoms to enjoy the F's of life. Fun, food, family, friendship, falling in love, fitness, football, and finance.

It will remove it all from you if you become a Christian. They will tell you that Christianity is living an empty life. You know, don't listen to them. Don't listen to that.

Because Jesus reminds us, he says in John 10, that not only that he's the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep, but Jesus says, I have come. And why has he come?

[ 14 : 04 ] I have come that you might have a life. What kind of life? An abundant life. I have come that you might have life and live it to the full.

Live it the way you were created to live it. So Jesus says, I'm the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. And I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly.

And that's what Jesus wants for you. He wants you to live life to the full by claiming him and confessing him as your shepherd and your savior.

Because when you make that personal profession of faith, you have the promise of all his provisions. You have the promise of everything that comes from the hand of this good shepherd. Because the promise is that he will feed you and lead you.

He will feed you and lead you. He'll feed you ultimately from his word. His word, as he says in verse 2 and 3, it's like fresh green pastures.

[ 15 : 09 ] His word is food for the soul to strengthen and sustain and support in our time of need. And you know, as an under-shepherd, as an under-shepherd, all I can say to you is read your Bible and be in church.

Make sure you read your Bible and be in church. Be in the word and be under the word. Be in the word and be under the word because the word of God is food for the soul.

We were singing about that in Psalm 100, that we are his flock, he doth us feed and for his sheep he doth us take. But you know, the best shepherd, he not only promises to feed us, he also promises to lead us.

He'll lead us, as he says there in verse 2, besides still waters. He'll refresh us, he'll revive us, he'll restore our soul. But the amazing thing is he will also lead us in paths of righteousness.

Verse 3. In other words, the best shepherd will lead us in paths of righteousness and he will always lead us by his grace for our good and to his glory. The shepherd will always lead us by his grace for our good and to his glory.

[ 16 : 27 ] He will lead us onto a path, sometimes a path in which we have to submit and surrender to his will and confess to this shepherd, well, not my will, but thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

My friend, when we personally profess our faith in the best shepherd, we have the promise of all his provisions. He'll feed us from his word, he'll lead us into green pastures besides still waters, all for his name's sake, by his grace for our good and to his glory.

But as many of you have already encountered and experienced in your life, both at home and in your family, the best shepherd is also one who leads us into the darkest of valleys, as it says there in verse 4, the valley of the shadow of death.

And you know, sometimes we can't understand why he's leading us there. Sometimes we can't understand what purpose he has in it in leading us into that valley. Sometimes we can't even understand where his promises of provision are in the darkness of that valley.

But as David confesses in verse 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.

[ 17 : 56 ] They comfort me. And you know, for me as an under-shepherd, an under-shepherd of the best shepherd, I would have to say that it has been the greatest privilege to have walked with some of you as you entered and experienced some of the darkest valleys in your life.

And that's the only word I can use. I've used it many times before. It's the word privilege. Because it really is a privilege. The greatest privilege.

A privilege to sit with you and to speak with you. A privilege to listen to you and even to love you. A privilege to read God's word in the darkest valley and then to sit there and pray with you.

It's the greatest privilege to be part of your lives and to have encountered and experienced some of the darkest valleys in life. And for some of you, the valley was a valley of sin where you needed salvation and you needed restoration.

For others, it was the valley of sickness as you underwent trial and turmoil and facing treatment. But for many of you, it was and it will always be my privilege to have walked with you in the valley of sorrow as you lost someone you loved, those you cared about in this world who were closest to you.

[ 19 : 35 ] And you know, even in the valley, it has been my privilege to point you to this shepherd, the best shepherd, the good shepherd, the only shepherd, Jesus Christ.

because he promises to you, 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. But you know, the greatest comfort for me as an under-shepherd, is that although I leave the flock, I'm leaving you in safe hands.

I'm leaving you in safe hands, shepherding hands, hands that will have you, hands that will hold you all the days of your life.

And you know, what better hands to be in than the hands of the best shepherd? What better hands to be in than the hands of the best shepherd? Because that's what Jesus says.

[ 20 : 44 ] He says, 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 hands.

You know, what better hands to be in than the hands of the best shepherd? That's why we need the third C. Commitment. Commitment.

That's our final C. Confession. We need to confess Jesus. The Lord is my shepherd. Comfort. Comfort. He's there for us in the valley. And then commitment.

Commitment. 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. As I've said many times before, the only word I can use to describe ministry is the word privilege.

But if you know me by now, which I hope and I'm sure you do, you'll know that the only word I can use to describe Christianity, the only word I can use to describe what it is to follow Jesus as the best shepherd is the word commitment.

[ 21 : 57 ] Commitment. Yes, there needs to be confession of sin. Yes, there needs to be confession of Jesus as Savior. But there also needs to be commitment to the shepherd. There has to be commitment to the shepherd.

And I've said it many times from this pulpit before. Christianity requires commitment. Christianity requires commitment. And I said it many times even at Christianity Explored.

I love doing Christianity Explored with you. I think we did it almost every year by lockdown. And over the years I've asked many of you to come along. Sadly, some of you refused.

Others responded. Many of you came along to Christianity Explored to listen and to learn about who Jesus is and why Jesus came and what it means to follow Him.

And it also gave you an opportunity to ask questions and to seek answers. And for some of you it was the means by which you came to confess your sin and commit your life to Jesus as your Savior and your shepherd.

[ 23 : 01 ] But for many of you for many of you far too many of you you're still not committed. Still not committed.

And yet what's still hampering you and hindering you and holding you back it isn't someone. It isn't even something else. No, no.

You don't need to look any further than self. That's what's hampering you. That's what's holding you back. That's what's hindering you from wholehearted commitment to Jesus Christ.

Self. Self. And you know the last Christianity Explored I was doing in the school with a teacher the phrase we kept coming back to is you need to get over yourself.

You really need to get over yourself. Because that's what Jesus says to us. Jesus says to us in the gospel if anyone will come after me if anyone wants to be a Christian then they must deny self.

[ 24 : 04 ] they need to get over themselves. They need to realize that what's actually holding them back and hindering them and hampering them from their commitment to Jesus Christ is self.

If anyone will come after me says Jesus they must deny self take up their cross and follow me. Because commitment Christianity requires commitment.

Christianity requires commitment. commitment. And you know that's something I want you to remember in the coming months. You're not going to hear me saying it.

But I want you to remember this. Christianity requires commitment. Because it's not only commitment to Christ it's also commitment to Christ's church.

because Christianity requires commitment in coming together in worship both ends on the Lord's Day. Christianity requires commitment to the prayer meeting midweek.

[ 25 : 09 ] Christianity requires commitment to creche and to Sunday school. So kids keep coming. those in the creche and those in the Sunday school keep coming to Sunday school.

Parents keep bringing your children to Sunday school. Teachers keep teaching them. Keep teaching them about the best shepherd because Christianity requires commitment.

Christianity also requires commitment to youth fellowship. So young people keep coming to YF. I won't be able to beat you at bowling anymore but make sure you give the best years of your life to this shepherd.

Make sure you give the best years of your life to following the best shepherd because Christianity requires commitment. And so my friend Christianity requires commitment in serving our Savior and

serving our shepherd.

Christianity requires commitment in professing our faith in presenting Jesus to our congregation and proclaiming Christ in our community. Christianity requires commitment.

[ 26 : 24 ] But you know with this I'll conclude. You know after ten years I have many regrets about my ministry here in Barvis.

I'm not going to list them but one of them and I suppose as someone who I hope lovingly preach to you every week one of them my unconverted friend is not being here to see you confess your faith in this Savior and commit your life to this wonderful shepherd.

And I was thinking well it will only be an eternity that we will really know if the past ten years of sowing seed here has had any lasting impact and influence upon your life.

For some I had the privilege of seeing them coming to faith in Christ. I even had the privilege of seeing them dying in Christ. It's amazing to see someone die in the Lord.

Even to see someone die on their deathbed to come to faith on their deathbed and their faith in Jesus. And even to stand over their grave what greater privilege as a minister to stand over someone's grave and have the assurance that that grave belongs to Jesus.

[ 28 : 00 ] us. But you know only eternity will tell us what we all did with the best shepherd. Only eternity will tell us what we did with this shepherd who has loved us and gave himself for us.

And that's how Psalm 23 concludes. It concludes by calling us to live life not for the here and now but to live life with an eternal perspective.

he says surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

And you know it's not only the shepherd psalm of Psalm 23 that concludes by calling us to live life with an eternal perspective. In fact our whole Bible the shepherd theme of scripture reaches its climax and conclusion by also calling us to live life.

With an eternal perspective. The shepherd theme of scripture begins in Genesis and it ends there in the book of Revelation where John is given this revelation of heaven and he sees eternity what it's like in eternity and he says after this I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation tribe people and language standing standing before the throne and before the lamb clothed in white robes and they're singing salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne and to the lamb then the questions asked who are these clothed in white robes and where have they come from and the answer is given and you know I was thinking some of those who sat here at the beginning of my ministry they are part of this multitude they are part of the answer these are the ones coming out of the great tribulation having washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb therefore they are before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence they shall hunger no more neither thirst any more the sun shall not strike them nor any scorching heat for the lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd he's always their shepherd always the shepherd and he will guide them to springs of living water and you know the best part is that he will wipe away every tear from their eyes you know what better shepherd to follow than the best shepherd shepherd and so what can I say to you it's hard enough to speak but what can I say except make sure that the best shepherd is your shepherd by confessing him by finding comfort in him but also by committing your life to him because he's a great shepherd he's the best shepherd so I want all of us to confess the Lord is my shepherd well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray our father in heaven we give thanks to thee for thy word and we thank thee for the shepherd psalm of psalm 23 a psalm we have read and sung so often words that seem so familiar to us and yet we pray that they would be real and relevant to us again today reminding us that [ 32 : 03 ] Jesus is the best shepherd the one whom we must confess one in whom we will always find comfort in and one for whom we must commit our lives to well Lord bless thy truth to us we pray bless thy word to our souls may it find lodgment in our heart and bring forth fruit to thine own glory hear us we pray go before us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this morning we're going to sing the words of that psalm psalm 23 psalm 23 it's in the Scottish Psalter page 229 psalm 23 psalm 23 psalm 23 psalm 23 psalm 23 psalm 23 we're going to sing the whole psalm i want you to sing i want you to mean what you sing if you're singing the lord is my shepherd then make sure he is your shepherd make sure he is your shepherd both in life and in death

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want He makes me down to lie In pastures green he leadeth me The quiet waters by We'll stand to sing if you're able the whole psalm to God's praise The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want He makes me down to lie In pastures green he leadeth me The quiet waters by My soul he does restore again

And be to walk the faith Within the paths of righteousness In for his own name's sake Yea, though I walk in this dark will Yet will I fear none ill For thou art with me And thy rod

And staff be comfort still My table thou hast In the presence of my foes My head the dust with oil anoint And my cup overflows Goodness and mercy And mercy all my life

Shall surely follow me And in God's house For evermore My dwelling place shall be The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make his face to shine upon you And be gracious to you The Lord lift up his countenance upon you And give you peace Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Ami Amen Amen Amen Amen Monday Amen AMi Amen Amen Bam■■■■ É Ameniras

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