

Psalm 23: The Saving Shepherd

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[0 : 0 0] Well, if we could, this morning, if you would turn with me to the book of Psalms and Psalm 23. The book of Psalms and Psalm 23.

If you're using the Pew Bible, it's on page 550. So, the book of Psalms and Psalm 23.

We're going to read the whole psalm. A psalm of David. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness. For his name's sake.

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 prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

[1 : 0 8] You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Since it was first penned by David over 3,000 years ago, Psalm 23 has become one of, if not the most well-known psalm in the Bible.

Even those who don't go to church usually have heard of the shepherd psalm of Psalm 23. Which is why you could probably say that Psalm 23 is everyone's favorite psalm.

Psalm 23 is everyone's favorite psalm. Because the beautiful thing about Psalm 23 is that it's an appropriate and applicable psalm for every circumstance and every situation that we go through in our lives.

Because whether it's the blessing of a baptism or the joy of a wedding or even the sorrow of a funeral, Psalm 23 always seems to be appropriate and applicable to the circumstance and to the situation.

[2 : 1 9] In fact, in the past, Psalm 23 was often sung during a communion service in preparation for sitting at the Lord's table. So we're in good company this morning as we consider Psalm 23.

But as we saw and as we said last night at our preparatory service, we said that Psalms 22, 23, and 24, they form a trilogy of shepherd psalms.

A trilogy of shepherd psalms. Because in Psalm 22, we see the suffering shepherd. In Psalm 23, we see the saving shepherd. And in Psalm 24, we see the sovereign shepherd.

And last night in Psalm 22, we saw the suffering shepherd. We saw how he suffered for our sins by encountering and experiencing the darkness and the dereliction and the death that took place on the cross at Calvary.

But this morning, I'd like us to see Psalm 23 and see that it's the psalm of the saving shepherd. And then, God willing, this evening, we'll consider Psalm 24. So come for the third part of the trilogy.

[3 : 2 7] Because in Psalm 24, we see the sovereign shepherd. The sovereign shepherd. But you know, this trilogy of shepherd psalms, they explain and they emphasize to us just how good our good shepherd really is.

And that's a question I want us to ask this morning as we come to this well-known psalm. I want us to ask the simple question, how good is the good shepherd?

How good is the good shepherd? Because in Psalm 23, David reminds us that the good shepherd is the saving shepherd. And he's the saving shepherd because he's a personal shepherd, he's a peaceful shepherd, and he's a promising shepherd.

He's the saving shepherd because he's a personal shepherd, a peaceful shepherd, and a promising shepherd. So how good is the good shepherd? How good is the good shepherd? David says in verse 1, he's a personal shepherd.

He's a personal shepherd. David says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. The Lord is my shepherd. And you know, from the book of Genesis all the way through to the book of Revelation, there is what you could call a shepherd theme in Scripture. A shepherd theme in Scripture, because right at the beginning of beginnings in the book of Genesis, we see that Adam's righteous son, Abel, was a keeper of sheep. He was a shepherd. And then as you progress through the pages of the Bible, we encounter the patriarchs. We encounter Abraham, and then Isaac, and Jacob, who were all shepherds. Then there's Moses. He was also a shepherd. The Israelites were shepherds. David, as we have it in Psalm 23, was a shepherd. Even the prophet Amos was a shepherd in Tekoa. But you know, the prophets saw themselves as under-shepherds. They were under-shepherds who pointed to the Lord as their shepherd. Because when you read Isaiah, he tells us that the Lord will feed his sheep like a shepherd.

[5 : 41] Ezekiel claims that the Lord will rescue and restore and redeem his sheep like a shepherd. Zechariah prophesies that there will come a shepherd who will be smitten and struck for the sake of his people. And of course, the identity of the Old Testament shepherd is, he's revealed to us in the New Testament, in the Person of Jesus, where, as we read in John chapter 10, Jesus declares, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. But not only Jesus, Peter also claims that Jesus is the chief shepherd. Paul states that Jesus is the great shepherd of his sheep. And then the shepherd theme in Scripture, it comes to its climax and its conclusion right at the end of our Bibles in the book of Revelation, where John sees, what does he see? He sees a lamb in the midst of the throne room of heaven that has been slain for his sheep. And that lamb is described to us as a shepherd, shepherd, the shepherd of his sheep. My friend, the shepherd theme in Scripture is a wonderful reminder and reassurance of how good our good shepherd really is. But you know what's really interesting is that David wasn't the first person to make this personal profession of faith. David wasn't the first person to claim and confess, the Lord is my shepherd. It was actually Jacob. If you go back to the book of Genesis, Jacob says, the Lord has been my shepherd all my life. The Lord has been my shepherd all my life.

And maybe you can say that this morning. Maybe you can say like Jacob, the Lord has been my shepherd all my shepherd all my life. Because maybe for you, there wasn't really a time when you didn't know and you didn't love the Lord as your shepherd. But for others, like it was for myself, where later on in life, we discovered how good the good shepherd really is. Because you came to see that this shepherd is a personal shepherd who dealt with you so personally and so patiently and so privately. Because maybe for many years, no one knew that anything was going on in your heart. Not even those closest to you. Not even those among your family or in your friends. They didn't know. But you knew. You knew that this good shepherd was speaking to you. As a lost sheep who was wandering in the wilderness of this world. And as you kept hearing his voice, maybe through preaching or through other

Christians telling you you needed to be saved, you kept hearing his voice calling you and compelling you to come home. And for years you resisted. For years you resisted thinking the grass is always greener on the other side. But when you came to the end of yourself, you could no longer resist.

You could no longer refuse the gracious and gentle voice of the good shepherd. And eventually, you turned to him. And when you turned to the shepherd, you almost turned to him, echoing the words of the hymn writer, saying, I heard the voice of Jesus say, Come unto me and rest. Lay down, thou weary one, lay down thy head upon my breast. And what did you say? I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad. But I found in him a resting place. And he has made me glad. And my friend, when you came to Jesus, you claimed and confessed with every other Christian and with David, you claimed and confessed, The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. He is mine.

And I am his. The Lord is my shepherd. And today, that's your personal profession of faith, because he's a personal shepherd. He deals with us personally. He's a personal shepherd. So how good is the good shepherd? He's a personal shepherd. But he's also a peaceful shepherd. He's a peaceful shepherd. That's what we see secondly. David says, The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

[10:16] He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. You know, whenever someone comes to claim and confess, The Lord is my shepherd, they not only discover that Jesus is a personal shepherd, they also discover the provisions of this personal shepherd. Because as David confesses there in verse 1, he says, The Lord is my shepherd.

And then he says, I shall not want. I shall not want. I shall not lack or lose out. I shall not be deprived or disadvantaged in any way. But of course, many will tell you that when you do claim and confess the Lord as your shepherd, they will tell you that you are lacking and you are losing out. They will tell you that you are deprived and you are disadvantaged for following Jesus as the good shepherd. And they'll tell you that you are going to claim and you are losing out. And they'll tell you that because if you become a Christian, your life will be so regimental and so restricted and so restrained to the point that it will remove your freedom to enjoy all the Fs of life. Fun, food, family, friendships, falling in love, fitness, and finance. Many will tell you that Christianity is living an empty life. But that's not the case at all. Because as we read in John 10, just before Jesus declared that he's the good shepherd who would lay down his life for the sheep,

Jesus said, I have come. I have come that you might have life and have it more abundantly. In other words, Jesus said, I have come that you might live your life to the full.

And you know, that's because when we claim and confess the Lord is my shepherd, we also claim and confess I shall not want. I shall not lack or lose out. I shall not be deprived or disadvantaged in any way. I shall not feel empty because the Lord fills my life with the abundance of eternal life.

Why does he do it? And how does he do it? Verse 2, he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. You know, the abundant life of following the good shepherd shepherd is that he feeds his sheep and he leads his sheep. He feeds his sheep and he leads his sheep.

[12:53] The good shepherd feeds his sheep with the plentiful provisions of both word and sacrament. And that's why we're here this morning. I hope you came hungry to church. Because the Bible says those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, they will be filled. And so those who come to church this morning, we should be here wanting to be fed. And that's what we were singing about even in our opening psalm, in Psalm 100. We all sang, we are his flock, he doth us feed. And for his sheep, he doth us take. And you know, my friend, our shepherd, he feeds us and he fills us with the fresh green pastures of God's word. And he fills us and he feeds us so much that we have to lie down.

We have to lie down in the green pastures. Because as many of you will know, if you have sheep, that's what sheep do when they're filled and full. They lie down. They lie down in the abundant provisions of the shepherd. But you know, this good shepherd, he not only feeds his sheep in the green pastures of God's word, he also leads his sheep. He leads them, as we read there in verse 2, he leads them beside the satisfying and still waters of prayer. Because it's the satisfying and still waters of prayer. That's what refreshes and revives and restores the soul.

You know, sometimes we struggle to pray. Sometimes we struggle to read our Bible. But it's when we do. And it's always a fight first thing in the morning to read the Bible and get to work on time. But it's always when we do that we feel refreshed and revived and restored in our soul.

And that's what David is reminding us here. That's where he leads us. He leads us beside the still waters to refresh, revive, and restore our soul. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. You know, it's a picture of peace.

Because the good shepherd is a peaceful shepherd. He's the prince of peace. But when you claim and confess that the Lord is my shepherd, you receive that plentiful provision of peace. You experience and enjoy peace with God and the peace of God. You experience and enjoy peace with God and the peace of God. And this is what David means when he says about the good shepherd in verse 3. He says, he restores my soul. He restores my soul. Literally, he's saying, he brings me to repentance.

[15 : 51] He brings me to repentance. Because that's what happens when a sinner claims and confesses Jesus as their shepherd and their Savior. They're brought to repentance. They're brought to a place where they're confessing their sins and their need of the Savior. You know, it was Isaiah, you'll remember, Isaiah said in Isaiah 53, all we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way.

But in repentance, we turn from our own way, which is the way of sin, and we turn back to the good shepherd. In repentance, we turn away from our sin and we seek salvation. We seek reconciliation and restoration. And it's through repentance. It's through turning back that we're made righteous.

It's through repentance that we're made righteous. That's what he says in verse 3. He restores my soul, so he brings me to repentance. And then he leads me in a path of righteousness. For his name's sake, he has done it. And you know, this is how we know that he's a peaceful shepherd. Because it's through him we have peace with God. And it's in him that we experience and enjoy the peace of God that passes all understanding. And of course, it's very difficult to describe and define peace with God and the peace of God. But the thing about peace, that peace is practical. Peace is practical. Because it's only when you believe in your heart and you confess with your mouth saying, verse 1, the Lord is my shepherd.

It's only then that you experience and enjoy peace with God and the peace of God. My friend, peace is practical because it's an outworking of our personal profession of faith. Peace is practical because it's an outworking of your personal profession of faith. So when you believe in your heart and confess with your mouth that the Lord is your shepherd, that's when you experience and enjoy peace with God and the peace of God. But you know, even as Christians, there are times when we can feel distant or even feel detached from our peaceful shepherd.

which is why peace is practical. Because you know, when we feel distant or detached from the Lord, I always think it's good for us not to go out on the street corners like the Pharisees, but I think it's good for us to pray out loud and even to say out loud, the Lord is my shepherd. Do you know when you wake up in the morning and you think, am I really a Christian? Am I really saved? Is the Lord really my shepherd? You say, no. Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. And the Lord is my shepherd and I shall not want. I shall not lack or lose out. And you know, that's why I think it's, that's why peace is practical. We should say things or pray things out loud or say things out loud, that we hear it ourselves. Because the thing is, we believe it in our heart, but it's good to confess it with our mouth. But more than that, we need to verbally and vocally claim and confess all the promises of this shepherd.

[19 : 31] Because there are so many promises of this shepherd. That's why Psalm 23 reminds us and reassures us here that Jesus is a personal shepherd and a peaceful shepherd, but he's also a promising shepherd.

He's a promising shepherd. So we're asking the question, how good is the good shepherd? He's a personal shepherd, a peaceful shepherd, and a promising shepherd. A promising shepherd. Look at 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 prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now, as many of you know, I love the Pilgrim's Progress. Next to the Bible, I think it is the best book that was ever written. You all know the author. If you don't know the author, his name is John Bunyan. John Bunyan tells the story of the encounters and the experiences of a man named Christian as he travels from the city of destruction all the way to the celestial city. But of course, when you read the narrative of the story, you see that the journey to the celestial city, it not only included high mountains, it also included deep valleys. In fact, after Christian had been battered and bruised by Apollyon in the valley of humiliation, Christian then encountered and entered another valley, the valley of the shadow of death. And this is what Bunyan writes in his book. He says, now at the end of this valley, which was the valley of humiliation, now at the end of this valley was another called the valley of the shadow of death. And Christian must needs go through it, because the way to the celestial city lay through the midst of it. Christian must needs go through it, because the way to the celestial city lay through the midst of it. And you know, when John Bunyan wrote the

Pilgrim's Progress, he was very pastoral in his approach. And that's why I love it so much. Because he highlights for us that throughout our Christian experience, one valley will often lead into another valley. Throughout our Christian experience, one valley will often lead into another valley. Whether it's a valley of sin into a valley of sickness, or a valley of suffering into a valley of sorrow, one valley will very often lead into another valley. And like it was for Christian in the Pilgrim's Progress, it's in the valley that we grow in grace. It's in the valley that we grow in knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And even though the valley as it was here in Psalm 23, even though it's the valley of the shadow of death, and even though it may be dark and desolate and a deserted valley, it's in that valley that we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. That's what David says. 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, in his commentary, the 17th century Puritan Matthew Henry, he said about this verse, verse 4, he said, death is before all of us, but for the Christian, it's only the shadow of death, because there's no substance of evil in it. For the Christian, it's only the shadow of death.

[23 : 28] There's no substance of evil in it. And Matthew Henry says, just like the shadow of a serpent will not sting you, and just like the shadow of a sword will not kill you, and just like the shadow of a dog will not bite you, so too for the Christian. It's only the shadow of death. It's not the substance of death. Why? Matthew Henry says, death has been swallowed up in victory. My friend, the valley of the shadow of death is only a shadow. Yes, we all fear death, but the shepherd assures us, we're not to be afraid, because it's only a shadow. And we're not to be afraid of the shadow, because death has been defeated by the good shepherd. Our good shepherd, as Paul tells us, he has abolished death. He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. Our good shepherd has laid down his life for the sheep. And you know that word for, it's just a small word that Jesus uses, but it's an important word to understand the gospel of the good shepherd, because when Jesus says that he laid down his life for the sheep, he means for the benefit and for the blessings of the sheep, for the life and for the liberty of the sheep, for the freedom and the forgiveness of the sheep, for the sake of and for in substitution of the sheep. I am the good shepherd, says Jesus.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. He's a good shepherd. But you know, if it wasn't for the suffering shepherd of Psalm 22, we wouldn't have the saving shepherd of Psalm 23. If it wasn't for the suffering shepherd of Psalm 22, we wouldn't have the saving shepherd of Psalm 23. And as we've discovered, the saving shepherd, he's a personal shepherd. He's a peaceful shepherd. He's a promising shepherd, because he promises. He promises that his presence, as it is there in verses 1 to 3, his presence will lead us in paths of righteousness.

He promises that his presence, verse 4, will be with us through the valley of the shadow of death. And he promises right, he promises us right at the end of the Psalm that his presence will follow behind us with his goodness and his mercy. He says, surely, surely, that's not a surely of uncertainty, that's a surely of surety. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I always love verse 6 of Psalm 23, and always reminds me of Douglas Macmillan's illustration in his classic book, *The Lord Our Shepherd*. If you haven't read that book, read it. *The Lord Our Shepherd*. If you haven't read *Pilgrim's Progress*, read that too. But in the book, *The Lord Our Shepherd*, Douglas Macmillan, he wrote this, but he wrote the book because he, prior to entering the ministry, he was a shepherd in Ardner-Merchen. And in his book, he tells the story of two sheepdogs.

[27 : 00] You've probably heard the story before. One sheepdog was called Goodness. The other sheepdog was called Mercy. And he said that as the shepherd led the flock out in front, goodness and mercy would always follow behind. And if one of the sheep strayed from the flock, goodness and mercy would run out.

They would run out and circle the sheep and turn it back into the flock. And if another sheep got out, goodness and mercy would go out again and circle the sheep and bring it back into the flock. And you know, it's a wonderful image and illustration, isn't it? Because, you know, we often have fears, don't we?

We often have fears that if we claim and confess that the Lord is my shepherd, if we come out on the side of the Lord, we have fears that we'll stray from the shepherd. We have fears that we'll let the Lord down. But what Douglas Macmillan sought to emphasize by his illustration is that the Lord will not let us stray from the flock. Because goodness and mercy are there to turn you back and to keep following behind you, to keep you as part of the flock. For as Jesus said, there is one flock and there is one shepherd.

And his goodness and his mercy promise to follow behind us all the days of our life. My friend, he's a personal shepherd. He's a peaceful shepherd. And he's a promising shepherd.

That's how good the good shepherd really is. He's so good. He's so good that you must make that personal profession of faith by sitting at his table this morning and simply claiming and simply confessing, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. Well, may the Lord bless these few thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, we give thanks to Thee for Thy Word. We give thanks for the Shepherd Psalm of Psalm 23, a psalm that we're so familiar with. And yet, Lord, we pray that we would never be too familiar with the shepherd of Psalm 23, so familiar that, as we often say, familiarity breeds contempt, but that we would see how precious this shepherd is, that it would cause us to love him, to love him more and more, to seek to follow him more closely, and to be assured of his great and his precious promises, promises that remind us that his goodness and his mercy will follow us all the days of our life, and that in God's house forevermore our dwelling place shall be.

[29 : 59] Lord, go before us, then we pray. Guide us, we ask, and do us good for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Well, we now come to the part of the service where we often refer to it as the fencing of the Lord's table. The fencing of the Lord's table. And fencing the Lord's table is, as I mentioned probably before, it's a practice that some have wanted to neglect in recent years, but I believe there should always be that distinction and that difference made between those who are in Christ and those who are still out of Christ. Because a Christian, as Peter describes in the New Testament, he says, a Christian has been called out of darkness and called into the light, the marvelous light of the gospel.

And so fencing the Lord's table is important. But you know, I want to be clear. I always want to be clear. But I want to be clear and say, I don't fence the Lord's table. The Lord fences the Lord's table.

Because it's his table. It's not a free church table. It's not a Barber's free church table. It's his table. And when the Lord fences his table, he always does so from his word. He tells us who should and who shouldn't sit at his table and partake of his supper. And you know, this analogy of the fence, when fencing at the Lord's table, it's very helpful, especially when we consider the Lord as the good shepherd. Because as those of you who might have sheep or have had sheep in the past, you will all know that when it comes to being a shepherd, when it comes to being a shepherd, fences are very useful. But the purpose of a fence isn't to keep sheep out. The purpose of a fence is to keep sheep in. It's to keep sheep safe and secure within the boundary of the fence.

But sadly, in the past, the fence around the Lord's table has been too high and too holy, to the point that those outside the fence, they feel that they need to be perfect in order to come and sit within the fence at the Lord's table. But the thing is, there is no one within this fence this morning who is perfect. There is no one partaking of the Lord's supper who is perfect.

Because we're all, as we were saying earlier at the baptism, we're all unworthy sinners. We're all unworthy sinners. Do you know what Rabbi Duncan, the 19th century professor of Old Testament, he was a professor in the Free Church College, he said to a woman who was hesitating about coming to the Lord's table, he said to her, tack it, woman, it's for sinners. Tack it, woman, it's for sinners.

[33 : 13] You know, there's no one who is partaking of the Lord's supper this morning who is perfect. I'm not perfect. They're not perfect. I can say that because we're all unworthy sinners. But we're all saved by the goodness and the grace of the saving shepherd, Jesus Christ. Therefore, the only qualification for coming within the fence, the fence of the good shepherd and sitting at the fence, within the fence and sitting at the table of the good shepherd, and I want to be clear as possible when I say this again, the only qualification, the only qualification for sitting at the Lord's table is if you believe in your heart and you confess with your mouth. Psalm 23, verse 1, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. That's the only qualification that scripture gives us.

And I'm sure that many of you sitting here this morning outside the fence, it's always lovely to see you, by the way. I know that you believe in your heart that Jesus is the good shepherd.

What else? Why are you here this morning? Why are you sitting here week by week? But maybe your struggle is not believing that Jesus is the good shepherd. Maybe your struggle is publicly confessing that Jesus is your shepherd. Your struggle is maybe personally proclaiming and professing your faith in the good shepherd. Your struggle is openly claiming and confessing and saying, Psalm 23, verse 1, the Lord is my shepherd. But as we said earlier, when you claim and confess the Lord is your shepherd, you discover that this good shepherd, he's a personal shepherd. He's a peaceful shepherd.

He's a promising shepherd. He's a good shepherd. So I want to say to you, if you have heard the voice of the shepherd, then you should partake of his supper. Because if you believe in your heart that Jesus is the good shepherd is the good shepherd, and you can claim and confess with your mouth, and some of you have heard you saying it, if you can say the Lord is my shepherd, then you should just come forward during Psalm 118 and partake of the Lord's Supper.

Don't worry about the elders. The elders will be delighted to see you. The good shepherd invites you to come to his table and remember that the good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep.

[36 : 16] But we're now going to sing. And we're going to sing Psalm 118. Psalm 118. It's in the Scottish Psalter. It's on page 398. Psalm 118. We're singing from verse 15.

And during this psalm, the elders will lay the elements on the table. They'll put the bread and the wine out on the table. And during this psalm, if there's members who are maybe in the creche and they want to come through, or the Sunday school, they're welcome to come. If there's anyone in the congregation who wants to sit at the Lord's table because the Lord is their shepherd, then you come.

You come during this psalm. This psalm is a hymn of thanksgiving. It's the last words that Jesus sang before he was crucified. It's a wonderful reminder to us of what Jesus has done for us.

And because of what Jesus has done for us, we sing in verse 15, in dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand doth ever valiantly. The right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. And in these wonderful words, I shall not die but live, and shall the works of God discover. The Lord hath me chastised so, but not to death given over.

So we'll sing Psalm 118, verses 15, down to the verse mark 21. And we'll stand to sing, if you're able, to God's praise. In dwellings of the righteous is heard the melody of joy and health the Lord's right hand.

[38 : 27] the right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high.

the right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord doth ever valiantly. I shall not die but live, and shall the words of God be.

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[40 : 09] the right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. the right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The right hand of the mighty Lord, exalted is on high.

the mighty Lord, exalted is on high. The wonderful verse. This is a gate of power. The North appeared in the world, exalted is on high. The more built in the world, exalted is on high. The gate of kings of kings of kings of angels. And apples David, exalted is on high. The north appeared of kings of kings of kings. The Lord, exalted is on high. The white tyre is on high. The distinct light, the sky of kings of kings, the 54-ishout. The sky of kings of kings of kings of kings.

shall enter in thee will I praise for thou be heard and hast my safety been seated.

As we come to the Lord's table this morning, we've been asking the question, how good is the good shepherd? How good is the good shepherd?

And as we discovered from Psalm 23 that when we claim and confess the Lord is my shepherd, we see that the good shepherd is the saving shepherd because he's a personal shepherd, he's a peaceful shepherd, and he's a promising shepherd.

[41 : 46] But in verse 5 of Psalm 23, we also see that he's a preparing shepherd. He's a preparing shepherd because we read there that he prepares a table for us in the wilderness.

David wrote, You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. He's a preparing shepherd who has prepared a table for us.

And this is such a table whereby using the simple symbols of bread and wine, we're encouraged and we're enabled to reflect and remember upon the broken body and the shed blood of our suffering and our saving shepherd.

A suffering and saving shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep. But you know, what I love is that our good shepherd, he not only prepares a table for us, he calls us to that table so that we will be strengthened and sustained in our wilderness journey.

And so as we sit together this morning as a flock of Jesus Christ, our good shepherd is saying about us this morning, he says, My sheep are purchased.

[43 : 05] They are redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but by his own precious blood. He says, My sheep are protected, protected by my caring and compassionate hand.

and my sheep are privileged because they all receive the gift of eternal life. That's what Jesus said in John 10. 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. My friend, that's how good the good shepherd really is. Therefore, as we sit together and as we eat together, let us simply remember together how good our good shepherd really is.

We now read our scriptural warrant for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Everything we do in church, it has to be according to the Bible. So in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 23, we read these words where Paul wrote, I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed, he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup after supper saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

[44 : 49] For as often as you eat this bread and you drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So according to the institution and the command and the example of our good shepherd, let us give thanks together.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for thy goodness to us. We thank thee, Lord, for thy grace towards us. That as thy word reminds us that it is by grace that we are saved through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast.

And we have nothing to boast this morning except that we have a good shepherd, a good shepherd who laid down his life for unworthy sheep such as we are.

And Lord, we know that we do not deserve it. We do not deserve the least of thy mercies, but we bless thee and we praise thee that thou art the God who has called us to thyself, who has called us from darkness unto thine own marvelous light, a God who has claimed us as his own, who has redeemed us and restored us and reconciled us to himself.

And Lord, help us then, we pray, as we come, as we sit together as one flock under the guiding hand of that one good shepherd. Oh Lord, we pray that as we remember his death together, that as we take these simple elements of bread and wine, that they would be a means to nourish us and nurture us in our faith, that it would strengthen us and sustain us as we keep looking to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

[46 : 39] Bless us, Lord, together we pray. Undertake for us, we ask, for we ask it in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen. Well, the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, he took bread and when he had given thanks, he broke it and he said, this is my body, which is for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. In the same manner also, he took the cup after supper, saying, this cup is a new covenant in my blood.

Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. friends, or flock, for as often as you eat this bread and you drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Jesus said, I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep. friends, by sitting at the Lord's table and by partaking of the sacrament by faith, we have publicly proclaimed the Lord's death.

We have claimed and confessed very simply that the Lord is my shepherd. He's my shepherd. He is mine and I am his. More than that, we have claimed and confessed that the good shepherd is a personal shepherd.

[48 : 28] He's a peaceful shepherd. He's a promising shepherd and he's also a preparing shepherd. He prepares a table for us to strengthen us and sustain us in our wilderness journey.

But more than that, he prepares for us a place at his table in glory. This is only a foretaste and a foreshadowing of what is to come.

Our good shepherd promises us that he is preparing a place, a table. He's preparing for us a place at his table.

You know what he said in John 14? Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions. If it were not so, I would have told you.

I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am, there you may be also.

[49 : 36] None of his will be lost. He will take them all home to be with himself. That's how good the good shepherd really is.

He's a personal, peaceful, promising, and preparing shepherd. shepherd. Therefore, as his flock, you know, we need to leave this table this morning with that renewed commitment.

A renewed commitment to love our shepherd more deeply, to walk with our shepherd more closely, to listen to our shepherd more earnestly, and to serve our shepherd more faithfully.

Because our good shepherd says to us so clearly, he says, fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Fear not, little flock. Well, may the Lord bless us and may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray together. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee for the promise of Jesus, that how he says, fear not, little flock, for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom, and that we would know that even though we may feel that we are a little flock, and feel that we are weak and frail in so many different ways, but we give thanks that our shepherd is good, our shepherd is gracious, our shepherd is great, that he never changes, despite the passing of time in our experience, despite aging or different circumstances and situation that we go through, we give thanks that our shepherd remains the same, and his promises are true, and help us then to trust his promises, to cling to his promises, to confess his promises, for every one of them, as thy word says, they are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus.

[51 : 41] Bless us together, we pray, encourage us, we ask, remember us, all we plead, and go before us, 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 in the words of Psalm 72. Psalm 72, in the Scottish Psalter, it's on page 314, in the blue psalm book, Psalm 72, we're singing from verse 17 down to the end of the psalm, so the last three verses of the psalm.

The reason we sing Psalm 72, I think it's always good for us to ask why we do what we do. So the reason we sing Psalm 72 as we conclude a communion, is because, as it says in verse 17, this is a psalm written by Solomon, but it's talking about the greater than Solomon.

It's talking about Jesus, and what Solomon says about his greater is that Solomon's name lasted a long time, but his name, the name of Jesus, his name forever shall endure, last like the sun it shall, men shall be blessed in him and blessed, and all nations shall him call.

And as he says at the end of the psalm, and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity, the whole earth let his glory fill. Amen. So let it be.

[53 : 17] So these verses of Psalm 72 will stand to sing if you're able to God's praise. Amen. Matthew 72 out.

I am called. Now blessed be the Lord our God, the God of Israel.

For He alone hath wondrous works in glory hath excel.

Now blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let its glory fill. Amen, so let it be.

[55 : 10] The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.