

# Following the Good Shepherd

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 09 June 2024

Preacher: Trevor Skead

[ 0 : 0 0 ] So would you open your Bibles, if you have one, a physical one in front of you, or feel free to open your phone, if that's the correct way of saying that, to Psalm 23.

Very well-known Psalm for most of us in this room, I'm sure, if not all of us. Psalm 23, I'm going to read the passage for us, and then we're going to pray, and then we're going to think about it a little bit together this morning.

Psalm 23, a Psalm of David, he writes these words, 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 your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Let's pray as we ask God to help us this morning. Our Father, we thank you so much that we come before you, this shepherd of Psalm 23, and we come before you this morning asking, Lord, that you would shepherd us as we hear your word.

[ 1 : 3 6 ] That you would shepherd our hearts and our minds, that you would lead them, Lord, to good places. Good places of thinking about you, thinking about life. That you would lead our hearts, Lord, to good places of responding to you.

Father, we are grateful that you are with us now. And so we ask, Lord, that you would glorify your name, that you would help us to see Jesus more clearly this morning. And Father, that we might follow you, maybe in a way that is a little bit different, a little bit more sincere, a little deeper, a little bit more.

Lord, whatever we need this morning as we hear this and as we respond to it as your people together. And so I ask for that, Lord, by your grace, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So I want to begin this morning with a short story.

I'm told it's always a good way to start a sermon. So let me start there. It's not one of my stories. The past few times I've preached, I've reached into my childhood or a part of my life that seemed to offer something.

This morning, I don't have that for you yet. There may be something coming a bit later. But the story I want to start with up front is a story about a pilot, two pilots flying in an airplane. They fly a regular route.

[ 2 : 4 6 ] And every time they're flying on this route, the one pilot, I don't know if it's the co-pilot or the main pilot, whoever he is in the story, he looks down. And he looks down at this particular spot of land every single time.

And they've done this route a few times now, so his fellow pilot, his co-pilot eventually asks him, why do you always look down at this particular moment in the trip? What are you looking for down there?

And he says, well, have a look down there. Do you see that little spot down there? As a child, I used to fish in that little stream down there every summer holiday. I have so many good memories of that spot.

But you know what? When I was fishing down there, I would watch the planes flying over. And I would wish, I would say, one day I'm going to be a pilot flying an airplane.

I'd wish for a moment that I'd be up there flying those airplanes. As I fly the airplanes over now, I look down at that spot and I wish I was back down there fishing. A great little story, a humorous story maybe.

[ 3 : 47 ] A story about, I think, something we all can relate to in many ways. A struggle for contentment. The things that we have and enjoy in life and know to be good in life now are good and we do enjoy them.

But there always seems to be something out there that we need. Something we strive for, something we desire. And sometimes we get there and we achieve those things or we be able to create those scenarios we envision for ourselves.

And we get there and we discover, well maybe something was back there that I didn't realize I had. Or maybe there's something still further out there that I now think I actually need.

Can anyone relate to that on some level? The human struggle for contentment. And I think it doesn't take a strong argument to make the case for that. We can look at our world.

We can look at our present moments. We can look at our social media feeds. And we can see that our world is a constant struggle, a quest to find meaning, to find contentment, to find satisfaction, to find rest, to find peace.

[ 4 : 55 ] And in the world is a constant struggle, a constant struggle, to find peace. And in it we see a picture that we don't see really in life around us.

We see a picture of peace, a picture of contentment, a picture of rest. Who doesn't want that?

Who doesn't want what we see in Psalm 23? Green pastures, quiet waters, rest for our souls. A rest from the striving, a rest from the troubles.

At the same time, however, Psalm 23, and this may not be immediately apparent to you, but for all the comfort in its words, all the sort of comfort in that imagery, I believe it also comes to us this morning with something of a challenge.

And the challenge may be this, as we look through the words a little bit this morning together, that we, even as we look at this Psalm, even as we see what might appear to be this perfect picture of rest and contentment, that we look at it, and we look at that idea of contentment, and we actually have a misguided or a misshaped picture of contentment to start with.

[ 6 : 24 ] In other words, what I mean is this, the basis from which we start or with which we think about this or which we strive towards finding that rest or peace is essentially this, if I can work out all the circumstances of my life, I'll find contentment.

If I can get everything together inside me and outside me, I'll be able to enjoy contentment. I'll find that inner sense of peace and rest.

The reason I say it's maybe a misguided picture of contentment that we strive for, even though we see something very desirable in Psalm 23, is because the picture of contentment that Psalm 23 shows us is a picture of contentment that is not the fruit of perfect circumstances.

It's not the fruit of a perfect getting your life under control. It's not the result of the eradication of all the things that add pressure or discomfort or even anxiety to our lives.

It's not even the fruit of having the half-glass-full Pollyanna perspective on life that is able to see the good in every little bad thing. Because if we look carefully at the details of the Psalm, what we'll actually see is that contentment, as is pictured here, is not found in the absence of these things, but in fact in the very presence of all these things.

[ 7 : 53 ] And if we look a little deeper even, we'll see very clearly that the provision or the security alone are actually not even the true source of the sheep's contentment. It isn't the green pasture alone or the quiet water alone that is the true source.

I've made it, I've arrived, everything is as it should be. For the sheep in this Psalm, true contentment is found in something even beyond that, the shepherd himself.

A deep confidence in the goodness of the shepherd. And so this morning as we kind of look through the Psalm, I've really just got two main ideas for you as we think about it.

And it is this idea that I've just said here, that as Christians, as the Psalm I think puts in front of us, we can know true contentment, but that that contentment is found in a deep confidence in the goodness of the shepherd.

And the second idea, as I've already alluded to, that we can know true contentment, and that it can be known even in the reality of difficulty and uncertainty in this world, in this life, in this day, right now.

[ 9 : 04 ] So just those two simple ideas for you this morning. We're going to start with the first one, true contentment is found in a deep confidence in the goodness of the shepherd.

A deep confidence or assurance of the goodness of the shepherd. Now we're going to go to a little childhood story. Does anyone know what happened on the 22nd of March, 1995?

Now, increasingly I find when I refer to dates before the year 2000, I actually have to ask, who was alive? Who was alive before 2000? Why don't we do a little exercise?

Who was alive in 1995? Enough of you. Thank you. Okay. I can still use this illustration for a few more years. As I've mentioned in previous sermons, I'm not originally from Cape Town.

I'm from a little town down the coast, formerly known as Port Elizabeth, now known as Gobeja. And on the 22nd of March, 1995, the Queen of England came to visit me.

[ 10 : 11 ] You don't believe me? She came to visit. I added the me part. But my school was right next to the airport.

Well, our sports fields were right next to the airport. The school was a bit of a walk up the road. And the Queen of England was coming. And so we were all lining the streets and we had flags with, it was the New South Africa then, so the New South African flag on the one side and the Union Jack on the other side.

And she drove out of the airport in her little black car. And as we lined the street, she whizzed down the street and she did a little tour. And I'm told she came back to the airport and got an airplane and went wherever she was going next.

So the Queen of England came to Port Elizabeth. She didn't spend a lot of time there. But as she whizzed past, I'm 99.95% sure that I actually saw her. Her little head, her little grey head, through the back window on the left-hand side as I waved my flag furiously.

I was less sure, however, that the Queen of England saw me. She may have, I doubt she went home and told her, she probably wasn't preaching a sermon, but told her family and friends about the day she saw Trevor Skeed in Port Elizabeth.

[ 11 : 33 ] Truth is, she probably didn't even know that I was there. Now, the psalm we've just read here, Psalm 23, paints a very different picture to my Queen of England experience.

King David, as he writes the psalm, as he considers his God, the King of all there is, as he thinks about that God, as he meditates on his God, as he looks back on his life, there are many images, there are many ideas he could have, and he does in other psalms, that he could have honed in and focused in on, but for some reason, in Psalm 23, he hones in this idea of a shepherd, as the metaphor for the King, the Lord, Yahweh, the God, that he has followed through his life, as the image that most accurately captures and portrays his experience, experience of what it has meant to follow this King, through his life.

And so he starts with these words, not of a distant King, who maybe has some good intentions, and has been good to him, in many ways even.

He doesn't use that image, he uses a much more, a much more personal image, of a shepherd. And he says, the Lord, Yahweh, and if you pay close attention there, the Lord's in little capital letters, which makes us aware of the Hebrew, underneath there, is not immediately apparent in the English, so they use the little capital letters, that he's using the name of, the covenant name of God, Yahweh, the God who revealed himself, in the burning bush, the God who set Israel free, from Egyptian slavery, in fulfillment of his covenant promises, to Abraham, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and Joseph.

Yahweh, is my shepherd, my shepherd. There's incredible, incredible juxtaposition, of two massive thoughts there, number one, Yahweh, and number two, that I can call him, my shepherd.

[ 13 : 50 ] Now nobody knows for sure, when David actually wrote the psalm. There's quite a large group, of commentators, who are pretty convinced, that even though, Psalm 23, is pretty early, in the book of Psalms, that it might actually, have been one of David's, later psalms.

In other words, it's not likely, that David wrote the psalm, as a naive youngster, who hadn't experienced, anything of life. He probably writes this, as an older man, man, and that's an important thing, as you think about, these words, and as you think about, who wrote these words, and why he wrote, these words.

Because he is writing, as a man, who has experienced, the reality of life, all of life, in all its dimensions, good and bad. And he has experienced, himself, in terms of life, and his responses, in all his best, and his worst moments.

He experienced, the height of fame, as a young man, when he defeated Goliath. He led the army of Israel, into an unlikely victory, over the Philistines.

But despite, his rise to fame, he spent many years, on the run, as a fugitive, a little bit later, sleeping in caves, always on the move, as King Saul, pursued him, and tried to kill him, because he was threatened, by him.

[ 15 : 12 ] Eventually, he becomes a king, he becomes, a great king, but he wasn't, a perfect king. He had many moments, of personal failure. One of the most, glaring, or the most, the one that stands out, the most, is his, his moment of weakness, when he has an affair, and tries to cover it up, by having, that lady's husband, killed.

And then, as things pan out, and, God disciplines him, he experiences, the loss of a son, who dies, as a baby.

And as time goes on, he even experiences, much later, the reality, of one of his own sons, now as an adult, rebelling against him, and betraying him. And so the man, who writes the psalm, has experienced, everything of life.

He's experienced, having achieved it all, that, that thing we maybe, all strive for, if that was the moment, in his Instagram feed, it would be the thing, we'd all look at, and say, if only that could be, me.

But behind the scenes, in the parts we don't see, we see that there is nothing there, that is abnormal, to what the human experience, and the human condition, would tell us, is normal, of life.

[ 16 : 28 ] And so his looks back, as he looks back, on his experience, as he looks back, on himself, in all these things, these are the words, he pens. Summary, the Lord, Yahweh, is, my, shepherd.

It is not an emotional, spur of the moment, oh I'm feeling good today, kind of psalm. It is a, carefully considered statement, of his own personal faith, and trust, in this, God.

As he looks at the good, and the bad of life, David says, this is what I know, is true, about the God, that I have followed, through all of my life, the Lord, Yahweh, is, my, shepherd.

And therefore, that's important, to see here, because that is how, this psalm is structured, this is how, the psalm, moves. It isn't a focus, first on the green pastures, or the quiet waters.

It is a focus, first on, the goodness of the, shepherd. Who the shepherd is, that I follow. And therefore, I can say, I lack, nothing.

[ 17 : 50 ] It's the opposite of, if I lack nothing, if I, manage to put everything, in the right place, I can know, true contentment.

It is because, the Lord is my shepherd, I can know, this, to be true. And so the rest of the, the psalm, pretty much elaborates, on that. It's David's, meditation on the truth, that all of his needs, are, and will be met, by his shepherd.

He can know, peace. The identity, of his shepherd, is his security, in life, irrespective, of the circumstances, of life.

Even in difficult, circumstances, even in uncertainty, even in the presence, of his enemies, if you read further on, in Psalm 23, in the presence, of things, that would want to, literally want to, threaten my, my well-being.

Even there, the Lord, is my shepherd. I lack, nothing. And so we see, very clearly, that the psalm, is telling us, that, or showing us, as we begin to look, just a little bit, beyond the familiar, words, that we do not have, a, a, a fluffy, picture on a wall, that, that is there, meant to be a placebo, for our moments of anxiety, or doubt.

[ 19 : 15 ] There is something, of substance here, that says to us, as Christians, who know this God, that we too, can know the kind, of contentment, David describes here, a contentment, that can be found, in the circumstances, of difficulty, and uncertainty.

In those moments, where maybe, we feel a bit more, like, my Queen of England situation, we're on the side, of the road, waving our flag, but she's just driving by, and she doesn't even know, that I'm there.

Let me read these verses, for us again, quickly. Read with me. The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down, in green pastures.

Now, I don't know too much, about sheep. I have many aspirations, of being a farmer, one day. I'm not too fussy, about what kind of farming. Maybe sheep, is a good place to start.

I don't know. But what I'm told, is that, sheep, only lie down, when they are, content, when they've had enough, to eat, and when they feel safe.

[ 20 : 20 ] If those things, are missing, any one of those things, are missing, the sheep, will not lie down. And so the picture, we have here, is the sheep, who is in a place, where they can, and willingly lie down, because they have, everything they need, just as David, has said.

He makes me lie down, where? In green pastures. Now this is, where things get, a little bit interesting, because as I tell you, about my aspirations, to be a farmer one day, and as I maybe, consider sheep farming, the picture I have in mind, is that beautiful, English countryside, of rolling hills, and lush green grass.

Maybe something, resembling, the Constantia, Greenbelt. I don't know, how much sheep farming, happens down there. Not much. If you drive a little further out, down towards Caledon, the Oberberg region, during winter, maybe that's, a bit closer.

But it is this beautiful, serene picture, where it's a great place, to be a sheep. Maybe it's a great place, to be a shepherd too. If that is the idea, we have when we read, Psalm 23, we're going to miss, some of the, some of the, some of the important things, we need to see here.

Because that is not, the picture, that you will see, if you were to fly over, to the Judean wilderness, where David would have been, a young shepherd, during his early days. In fact, if I were to put a picture up, on the screen there, what you would see, would look nothing like, the Constantia, Greenbelt, or the green pastures, of Caledon, after the rain has fallen.

[ 21 : 56 ] What you'll see is, very rocky, hills, and you're going to see, random sheep, kind of walking along, the edges of these hills, and the shepherds, somewhere there, amongst them, you're not going to see, much green pasture.

You're looking at sheep, and you're looking at rocks, and the question in your mind is, what are they eating? Do these sheep eat rocks? Okay, now the obvious question is no, because sheep don't eat rocks.

And so the immediate correction, we have to make in our mind, if we're going to get the picture, clear in our heads here, is that the landscape, that this shepherd, leads his sheep through, looks nothing like, the tranquil, serene, the place of contentment, that we all aspire to.

It looks like, exactly the opposite. It looks like the place, we avoid at all costs. The dry, and desolate, barren landscape, that offers nothing, to satisfy.

That's what it looks like. The place where you need, a shepherd, who can lead you, to the food, and the water, that will be able to equip you, to be at rest, to lie down, as the sheep do.

[ 23 : 14 ] Now that's not to say, there aren't greener places, and an oasis here and there, and at certain times of the year, greener fields, but land was so precious there, you don't find these farmlands, because arable land, is not going to be used, to make grass, for sheep to eat.

That's just not, what it's going to be used for. And so the sheep are out there, in this barren, rocky landscape. And what I'm told is, that, what happens, for most of the day today, is that, even though we can't see it, with our eye, as we're looking from a distance, if you were to get a bit closer, and you start to actually, explore the area, you'll find that, what happens is, is that little tufts of grass, actually spring up, and appear, in and around these rocks, where these sheep, seem to be eating nothing.

And what happens is, humidity comes in, from the Mediterranean Sea, in the evening wind, and there's just enough moisture, in the air, and from the sparse rainfall, kind of general moisture, in the air, to let tiny amounts, of green grass, grow, at the base, of the rocks.

And so what the shepherd does, is he leads the sheep, along the hillsides, to the places, where there are, these little, sections, of, green grass tufts, that are growing out, in and amongst, the rocks.

You don't see that, when you're looking at the land, at the landscape, from a distance. And so the idea here, the, and the region has this nickname, of green pastures, is the idea of this, day by day, provision, where the Lord, gives the sheep, everything they need, in the context, of barrenness, and difficulty, and hardship, very, an environment, that certainly, does not look conducive, to us experiencing, the contentedness, we so desire, need in life.

[ 25 : 21 ] And so the picture here, and David knows this, because he did this every day, day after day, is of a shepherd, who leads his sheep, into a place, where they have what they need, in very unlikely, conditions.

A shepherd, who keeps them safe, from the animals, and the threats, around them. A shepherd, who is with them, a shepherd, who, who doesn't, magically change things, but a shepherd, who has as his sole, purpose, as his sole focus, each day, the good of his sheep, and knows how to give it, to them.

That's the picture here. And so if you're kind of, skeptical, and you're listening in, on Psalm 23, and you say, oh that's just fluffy, Christian talk, you know it's nice, putting a bumper sticker. When you suddenly, get a bit of perspective, on what David is probably, thinking about, as he pens these words, it's suddenly a lot more real.

It's suddenly a lot closer, to the realities, of our lives, because isn't that, what life is like? It isn't, the life on the beach, with the cocktail, in your hand, and the music, playing in your ears.

You might have those moments, here and there, but this is the reality, of life, day in, and day out. What Psalm 23, is telling us, is that there is a shepherd, a shepherd, who can give us, what we truly need, in the place, where we can't find it, anywhere else.

[ 26 : 54 ] The good shepherd. And in Psalm 23, David is saying, I know that shepherd, and as I look back, on my life, this is what I have known, and experienced, to be true.

The good shepherd, Yahweh, has been, my shepherd. He has led me, to those pastures. He has fed me, the waters.

He has given me, rest, in a place, of restlessness. He has restored, my soul. That's a very beautiful image, potentially too.

I'm told that, sheep, are not the brightest, they're also not the most, physically, impressive, of all the, livestock specimens, out there.

And there's a strong, there's a, there seems to be, quite a few of the commentators, who think that, this little section here, where he writes about, the shepherd restoring, his soul, is being an allusion, to a cast sheep.

[ 27 : 58 ] In other words, a sheep who's, gone astray, or a sheep who's, woolen coat, has become too heavy, or there's few things, that can contribute, to this apparently. Please sheep farmers, in the audience, correct me afterwards.

Or if I'm glaring you off track, correct me, now, feel free. But a cast sheep, is a sheep that ends up, in a position where, it can't, it can't get back up, on its feet, again. For various, various reasons.

And all it takes, is the shepherd, to come and, to be able to lift it up again, to put it right again, but it can't get back, on its feet, again, unless the shepherd, does this. And this idea, of restoring, my soul, David, I'm sure he's thinking, about these moments, when he was that cast sheep, when he, got lost, when he, ends up in these, incapacitating situations, and the shepherd, comes and restores him.

The shepherd, comes and compassionately, puts him, right, again. As he thinks, about life, and as he, considers the worst, that life, can put before him, that dark place, where, you are all alone, where, it feels that, death itself, is your only companion.

Even there, he says, Yahweh, is, my shepherd. I've known him, to be my shepherd there. It's a fascinating picture. The idea, that we as Christians, can know this God.

[ 29 : 26 ] The idea, that we can walk this life, and that a rest, a peace, in the midst, of difficulty, can be our reality. He has another thought, for you, this morning, though.

And it's a thought, that's trying to tap, into, the struggle part, that we know, as Christians. The question is, why, even if we know, this to be true, can our own, experience, as Christians, of this kind of rest, and this contentedness, still seem, so elusive.

Still be something, that feels out of our grasp, in our day, today. Even if we agree, that all of this, is true. If I look back, on my own life, and as I look back, on my own struggle, in this area, and as I, think about it, more deeply, there's a part, of the psalm, that really, really, I find very challenging, and I find maybe, as the key, to unlocking, this, this, this, this juncture, this, I know, this is true, but, I struggle, to appropriate that, or experience that, in my life.

And it might be, again, this idea, of a shepherd, that is implicit, in the psalm. The idea, of the Judean, Middle Eastern, shepherd, who walks, in front of his, sheep.

So, as one thinks, about the dynamic, between the sheep, and the shepherd, it's not a shepherd, who sits behind the sheep, or comes along, inside the sheep, and drives the sheep, and moves them, where they need to go.

[ 31 : 12 ] There's a very different, kind of dynamic, between the shepherd, of this scenario, and the sheep, in that, the sheep, get to, the quiet waters, and they get to, the pastures they need, and they are, safe, in the presence, of enemies, and everything, that is sort of, portrayed in the psalm.

As they follow, the shepherd, who walks, in front of them. So, the way the scenario works, works is, the shepherd walks, the sheep, know his voice, and the sheep, follow him, wherever he, goes.

Wherever he leads, they follow, and they find, he leads them, to the things, that they need. And so, very implicit, in the psalm, is again, this other part, of the idea, that we can know, true contentment, in these difficult places, as we follow, the shepherd, who leads us.

Suddenly, the psalm, takes on, a very different, you. And it may, or may not be, that instinctively, we balk, at that idea. There is something, unsettling about, that idea, for us.

We may like, the idea of a shepherd, a shepherd, who provides, for us. But as we read, this psalm, it may be, that we read, the psalm, more with this kind, of an idea. A shepherd, who is a guide, or a mentor, or maybe, even a coach, for us.

[ 32 : 44 ] In other words, when you read, Psalm 23, what we may, actually be reading, without even realizing it, is this. The Lord, is my life coach, I shall not want.

The Lord, is my mentor, I shall not want. You don't follow, a life coach. You consider, the advice, of a life coach. But you're in charge.

You depend, on the shepherd. You consult, a mentor. The idea, of Psalm 23, is nothing like, a mentor, or a coach, or a guide, or a guru.

It's a picture, of submission, a shepherd, trusting, and submitting, to a shepherd. A sheep, trusting, and submitting, a shepherd. And that picture, challenges us, at our very core, because this is, our sinful condition.

We resist that, instinctively. Our independence, and pursuit, of self-fulfillment, go hand in hand. I know, what I need, in this life.

[ 33 : 44 ] I know, what I want, out of life. And nothing, or no one, has any right, to direct that, except me. In fact, that's the very place, our Bible opens.

That's, that's the story, that begins all stories, in the Bible. The story of humankind, in a garden, at perfect peace, at perfect rest. Green pastures, and quiet waters, you might say.

In perfect harmony, with the creator. But we know, how the story goes. They assert, their independence. They rebel, against their good shepherd. And the rest, is history. Literally. And our world, has been telling that story, ever since.

Psalm 23, comes to us this morning, and gives us, this incredible picture, of hope, that what was lost, in that garden, can be ours again. Now, in the midst, of our brokenness, in the midst, of difficulty, even, outside the garden.



It gives us, a picture of hope, that one day, when that garden, is restored, as the unfolding story, will tell us, and everything is made, new and right again, we will come, into that fullest experience, of rest, and peace, and contentment.

[ 34 : 49 ] And Psalm 23, points us forward, to see that the true, good shepherd, who would come, does just this, for us. So here are these words, of John chapter 10, Jesus says, I am, the good shepherd.

The good shepherd, lays down his life, for the sheep. Just a few verses on, he says, I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, my sheep knows me, just as the father, knows me, and I know the father, and I lay down my life, for the sheep.

My sheep listen, to my voice, I know them, they follow me, I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, no one will snatch them, out of my hand.

My father, who has given to them, to me, is greater than all, no one can snatch them, out of my hand, I and the father, are one. David wrote Psalm 23, so many years ago, but if he walked, into this building today, and I asked him, to recite it to us, I think he might, change it a little, because I think he would, start with these words, Jesus Christ, is my shepherd, I shall not, want.

The good shepherd, of John 10, who saw our brokenness, caused by our sin, saw our need, to be forgiven, and set free, from the sin, that enslaves us, and destroys us, the sin that separates, us from himself, the sin which is, at the root, of all our insecurities, all our anxieties, all our fears, our deepest fears, he comes, to restore, and renew, as a man, Yahweh with us, to provide, for our greatest need, by laying down, his life, for the sheep, on a cross, for our sins, how would David, write this poem today, because Jesus Christ, Yahweh with us, is my shepherd, I shall not, want.

[ 36 : 44 ] When life tells me, something different, when I'm too ashamed, and I feel unworthy, to even call on you, I look to Jesus, I look to that good shepherd, and I have a new story, to tell my heart, to tell my soul, a new truth, which defines me, a new hope, to hold on to.

But I also want you, to hear, the other words, of, the good shepherd, of John chapter 10, the good shepherd, who says, I come and I lay down, my life, for the sheep.

Listen to these words, from Mark chapter 8, verse 34, to 36. Jesus says, if anyone, would come after me, let him deny himself, let him take up his cross, and let him follow me, for whoever will save his life, will lose it, whoever loses his life, for my sake, and the gospels, will save it.

What does it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul? The good shepherd, comes to us this morning, and he says, I am the good shepherd, I've laid down my life, for you, that you may know me, as you follow me, you can know, contentment, and fulfillment, and rest, in this world, and I've secured that to you, for you, into all eternity, but you can't just, treat me, as a guide, or a life coach, or a guru, you need to follow, follow me, in other words, you need to lay down, your life, and the things you are aspiring to, and the things you hold on to, and the things that you think, are what you need, and realize, that the only thing you need, is me, and when you do that, then you can follow me, and as you follow me, I will give you, and I'll prove it to you, over and over, and over, and over, and over again, through the rest of your life,

I will prove, that I am the good shepherd, I will never fail you, but you have to trust me, and you have to follow me, and you follow me, by giving up, everything else, that you are looking to, and holding on to, and desiring, and I say that to you now, because the truth is, all those things you are looking to, are going to fail you anyway, because, at the end of whatever, this lifespan is for you, they fall by the wayside, and they aren't there anymore, even under the best, of circumstances, don't hold on to something, that is fleeting, and meaningless, come to me, it's a terribly scary thought, to give up your independence, and your aspirations, and hand them over to Jesus, and say, I will follow you, lead me, where you would lead me, it's not a scary thought, when we see, who asks us, to follow him, the good shepherd, who has laid down his life, for us, first, and knows what we need, and knows, where he's taking us,

[ 39 : 59 ] Psalm 23, is a beautiful, encouraging, life-giving, hope-giving picture, surrender, but we only know, the life, and the hope, it offers to us, when we see, the shepherd, and we hear his call, to follow him, and we say yes, in that place, of surrender, in the giving up, ironically, the story of Christianity, says, we gain it all, we get it all, everything, we need, from the giving up, we gain it all, for we gain, the shepherd himself, Psalm 23, David says, that has been, my experience, and my prayer, is that that would be, our experience, too, let's pray, as we ask, the Lord, to help us, the Lord, as we ask, you know, you can't, you can't, there's a whole hill, and we can't, of course it will be you, our dick's, we're supposed to, but the Father, and our goodness, how long it is, faites.

When we see, that is the Holy Spirit. And I'm doing, our ■■■■■■■■■■, it's a very smart guy. And I'm doing right, we're going to realize, hopefully, you do see the sun,