

The Good
SHEPHERD



*The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
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.*

Psalms 23:1-4

Dear FPC Family,

As we meditate upon Psalm 23 this summer, we will uncover the richness and beauty that has inspired faith in the Good Shepherd for thousands of years. What's more, we will see clearly the character of our God and who we are as His sheep, as we will explore each line of Psalm 23 through *The Good Shepherd* sermon series.

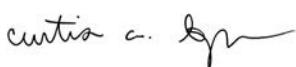
Each week, the pastors will share from a short phrase found in the Psalm, weaving together references from across the canon of Scripture to help bring new meaning to a familiar favorite. We invite you to personally reflect on these daily devotional questions, bookended with prayer. Studies have shown that writing out reflection by hand leads to deeper processing, so pair this guide with a notebook or journal. If you live with others, you might then have a roommate or family discussion. Your small groups can use these questions for group discussion. Children & Family has also prepared a short kid-friendly guide, as well as a supplement for parents.

In August we will transition into our second theme, *Welcomed to the Table*, as we continue with our daily reflections. As the imagery shifts in the Psalm to that of a host, we will explore what it means to have God as our host who welcomes us to His table. At His table, we richly feast on His word. We need not search for sustenance—God amply provides for us. At His table, we recognize how much we have to give thanks for—including that God gives us a legacy of goodness and mercy, and that our eternal destiny is assured in God's presence and under His power.

Everyone is invited to join us for our companion Sunday School series in August, *The Art of Neighboring*. We will be applying what we're learning in our sermon series *Welcomed to the Table*, with practical, hyperlocal implications. Since God welcomes us to His table, what does it mean to welcome others into our lives with open arms and hearts? What about with open doors and open schedules? What would this look like on your cul-de-sac, block, or hallway? We look forward to learning from our Good Shepherd and our Good Host what it means to love and care for others the way He loves and cares for us.

In Christ,

Your FPC Pastors



Pastor Curtis



Pastor Jon



Pastor Emmanuel



Pastor Caitlin

The LORD Is My Shepherd

Psalms 23:1a

Daily Prayer Points

Pray to open your reflection time on God's word, that your Shepherd would guide your reflection by His Spirit.

After reflecting on the day's questions, respond to God in prayer. Each day, also pray for those you know that have not welcomed God as their shepherd, and ask that the Holy Spirit would equip you with words that point them to Jesus.

Day 1

Imagine talking with a young child. "What is God like?" they ask.

How would you respond? How would you respond differently to people of other ages?

Spend a few minutes reading and reflecting on Psalm 23.

Reread it in a few different translations. What similarities do you see? What differences? Which version do you prefer? Why?

Day 2

This week, we're digging into the opening phrase: "The Lord is my shepherd."

How close is the metaphor of God as "shepherd" to your answer above?

What do you think of God being your shepherd? What does that mean to you?

This psalm starts not with who we are, but who God is (not who God was or who God will be, but who God is). Though King David was a shepherd himself (see 1 Samuel 16:1-13), in Psalm 23 God is the shepherd.

Why do you think it's important that the Psalm starts with God?

The Hebrew name, YAHWEH (which is translated as the "LORD" in English) was considered so holy that Jews would not say it aloud. Instead, they substituted "Adonai" or "Jehovah" in its place.

What do you think of that idea? What would more reverence for God's name look like in your life today?

Day 3

Read Exodus 3:1-15.

Verse 14 is where we read the name Yahweh. **How does your Bible translate that verse?**

In that culture, to know the name of a deity meant having access to the power of that deity.

Is Yahweh's power given to Moses?

The Bible reveals that God is all powerful, all knowing, and always present. Robert Morgan writes: "What often is missing from our lives is the conception of God. We spend hours contemplating finances or projects or problems or family matters. We obsess over many stressful things, and then, to forget about them we pursue an array of diversions unmatched in history."

Do you agree? Is this true for you? When could you spend more time in God's presence and meditating on His Word? How could that affect your life?

Day 4

The 16th century reformer Martin Luther is credited with the saying, "The Christian faith is a matter of personal pronouns." We see a personal pronoun in the very first phrase: *my*. Personal pronouns make up about 25% of the whole psalm!

What is the difference between "The Lord is *a* shepherd" and "The Lord is *my* shepherd"? Do you remember when you first used that personal pronoun for God?

In the Hebrew language, "friend" is derived from the word "shepherd." Ponder that for a moment in light of Psalm 23:1.

What does it mean to you to be able to call God your friend?

What's more, Jesus, the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep, calls us friends in John 15:9-17.

Knowing that Jesus considers you a friend, in what ways could you invest in your friendship with Him this summer? (For a helpful starting point, you might consider friends in your life with whom you speak often, spend time together enjoying each other's company, doing life together, and so on.)

Day 5

Psalm 23 was written in a culture of nomadic shepherders (from which we derive the word shepherd). As such, God being a shepherd was an easy metaphor for the original audience to grasp.

What metaphor would you use today to communicate to our culture?

Read Luke 15:11-32. **How is Jesus the Good Shepherd?**

Diving Deeper: Tracing Themes Throughout Scripture

Engage other references to God as shepherd in Genesis 48:15, 49:24, Deuteronomy 32:6-12, Psalm 28:9, 74:1, 77:20, 78:52, 79:13, 80:1, 95:7, 100:3; Isaiah 40:11; Jeremiah 23:3; Ezekiel 34; Hosea 4:16; Micah 5:4, 7:14; and Zechariah 9:16. Why do you think this metaphor is so common in the Hebrew Scriptures?

The word "is" implies both existence and immediacy. See other examples in Genesis 28:16; Exodus 15:2; Deuteronomy 33:27; Psalm 27:1; Psalm 46:1; Habakkuk 2:19; John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9-11, 11:15; Romans 8:31; 1 Corinthians 1:9, 25, and 3:17; and 2 Corinthians 9:8.

I Lack Nothing

Psalm 23:1b

This week we focus on “I lack nothing.” While many translations may have it written: “I shall not want,” consider the difference between lack—being found without something you need, and desire—wanting something you do not have.

Daily Prayer Points

Pray as you begin your reflection time. Ask God to guide your time so that you might become more aware of His provision in your life.

After your reflection, praise God for His provision for His people and in your life. Pray that God would invite you into the inner work of empathy and compassion, that you would have the capacity to love your neighbor like Jesus loves us. Pray also for God to supply your daily bread, and to help you supply others’ daily bread as well.

Day 1

What is the deepest desire right now?

Another way to ask that is, what is weighing heaviest on your heart right now?

How would you know God answered that desire/prayer?

What is a time in your life that you knew God answered your desire/prayer?

Spend a few minutes reading and reflecting on Psalm 23.

What does your version read, in verse 1? “The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing...”

What is your favorite translation of that line? Why?

Day 2

Consider for a moment this translation, “The Lord is my shepherd, what more do I need?”

How would you answer that question?

What are the things you need?

We continue to hold this line, “I lack nothing,” in tension with the LORD is my Shepherd.

How has your Shepherd given you everything you need?

Day 3

An ancient Jewish teaching sees “I lack nothing” as having been inspired by the experience of the Israelites wandering in the desert, when God provided for their needs for forty years, supplying them with food and water, and even keeping their clothing from wearing out—so that they lacked nothing.

Read Exodus 16:1-21.

What are the Israelites grumbling about in verses 1-3?

What do they want Moses to do?

How did God respond to the people's grumbling in verses 4-8?

How does God provide for His people in verse 10?

What does the provision in verse 10 look like for God's people today?

Day 4

Reread Exodus 16:1-21.

How did God provide physically for His people in verses 16-18?

How much did the LORD command them to take?

Linger on verse 18. Read it several times, and then write it down in your own words.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-15.

What does this passage tell us about God's kingdom economy?

How has He designed His Kingdom for the needs of His people to be supplied?

Consider verse 14. **Have you ever experienced a time of need where another's "plenty" supplied your need?** Reflect on how God provided for you, and what that means to you.

Are you currently in a time of plenty or a time of need? How might God be calling you to trust Him, either to supply another's need, or to have your needs supplied?

Day 5

Read Exodus 16:1-36.

What happened when the Israelites took too much manna?

Why were they to gather twice as much on the sixth day?

What was the LORD's purpose in the special double provision on the sixth day?

How does the LORD provide for your Sabbath rest today?

What parallels do you see when looking at the phrase "I lack nothing" from Psalm 23 and this account from Exodus 16? When have you been like the Israelites and taken more than what you needed for the day?

Day 6

Read *The Lord's Prayer* from Matthew 6:6-13

How has God supplied your "daily bread"?

How might God provide someone else's "daily bread" through you?

Diving Deeper

A *Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* by W. Phillip Keller is a treasure. We highly recommend reading through it as you read through Psalm 23 this summer.

He Makes Me Lie Down In Green Pastures

Psalm 23:2a

So far we have contemplated the first two phrases in Psalm 23: “The Lord is my shepherd” and “I lack nothing.” These words set the stage for all that follows. Throughout the remainder of Psalm 23, we can ask: “How can I know the Lord is my shepherd, in whom I lack nothing?” Each of the remaining lines answers this, if we preface it with the word “because.”

This week, that becomes: “How can we know the Lord is our shepherd, in whom we lack nothing?”
Because He makes us lie down in green pastures.

Daily Prayer Points

Pray as you begin your reflection time. Ask God to deepen your time so that you might rest and trust in Him. After your reflection, respond to what you have processed by praying it back to God. (Consider which freedoms you want to ask God to be satisfied in your life, and lift those freedoms up to Him in prayer.)

Day 1

Contemplate for a few moments about the words before us this week: “He makes me lie down in green pastures.”

What does that mean to you? What images does it conjure up in your mind? Have you ever experienced something like that?

What do you personally need to experience true, replenishing rest? (Or, as the Hebrew word for *lie down* can be translated: “to stretch out”?)

Day 2

Lying down in a green pasture seems easy enough—unless you are a sheep. As Phillip Keller writes in *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, it is almost impossible to make sheep lie down unless four specific needs are met. We will consider their needs this week and how only their shepherd can create these conditions for them, while also considering our needs and how God meets them as our Shepherd.

The first “freedom” that sheep need is to be free from fear, devoid the slightest suspicion of coyotes, cougars, or bears. This is why shepherds have to “keep watch over their flocks by night.” Even then, only the presence of the shepherd allows sheep to relax and rest.

In what settings, circumstances, or spiritual practices are you most able to become aware of the presence of God?

Day 3

Yesterday we saw sheep must be free from fear to lie down; sheep are social creatures and also be free from friction with other sheep in order to rest. Chickens have a “pecking order” and cattle a “horning order,” while sheep have a “butting order,” through which they establish and maintain a hierarchy. Us humans try to be “top sheep” too, don’t we? (Or we at least try to “keep up with the Joneses.”)

Read Matthew 20:1-16. **What do you think Jesus means when he says “the last will be first, and the first will be last?” What would this look like in a flock of sheep?**

Read Philippians 2:1-11. **How does Paul build on Jesus’ teaching?**

Day 4

In addition to being free from fear and free from friction with other sheep, sheep have two other conditions that must be satisfied in order for them to lay down. Sheep also need to be free of flies and ticks. This requires both repellents and regular cleaning by their shepherd. No wonder we too use the phrase “bugged” when we’re annoyed by life’s challenges. Read Philippians 4:6-7 for how to call upon God when we’re “bugged.”

How and where are you most able to do so?

Day 5

The fourth freedom sheep need before lying down is to be free of hunger. While David writes of green pastures, most of Palestine is a “dry, brown, sun-burned wasteland.” The existence of green pastures meant that shepherds had cleared rocky land, torn out brush, plowed soil, and irrigated water.

Similarly, we can give thanks to God for our “daily bread”! But there’s an even deeper meaning to be explored. Read Matthew 13:1-9.

Phillip Keller concludes: How He works to clear the life of rocks of stony unbelief. How He tries to tear out the roots of bitterness. He attempts to break up the hard, proud human heart that is set like sun-dried clay. He then sows the seed of His own precious Word, which, if given half a chance to grow, will produce rich crops of contentment and peace. He waters this with the dews of His own presence by the Holy Spirit. He tends and cares and cultivates the life, longing to see it become rich and green and productive.

How has God done this in your life? Give thanks to Him, your Shepherd.

Day 6

Various passages in the Scriptures reveal that God is our true pasture—that we “feast on” His Word and “drink in” His grace. Read Psalm 42:1-2 and John 6:25-69.

How best can you feast on God’s word this week?

How can you share the “green pastures” of God’s provision with others who feel spiritually lost in a dry, brown, sun-burned wasteland?

St. Augustine once questioned, “What will *make* me take my rest in you... so I can forget my restlessness and take hold of you, the one good thing in my life?”

What about you? **What will “make you” take your rest in God?**

He Leads Me Beside Quiet Waters

Psalm 23:2b

Our summer series in Psalm 23 continues as we reflect on what it means to be led by the Good Shepherd beside quiet and still waters. Interesting fact: a shepherd never takes a sheep out to pasture alone—a flock is always assumed to be with a shepherd. However, Psalm 23's focus is on the individual, as David reflects on his personal journey with his shepherd. Let us do the same as we continue to reflect together on the wondrous ways the Good Shepherd cares for our deepest needs!

Day 1

When you think of still, quiet waters, does a place or image come to mind?

When you are walking or on a hike, do you like to be out front or following a leader?

Have you ever lost your way or as some may say, “been temporarily disoriented”?

What has helped you get back on track?

Day 2

The shepherd takes the sheep out onto the hillside to graze in the morning, but after a morning of grazing the sheep need to drink. The shepherd must plan their day around the availability of water in the middle of the day.

Take a moment to read John 4:1-15. This is a powerful passage with so much to explore—but for now—let us focus on the theme of physical and spiritual thirst/water...

What time of day is it when Jesus stops for water?

What are you constantly “thirsting” for? How has Jesus satisfied you?

A physical need opens the door for a conversation about a spiritual need.

Day 3

In the Old Testament, living or running water was a figurative reference to divine activity.

Read Jeremiah 2:13; Zechariah 14:8.

What is the cost of the living water to us?

Jesus contrasts temporary with eternal satisfaction, teaching that all earthly pleasures, even if legitimate, are fading. **What other spiritual truths can we discover from Jesus in this encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well?**

Day 4

What “green pastures and quiet waters” has the Lord brought you to experience lately?

The good shepherd leads me; he does not drive me. Sheep know the voice of their shepherd and are eager to follow. Consider John 10:27. **What are examples of some other voices that are calling our name?**

Learning from testimonies of Middle Eastern shepherds, “Sheep cannot be watered at places where the water is swift.”

How does this bring further depth to your understanding of “He leads me beside quiet waters?”

Read Mark 4:35-41 & Matthew 8:23-27. **What’s Jesus doing here beyond quieting the waters? Where else in Scripture are waters quieted or calmed?**

Day 5

What can get in the way of Jesus leading us? And you, personally?

Each day the shepherd leads the flock to where it can rest.

Why is trusting in Jesus alone to provide that rest so difficult at times?

What troubles and challenges in your life are currently keeping you from experiencing true rest in the green pastures and quiet/still waters Jesus has in mind for you?

Day 6

Reflect on Eugene Peterson’s translation of Psalm 23:2 before praying for your Shepherd to give your soul refreshment and rest: *You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools of water to drink from.*

Ask God to open your heart and hands towards His leading in your life.

Be still...consider how you have been “blessed to be a blessing to others...”

He Restores My Soul

Psalms 23:3a

This week we continue our summer sermon series in Psalm 23, engaging the phrase: “He restores my soul.” What does it mean for God to “restore” our soul?

Daily Prayer Points

Pray as you begin your reflection time, for your Shepherd to restore your soul through this time with Him.

After your reflection, turn your responses into prayer back to God. Also pray for those you know that have not welcomed God as their shepherd, and ask that the Holy Spirit would equip you with words that point them to Jesus, the Restorer of our souls.

Day 1

Think about a time you needed restoration. What caused/contributed to the need to be restored?

Did you ever feel restored? If so, how did it come about?

Slowly and reflectively read Psalm 23, perhaps in a different translation than you’re used to. **Have you begun to notice anything different about this Spirit-inspired poem as a result of our study?**

Day 2

Psalm 23:2 declares, “He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters.”

What do you think green pastures and quiet waters have to do with the next line, “He restores my soul”? How are these thoughts related?

How have the green pastures of God’s Word and the quiet waters of His Holy Spirit restored your soul?

In the next verse, King David begins speaking of the Shepherd in the second person (from third person “He” to “you”), but for now it is as if he is telling us the story of his being restored. **How would you tell that story in your own life?**

Day 3

We know from shepherds how sheep hide under a bush or rock immediately upon realizing they’re lost. Complicating matters, their heavy fleece can sometimes cause sheep to tip over and become unable to stand up on their own. 2 Samuel 11 and 12 tells the story of David falling morally, with an inappropriate encounter he initiates with Bathsheba. When he realizes his sin may be found out, he tries covering it up. As often happens, sin leads to more sin.

As Shakespeare wrote, “our best conscience is not to leave sin undone, but to keep it unknown.” It is only when the prophet Nathan plainly reveals David’s sin that he admits to having “sinned against the LORD.” (Psalm 51 also recalls this scene.)

Our “sheepish” efforts at hiding go all the way back to the Garden of Eden: after eating the fruit, “The Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ He answered, ‘I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.’” (Genesis 3:9-10)

When have you tried to hide from the reality of your sin? How did God get your attention?

Day 4

While our English translation renders it, “He restores my soul,” the literal Hebrew reads, “He brings me back.” A good Armenian translation from the fifth century renders it: “He brings me from the wrong path to the right path.”

How does “He brings me back” shift the meaning of this phrase? What’s the difference between being “restored” and being “brought back”?

Digging even deeper, the form of the Hebrew verb used makes it clear that this is an action done *for* us—not something *we* do. Without help, sheep are unable to find their way home.

How does this deepen your understanding of the verse? Can you think of other passages where someone or something is “brought back”?

To bring sheep back, the Shepherd must first come find them.

How has the Shepherd come after you? Where are you still tempted to run to?

Day 5

Read Luke 18:9-14. **How does Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector further clarify the verse before us?**

Day 6

Psalm 22, 23, and 24 belong together as a kind of trilogy clearly depicting the past, present, and future of God’s people through Jesus our Good Shepherd. Psalm 22 is quoted by Jesus on the cross and Psalm 24 looks ahead to the New Jerusalem, while Psalm 23 depicts His presence with us now. Read these three chapters in one sitting and see how they speak to you of Jesus the Good Shepherd who laid down his life for us, of Jesus the Great Shepherd who leads us today, and of Jesus the Chief Shepherd who will reign in glory for all eternity.

Diving Deeper: Tracing Themes Throughout Scripture

Reflect on these passages which reveal God’s restoration for His people:

Psalm 103:12; Job 14:17; Isaiah 1:18, 38:17, 44:22; Micah 7:19, and Colossians 2:14.

He Guides Me Along Right Paths

Psalm 23:3b

Our summer series in Psalm 23 continues as we reflect on what it means to be guided by the Good Shepherd along the right paths for His name's sake...He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His own name's sake.

Dr. Kenneth Bailey writes, "The clear assumption, (affirmed by the Classical Armenian translation [of Psalm 23]) is that I was lost while straying in the paths of unrighteousness and the good shepherd brings me back to the right paths and leads me on."

Daily Prayer Points

Pray as you begin your reflection time, for your Shepherd to guide you along right paths as you spend this time with Him.

After your reflection, turn your responses into prayer back to God. Give thanks for the saving love of Jesus in our lives, and the wondrous ways the Good Shepherd cares for our deepest needs. Ask God to open His flock's heart and hands towards His leading in their life—for His glory and the benefit of others. Pray for the lost sheep that come to mind right now, who need to experience the caring presence of the Good Shepherd.

Day 1

When have you experienced joy in meeting a need for someone?

What would you list as your most basic 3-5 needs in life?

What has been the most precious thing that you have lost, only to have found it again?

Which of the needs identified in this Psalm are you particularly aware of God meeting in your life at this time? What is it like for you to experience God's care in this way?

Day 2

Read Isaiah 53:6. **Why do we need a Shepherd? And how has this Shepherd guided you in your life and faith journey?** Reflect on the days or seasons of life when you took your own paths...

Have you ever thought about Psalm 23 this way? God as Guide; His people as needy pilgrims How does that fit with what you have studied in Psalm 23 so far?

Day 3

Verse 3 ends: "For his own name's sake..." Read Ezekiel 36:20-32.

What did the nations say about God?

What motivated God to restore Israel?

Consider what Kenneth Bailey wrote: "The shepherd searches for the lost sheep out of loyalty to his own integrity. It is for "his own name's sake." Therefore, my worth as a sheep, be it little or great, has nothing to do with his determination to (find and) restore me." **What assurance does that provide you?**

Day 4

Read John 10:1-21.

How do sheep respond to the Shepherd?

Who are the “thieves and robbers”?

How does Jesus identify himself with the “good shepherd”? (vv.11-15)

Who are the “other sheep” he must bring in also?

What final claim does Jesus make in verses 17-18?

Day 5

What was the turning point for you of hearing “God’s voice” and responding?

How do you discern his voice from all the voices that vie for your attention?

How does it make you feel to think of God caring for you as the Good Shepherd?

Reflect on these words from Max Lucado, “The path of righteousness is a narrow, winding trail up a steep hill. At the top of a hill is a cross.”

Day 6

Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd. The Shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. Explore these Scriptures—and their context—that illustrate this truth: Psalm 23:1, 79:13, 100:3; Ezekiel 34:11-16; Matthew 9:36, 26:31; Luke 12:32, 15:4; Hebrews 13:20.

What new insights or observations do you have about God as shepherd through these Scriptures?

What assurance does that provide?

Even Though I Walk Through The Valley

Psalm 23:4a

This week we continue our summer series in Psalm 23, engaging the phrase, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley” or “the valley of the shadow of death” and “I fear no evil.”

Daily Prayer Points

Pray to begin your reflection time, that the Shepherd who is with you even in the darkest places will assure you of His Presence and His power.

After you reflect on the questions, turn your responses into prayer back to God. Also pray for those you know experiencing valleys of deep darkness, that the rays of God’s light and love would shine forth the path ahead and that they would know of their Shepherd’s presence.

Day 1

What comes to your mind when you think about the phrase “the valley of the shadow of death”? Does it remind you of a particular image you’ve seen? A season of life you’ve experienced? A story of someone you know?

As we’ve seen before, Psalm 23 starts with a declaration: “The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.” These words set the stage for all that follows. Before each remaining line we can insert the word *because*. This allows us to ask the question: “How can I know that the Lord is my shepherd, in whom I lack nothing?” And to answer: Because He makes us lie down..., He leads us..., He restores us..., He guides us to righteousness... **Which of these lines is currently the most meaningful for you to reflect on?**

Day 2

Look up Psalm 23:4 in as many translations as you can.

Which of them most “speaks to your soul”?

In Hebrew, the phrase *shadow of death* is one word, translated literally as “deep darkness.” It is used throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, describing such things as darkness before creation (Amos 5:8), the gloom of a mine shaft (Job 28:3), and the realm of the dead (Job 10:21, 38:17). It recalls a sense of anxiety and dread.

Have you experienced seasons of “deep darkness”?

Did God make Himself known to you somehow during that time? If so, how?

In Acts 14:22, Paul and Barnabas declare, “We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God.” Alexander Solzhenitsyn agreed, saying, “Suffering ripens our souls.” Richard Foster put it this way: “God becomes a reality when he becomes a necessity.”

Have you seen this to be true in your own life? Or in the life of another?

Day 3

Here, in verse 4, the grammar of this ancient poem shifts. Instead of speaking about God in the third person, David begins addressing Him in the second person – from “he” to “you.”

Do you think that is significant? Why or why not?

When did you “shift your grammar” from speaking about God to talking with God?

Throughout the Scriptures, God repeatedly declares, “I am with you” (see, for instance, Genesis 28:15; Exodus 33:14; Joshua 1:5; Isaiah 41:10, 43:2; Matthew 28:20; and Hebrews 13:5-6).

How can knowing that change our perspective within valleys of deep darkness?

Some conclude that David is here reflecting on a particular valley known as the Wadi Kelt, which is the same route Jesus would have taken when he departed Galilee—and the site of his story about the Good Samaritan. In Jesus’ day, it was called “the way of blood” because of the danger of bandits and wild animals.

Read Luke 10:25-37. **In telling this story, how is Jesus calling us to be more like our Good Shepherd?**

Day 4

In David’s day, such valleys were necessary to lead sheep through so they could reach high country in the springtime. Not only were these valleys the most direct route to the top of the mountain, they were the most well-watered with rich pasture.

Our experience in life’s valleys may not be quite the same. But note the preposition in this verse: *through*. The valley is not our permanent destination—we walk *through* it, on our way *somewhere else*.

How can having a larger, eternal perspective shift our current experience in the valley?

Like many passages of Scripture, Psalm 23 is written in chiasmic structure. This means that the primary meaning is found not at the end, but in the middle. That middle is the simple phrase we’ve looked at in this study.

How does that transform your understanding of this psalm?

How does it inform your perspective on this difficult season in our world?

Day 5

Read Psalm 23:4

How big are your top three fears? Have you been avoiding them, or tackling them?

Now, imagine that you are no longer afraid about those things. What did it take to no longer be afraid of them?

If God was to give you the resources to not be afraid of your top three anymore, what would those resources be?

Day 6

Read 2 Timothy 1:7. Fear is outnumbered 3 to 1 in 2 Timothy—Power, Love, and a Sound Mind.

Power: Read Romans 8:11.

The same life-giving spirit that raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you. **Where in your life do you need this life-giving power to conquer your fear?**

Love: Read Romans 5:5

Where in your life do you need love poured into?

Sound Mind: Read 1 Corinthians 2:16

When a structure is defined as “sound,” that means it is firm, intact, and stable. A sound mind is one that is undivided. It is the opposite of being double-minded.

Take some time to reflect on where you may be “double-minded.” **What beliefs or actions are you holding onto, even though they might conflict with following Jesus?**

Your Rod and Your Staff, They Comfort Me

Psalm 23:4c

Through the last two weeks we have engaged with King David's shift from third person to second person in the words: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." What a comfort to know that even in our darkest times—or better yet, especially in our darkest times—God is with us. In this study we examine the final words of verse 4: "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Daily Prayer Points

Pray to begin your reflection time, that the Shepherd who is with you even in the darkest places will assure you of His Presence and His power, and this week you might experience His peace and comfort. After your reflection, turn your responses into prayer back to God. Pray for those you know experiencing valleys of deep darkness, that they would know the Shepherd's presence, that He would protect with His rod and guide with His staff.

Day 1

When or where are you most comfortable?

Pause to reflect on last week's study and the fears you identified. **How have you sensed God's presence meeting you in those fears?**

King David declares, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

How do you initially understand this phrase? What comes to mind?

As we've seen, a journey "through the valley of the shadow of death" provides a well-watered route to the high countries for sheep's nourishment in the summer months. We, too, journey through life's valleys on our way toward the "high countries" of eternal life with God. However, as Kenneth Bailey explains:

Sheep have a special problem. They have no defenses. Cats have teeth, claws and speed. Dogs have their teeth and their speed. Horses can kick, bite and run. Bears can claw, bite and crush. Deer can run. But sheep have no bite or claws and cannot outrun and serious predator... The sheep's only security is the shepherd.

Where are you tempted to seek security? Safety? Protection?

What would it look like in your life for you to instead trust that God is our only defense?

Day 2

The Hebrew word for rod can also be translated as "scepter," "weapon," or "club." Such instruments were considered an extension of a shepherd's arm and were fashioned from sticks around 2 ½ feet long, sometimes including a mace-like end, often embedded with heavy pieces of iron.

Considering the defenselessness of sheep, why would a rod like this bring comfort?

A second use of the rod included examination and counting of the sheep. The Hebrew Scriptures refer to this as passing "under the rod" (see Ezekiel 20:37; Leviticus 27:32). Every evening, shepherds count their sheep as they return to the sheep fold. If one is missing (of the ninety-nine!), a search and rescue party begins.

**When have you felt outside of God's flock and in need of rescuing?
How did the Shepherd come looking for you?**

Day 3

A *good* shepherd would examine his flock while counting them. This was no easy task, as sheep's wool makes it difficult to detect wounds, disease, or defect. In other words, a shepherd could have "the wool pulled over his eyes." But not a *good* shepherd.

This is what David had in mind in Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Try echoing that prayer for a few moments, even now. **What does God's Spirit bring to mind?
How does it help you to have God search and examine you?**

Day 4

Shepherds also carry a staff. More than any other item, the staff identifies a shepherd as a shepherd. Unlike the rod, which could be used for protection from just about any external threat, a shepherd's staff would not help cattle, horses, or hogs. While rods signify authority, power and discipline, a staff reveals the good shepherd as long-suffering and kind in three different ways. We will explore one of these three uses each remaining day of the week.

First, a shepherd uses his staff to draw sheep together in intimate relationships with its mother and other sheep in the pen.

**How has God guided you into caring Christian community?
How has God brought you into a closer intimacy with Him?**

Day 5

In addition to drawing sheep together into relationships, shepherds also use their staff to guide sheep along difficult, dangerous routes, gently applying pressure to point them in the right direction.

**When has the Spirit of God gotten your attention and pointed you in the right direction?
How has Scripture revealed the right path forward?**

Day 6

The last use of a staff is to rescue wayward sheep who have gone off the path and gotten themselves into trouble.

**When have you been a wayward sheep? (It may not have been outwardly apparent to others that you had gotten off the path, but perhaps your heart was far from God.)
How did our Good Shepherd come to the rescue?**

*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 mercy follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*

Psalm 23:5-6

Welcomed to
THE TABLE



You Prepare a Table Before Me

Psalm 23:5a

In *The Good Shepherd: A Thousand Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*, Dr. Kenneth Bailey poses an interesting question for us to consider: “Here [in verse 5 of Psalm 23], the reader is obliged to make an important decision. Is the psalmist still talking about a shepherd and his sheep, or does the imagery shift to a festive meal with a host and a guest?”

Daily Prayer Points

Before you begin your reflection, pray for refreshment and rest for your soul. Pray for the wisdom of the Good Shepherd to guide and direct our hearts and minds as we invite all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God’s family.

To conclude your time of reflection each day, pray for God to show you what you are consuming that is not satisfying to your soul. Ask God to increase your appetite for spiritual nurture and nutrition, your spiritual hunger. Pray also for those who need the Lord’s provision in their lives—physically, spiritually, and emotionally—that they would be open to receive what they need from Him.

Day 1

Read Psalm 23 out loud twice, pausing for a minute after each reading to be still and reflect.

Thoughts? New insights?

Reflect on Max Lucado’s statement: “God is the Shepherd who guides, the Lord who provides, the Voice who brings peace in the Storm.”

Which of these resonates the most with you, based on personal experience?

Which one requires the most faith for you to believe?

Have you ever sat down to eat at a table that was “overflowing” with hospitality and food where you were treated (or simply felt like) an honored guest?

What was that experience like?

Day 2

To “prepare a table” means “to prepare a meal.” God prepares “food” for us. The Lord is a generous host and invites us to His table as His guests.

What responses do you have with God wanting to provide you with nurture and nutrition?

Picture yourself sitting at a banquet table prepared for you by God. Imagine yourself being loved and nurtured by God.

What spiritual food do you sense God is offering you?

Day 3

In verse 2, the psalmist speaks of food and drink for animals. Here in verse 5, the subject is food and drink for people. **How does this connect (or not connect) with your reading/interpretation of the text? What difference does it make if the psalmist is still talking about a shepherd and his sheep, or if the imagery is shifting to a festive meal with a host and a guest?**

Hospitality at meals is a critical aspect of traditional Middle Eastern culture.

Have you or anyone you know ever experienced this blessing personally?

Day 4

...in the presence of my enemies.

The focus of what is affirmed here: the Lord demonstrates costly love to me irrespective of who is watching. God “feeds us” in the presence of our enemies. This meal is offered at a great cost.

What enemies (perhaps spiritual) are you aware of in your life?

What do you tend to do in times of trouble and need:

- (a) Pray for God’s restoration?**
- (b) Turn to other people?**
- (c) Go it on your own?**
- (d) Retreat in frustration?**

How do you think the Lord wants you to respond?

Day 5

Read Luke 15:11-32.

The banquet/celebration angers the older brother and surprises many of us. **How does it change your reaction if you think of the banquet not as a gesture of “welcome back” to the prodigal son, but rather as a celebration of the outcome of the costly efforts of the father in reconciling his son to himself?**

All of this takes place in front of a village who does not like the son, as well as a brother who may never have reconciled with his younger (prodigal) brother. In other words, from the prodigal son’s point of view, his father ordered a huge banquet and celebration in the presence of his enemies. **What would it mean to you to be able to enjoy a celebration in the presence of your enemies? What would that reveal about your relationship with your Heavenly Father?**

By not being given the ending, it invites us to write our own ending for our own hearts. Pray for God to reveal where you might be acting like the elder brother, and for him to lead you to join in His celebration.

Day 6

Read Luke 19:1-10. Jesus spends the night at the house of a tax collector. The crowd is furious. Jesus, by sharing a meal with Zacchaeus, gives rise to more hostility because of who He chooses to eat His meals with. Jesus demonstrates costly love to those around the table “in the presence of their enemies...”

Gospel (good) news: Jesus has crushed your enemy, the devil, (Genesis 3:14-15) and prepared a safe place for your soul to be nourished. Suppose in the place of your greatest failure or most crushing disappointment, the Good Shepherd invites you to a meal. **What makes it difficult to believe that at your worst, the Shepherd wants to give you His best?**

Take time to consider how the Shepherd invites you to receive the gracious, costly invitation of Jesus Christ. **How does Jesus make it possible for you to accept this invitation to the banquet?**

You Anoint My Head with Oil

Psalms 23:5b

This week we continue our summer series in Psalm 23, looking at the phrase, “You anoint my head with oil.”

Daily Prayer Points

Before you begin your reflection time, pray for God to anoint this time by His Spirit.

After your written reflection time, pray for those you know who are “bugged” and need protection, are “crashing their heads” against another, or feeling wounded, that they would know the Shepherd’s presence, that He would anoint them with the oil of His Spirit.

Day 1

What do you think of when you hear that phrase, “You anoint my head with oil”?

What stories, experiences, or passages of Scripture come to mind?

The *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* gives three definitions of the verb anoint: “to apply an oily liquid, to consecrate or make sacred in a ceremony that includes the token applying of oil, to dedicate to the service of God.” This prompts Rabbi Harold Kushner to question, “How did we get from smearing liquid to being dedicated to God?”

What do you think? How do you think this practice came about? Have you ever been anointed? If so, how did it make you feel? If not, how do you think you would feel?

Day 2

Some students of Scripture feel that the driving metaphor of a sheep and Shepherd shifts, in verse 5, to a banquet table with a host and a guest. This brief phrase, “You anoint my head with oil,” offers no clarification one way or the other. It can be read either way (perhaps that’s part of this psalm’s power—it relates to many different aspects of life).

What was your own initial interpretation? A sheep being anointed by a Shepherd? Or a guest being anointed by their host?

Let’s explore each possibility in turn. Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

What is happening in this passage? What is the significance of the oil poured on David’s head? Did it make him king right then and there? Why or why not?

How do you think this experience shaped him? How do you think it affected his brothers? Do you think this interaction inspired the phrase in Psalm 23? If so, how?

In the ancient world, anointing someone could occur for a variety of reasons: consecration, inauguration, hospitality, sickness, and to dress wounds.

Which is happening in 1 Samuel 16?

Day 3

Shepherds anointed sheep for three reasons. First, to protect them from various insects that would make a home through their nasal cavities in their brains, driving sheep to insanity or even death. Sheep aren't the only animals that can be "bugged," though. We, too, need the anointing oil of the Holy Spirit to protect our minds from infection by the ways of the world.

Have you ever been "led astray" by secular thinking?

How did a fresh anointing of God's Spirit free your troubled mind?

Day 4

A second reason shepherds anoint sheep is during the mating season, when rams literally butt heads to win the attention of ewes. Like boxers entering the ring, shepherds anoint their heads so that in their colliding and crashing, sheep would merely glance off of each other with little damage done.

Again, there is a perfect analog: **Where do you need the anointing oil of God's Spirit during this difficult and divisive season? How do you need the oil of God's love when you're tempted to "step into the ring against an opponent"?**

Who is that opponent you're now thinking of? How could God's anointing oil smooth over difficult interactions you may have?

Day 5

Shepherds anoint sheep to protect them from bugs, as well as from hurting each other. Lastly, shepherds anoint sheep to help bring healing and wholeness to wounds and injuries (from crashing their heads together). **Where do you need healing and wholeness?**

To be anointed, sheep need to do three things: go to their shepherd, put their heads down, and trust in his anointing power.

We need to do the same: Go to our Shepherd, bow before Him, and trust His Holy Spirit. Spend some time doing so today. Like sheep, we need continual reapplication of His anointing.

Day 6

Check out your Bible's concordance or visit biblegateway.com to search all the references to anointing. Note Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 4:4-30, and 2 Corinthians 1:18-22.

Then visit fpchouston.org/discipleship to watch a three-minute Bible Project video on "The Meaning and Purpose of Anointing in the Bible." **What does it mean to you that you are anointed as you follow the Anointed One?**

My Cup Overflows

Psalms 23:5c

Daily Prayer Points

To open your daily reflection time, pray for the Holy Spirit to make God's cup of blessings evident in your life and the lives of those around you.

As you conclude each day's reflection, pray for a deepening understanding of what it means to receive the sacrament of communion, as well as to experience communion with God, because of the way Jesus drank the cup the Father gave Him. Give thanks to God that because Jesus drank the cup we deserved, we get to drink the cup He deserved.

Day 1

Continue to consider whether the metaphor shifts from talking of food and drink for animals, to now food and drink for people in the final two verses.

Regardless, these couple verses offer rich understanding if contemplated through the lens of hospitality. We are God's guests, at His table, where He offers a cup overflowing.

When have you experienced an overflowing cup of joy?

Day 2

Let's turn our attention to the cup that Jesus drank on our behalf. Read Matthew 26:26-28.

Jesus tells us that the cup, which we now celebrate when we partake in communion, is a reminder of the covenant God has made with us to forgive our sins when we confess that Jesus is our Lord and Savior. We so long for the day where we can be reunited as a family of faith, and join one another at the communion table that the Lord has prepared.

How does your participation in this cup give you joy?

Day 3

Right after this meal with his disciples, Jesus takes them to the garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus knows what is going to happen next. He knows that He will be betrayed, beaten, cursed, and crucified—and we get this intimate look at His thoughts, prayers and feelings immediately prior.

Read Matthew 26: 36-45. We hear Jesus pray, "Let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Have you ever reflected on why Jesus uses this phrase, "this cup" to describe what He is about to endure? Read Isaiah 51:17-23; Jeremiah 25:15-29; Revelation 14:9-11 and 16:18-20. Read the surrounding context if you are searching to understand the justice this necessary judgment involves.

What new meaning does it bring to communion when you understand that because Jesus drank the cup of wrath that we deserved, we get to drink from the cup of communion with God instead?

Day 4

Jesus prays two more times, submitting Himself to the cup God had set before Him. Reread Matthew 26:40-44. Jesus re-emphasizes that He will drink the cup if it is His Father's will.

Has there been a time in your life where you can relate? A time where things were very difficult, and yet you knew God was with you and that gave you the strength to follow and trust Him?

How does it help you to endure the trials of life when you know that God Himself experienced suffering on your behalf?

Day 5

Let's circle back to the phrase we are leaning into this week: "My cup overflows." In his book *Can you Drink the Cup?*, Henri Nouwen brings clarity to the cup stating that we first must hold the cup; then we must lift the cup; only then do we drink the cup.

To hold the cup: Be honest with what is going on in your life right now. **What are the good things? The hard things?** Take a real assessment of what your cup is like.

To lift the cup: Think of this as offering a "cheers" at the dinner table. Affirm and celebrate life together in community. Share with those around you whether your cup feels like a cup of sorrow or a cup of joy right now.

To drink the cup: remind yourself that "This is my life." Affirm that this is where God has me, with all its sorrows and joys. Take comfort as Jesus did, "Not as I will, but as you will."

Day 6

Jesus, our Good Shepherd, is well acquainted with the cup of sorrow, but also the cup of joy. May we feel God's presence with us as we know God's ultimate plan for us is to drink the cup of Salvation.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

Take some time to sit with God in prayer, asking him to reveal what is in your cup. Pray that God would give you the courage and endurance to hold, lift, and drink that cup.

Surely Your Goodness & Mercy Follow Me

Psalm 23:6a

Our summer series in Psalm 23 continues as we reflect on what it means to surely know personally that the Lord's "goodness and love (mercy) will follow me all the days of my life..."

Daily Prayer Points

As you open your reflection with prayer, ask God to guide your time by the Holy Spirit and to activate hope within you.

To close each day's reflection, ask God to bring to mind specific blessings you can thank Him for that day. Be sure to include daily moments of gratitude, such as your first sip of coffee, or getting a phone call from a friend. Praise God for those good gifts.

Day 1

The first part of Psalm 23:6 is a statement of hope. Author Juanita Ryan invites us to consider: "What a difference it would make in our daily experience to look into the future and anticipate that, in all circumstances of life, we will continue to be blessed by God's goodness and love."

When have you "looked to the future" and experienced fear instead of hope?

When have you "looked to the future" and experienced hope instead of fear?

Pause to reflect: how much of your mental space is taken up by what ifs and worrying about what could go wrong? Have you ever stopped to wonder: "What if things went right?" What would it look like to spend more time envisioning what our good God could have in store for you?

Day 2

What is your gut-level response verse 6? Do you believe it? Why or why not?

God's goodness is beyond our ability to fully comprehend, but we can experience it. Bring to mind a time in life when you have been especially blessed with an awareness of God's goodness and love. **Was God's goodness and love more abundant in that time, or were you simply more aware of His goodness and love? How did He make you more aware?**

Read Psalm 34:10 and 84:11; Matthew 7:9-12; and James 1:17. **What themes do you notice across these passages? What assurance does this provide?**

Day 3

Mercy/Loving kindness are signs of God's covenant faithfulness to us. The Hebrew word here is *khesed*, which possesses such deep meaning. Because it does not have an equivalent in the English language, this results in various translations: steadfast love, mercy, loving kindness, faithfulness, and more. *Khesed*

conveys God's love for you—a love that flows out of deep emotion and loyalty to His covenant. This love is intrinsic to God's very nature and character; it does not flow out of obligation.

Can you remember the first time you really experienced the love of God in your life?

What stands out to you about that time?

When have you most recently experienced the love of God? What was that like?

Have you ever experienced being loved, forgiven, and accepted (by God or by a person) when you felt like you were at your worst? What did this unconditional love mean to you?

Day 4

The Hebrew word often translated “follow” is closer in meaning to the word “pursue” (i.e., actively following): “Goodness and kindness will pursue me.” **Why would God pursue us? Do you sense this happening in your life?**

Ken Bailey writes: “Each evening as I turn toward home (with the flock), I am followed by [God's] goodness and covenant faithfulness/loving kindness—not by wild animals and ruthless thieves.” **How can you envision this playing out in your own life? What does it look like? How would it change the tone of your days to have this image in mind?**

How has your understanding of, and trust in, Jesus as your Good Shepherd grown over these last couple months?

Day 5

How can the insights of Psalm 23 help you to encourage someone else in your life right now?

Spend extra time in prayer today, asking the Lord to show you how you can share the goodness of the Lord with others around you. Take practical steps to follow up on that.

Day 6

Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight areas in your life where you have not recently trusted God to be your Shepherd. Confess this to God. Read Psalm 103:11-13 out loud, speaking this assurance of pardon over yourself with the very authority of Scripture. Thank God for the compassion He has for you.

Take a moment to read through Psalm 40. Recall a time you waited, prayed, and trusted.

What happened? What can you learn about prayers in times of trouble from this Psalm?

How has your awareness of your blessings grown over the last week as you have daily prayed for God to help you see the blessings He has given you? How has that awareness changed your mindset? Your actions?

I Will Dwell In the House of the Lord Forever

Psalm 23:6b

This week we conclude our summer series in Psalm 23, engaging the final line of this ancient poem: “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Daily Prayer Points

As you open your reflection time, ask God to grow you in your confidence in Him and to guide your thoughts and attention.

As you close each day’s reflection, respond in prayer to what God has revealed to you. Ask God to give you the boldness to boast in your Good Shepherd “over the fence to others” (a phrase you will have encountered in Day 2).

Day 1

As we have seen throughout the previous 12 weeks in our study of Psalm 23, this 3000-year-old poem can be read as a year in the life of a flock. We begin with the proud, joyous statement, “The LORD is my shepherd,” then journey with Him from the green pastures and still waters of home, through tough terrain and mountain passes to the high tablelands of summer. With fall’s rain, storms, and sleet, we are driven back down to the home ranch for a long, quiet winter. And much like its opening line, Psalm 23’s conclusion contains a positive affirmation—but one that might be even more poignant.

Where do you presently see yourself? Amongst the green grass and still waters of home? Amidst the tough terrain of mountain passes? Atop those lush tablelands? Resting in the presence of your Good Shepherd at the home ranch?

Day 2

In his book *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, W. Philip Keller writes of this final phrase, “It is as if [this sheep] has finally come home again and was now standing at the fence, bragging to its less fortunate neighbors on the other side. It boasts about the wonderful year it has had and its complete confidence in its owner. Sometimes I feel we Christians should be much more like this. We should be proud to belong to Christ.”

How comfortable are you boasting to others about how good (y)our Shepherd is?

How has this summer affected your boasting in our Shepherd?

Day 3

Early on in the Hebrew Scriptures, “the house of the Lord” was the tabernacle—a portable, tent-like dwelling place where God’s people would meet with Him (the first usage of this phrase is in Exodus 23:19). Later, King Solomon built the temple as “the house of the Lord” (see, for instance, 1 Kings 7:51 and 8:11).

Our closest geographical corollary to a holy, sacred space may be our sanctuary and Grand Hall. Can you recall how worship felt different during the lockdown phase of the pandemic, when we were unable to gather for worship together in our “house of the Lord”?

Did you sense God’s presence differently during online worship? If so, why do you think that is?

Read Psalm 27:4. **How does remembering how it felt to not enter the sanctuary help bring new life to the longing of the Psalmist?**

Day 4

While David was undoubtedly inspired by the tabernacle and the temple, he wouldn’t be able to dwell in such structures *forever*.

What do you think he is ultimately thinking of?

Read John 14:1-6. As we have seen in previous studies, Jesus is using a first-century wedding analogy to describe what Psalm 23 points toward.

What can we learn from Jesus, our Good Shepherd, about Psalm 23’s last word, “forever”? What will this “forever” look like?

According to Jesus, how do we enter “forever”?

Day 5

Read Revelation 21 and 22. Go back and reread Revelation 21:3.

How does this picture of “forever”—this new heaven and new earth—put into perspective our current experiences of green grass and still waters, of walking through winding and tough terrain, of tabletop mountains?

How will “forever” compare?

Wherever you currently find yourself on your spiritual journey, may you know and trust the One who knows the way home, in whose presence you can dwell forever.

What would it look like to proactively recommit your life to this Good Shepherd?

How could you best remain aware of His presence each day?

Day 6

Spend some time carefully pondering each of the phrases we have engaged in Psalm 23. Flip through this devotional guide and your notebook or journal.

Which has been most meaningful to you at this point in your spiritual journey?

Which phrase has challenged you the most? (Perhaps it has been the most difficult to accept or to believe.) How might God be inviting you to explore this further with Him?

Read Psalm 100. Thank God for this summer journey of faith. Your Good Shepherd has led you all the way.

Psalm 23

*The Lord is my shepherd; I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside quiet waters.
He restores my soul.
He guides me along right paths
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;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and mercy follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord
forever.*