August 9/10, 2025

# Experiencing the Psalm – Review and Reflect

*Everything We Need Series*

**Psalm 23**

Pastor Matt Meyer

Psalm 23…Everything we need. Well, as a community, we've been on a slow and deep journey together through Psalm 23 this summer, and today that journey comes to an end. Today, we're going to look at the entire psalm together one more time and, as Ryan mentioned last week, we're going to take some time to maybe experience the psalm a little bit. I'm not going to do a lot of teaching today. Mostly I'm going to remind us of things that we've been taught, things that we've heard over the course of this summer about this psalm and about our own lives. We're going to take some time to review, some time to reflect on what we've learned and possibly how maybe we already have experienced, in some ways, our Good Shepherd that's described in in this psalm.

So, just so you can know what to expect this morning, obviously things are different. There are tables in the auditorium. I'm up here way earlier than the preacher normally is, just so you can know it's going to be different this morning. The worship songs will be interspersed as a part of our reflection together, but you'll know what you need to do and when you need to do it. We'll make sure you're aware of where we're at and help you progress through the service. I'll be up and down several times over the course of the morning, but if you want to follow along, I'd invite you to turn one more time to Psalm 23 and we'll read and reflect together. We'll look at just the first two verses as we start:

> **The LORD is my shepherd,**
> **I shall not want.** (I lack nothing; I have all that I need.)
> **He makes me lie down in green pastures;**
> **He leads me beside quiet waters.** (He settles me down.)
>
> (*NASB, Psalm 23:1-2)

Now, if you're following along, or if you know the psalm, you'll notice I added some phrases in there, right? That's because those lines speak to how we have been told what these verses mean. On the first week of this psalm, Mark Matthewson helped us understand what it was like to have God as our shepherd, and he did that by comparing it to good and bad examples of shepherds throughout the Scriptures. But our God is a Good Shepherd who provides for us. Now, in the New American Standard version that I just read, the phrase **I shall not want** can be a little bit misleading for us. Mark talked about this, because we want a lot of things in life. In fact we live in a culture that encourages us to want more, to get something else, to get the next good thing, "Here, you need this!" In fact, they help us confuse our needs and our wants. See, most of the time we live with such an abundance, and Mark shared that it can be pretty easy to confuse our needs and our wants.

Yet with God as our shepherd, we have all that we need. We lack nothing. But that doesn't mean that I have all that I need for the rest of my life today. It means God will provide what I need for today, and I can trust Him for what I will need tomorrow and the next day and the next day. He provides enough for us each day.

Now then in verse 2, I added, ***He settles me down***. Do you remember what Bryan said about this phrase? He talked about the idea that you can tell a dog to sit down or to lay down. Bryan has horses; You can't tell a horse to lie down. It just doesn't work. And, similarly, you cannot make a sheep lie down. A sheep will only lie down when the conditions are right, meaning, if a sheep has had enough to eat and is satisfied and feels safe and secure, then the sheep will find a place to lie down and rest. So that's a bit of review to start us off.

And now for the reflection part. I'm going to give you about seven minutes to have a short conversation with someone that you're sitting next to. If you're sitting alone or far away in your section, like two or three seats, and you're all by yourself, I'd encourage you to move over to somebody that's next to you in your section to have this conversation. The questions that we're going to discuss will be up on the screen. You can pick one of them. You probably don't have enough time here to discuss them both, so pick one, and your partner picks one, and you share with one another. Here are the questions:

> **How have you seen the Lord providing for you over the last three months as we've journeyed through this psalm?**

That's one question. The second question is this:

> **How have you experienced the Lord settling you down over the last three months as we've experienced this psalm?**

So, take about seven minutes. We'll let you know when we're moving into the next part of this service, but you have seven minutes to have a conversation with somebody that's next to you.

(Worship Song, singing together – "Gratitude" by Brandon Lake)

Matt: Psalm 23:3-4:

> **He restores my soul;** (He brings me back.)
> **He guides me in the paths of righteousness**
> **For His name's sake.**
> **Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**
> **I fear no evil, for You are with me;**
> **Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.**

When Ryan taught us about **He restores my soul**, you remember he took us to the story of the lost sheep in Luke chapter 15, where there's 100 sheep, and one of them wanders off and is lost. So the shepherd leaves the 99—no question at all—and he goes after the one. And when he finds it, he takes that sheep and he lays it on his shoulders, and then it says that when he finds his lost sheep, he's rejoicing! And I remember sitting right over here that morning and thinking to myself, "That's not how I think God feels about me when He finds me on wrong paths, when I've wandered off." Often I think He's stern, disappointed. But that's not the image that we're given. He rejoices when He finds the lost sheep. He rejoices, carrying it back. And when He gets home, He throws a huge party because He's found His sheep that was lost.

And then it says that he sets it on its right path. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, rejoices in bringing us back from the wrong path that we walked down as we go through life. He's not frustrated. He's not angry, When He sees us go astray, He comes to find us and rejoices over finding us and He brings us back and sets us on to the right path. But He doesn't just set us on the path and say, "Okay, here now go make it right," and puts us back in the right place. No, it says ***He leads us in the paths of righteousness.*** He goes with us. Yet sometimes as we continue on that path, just like in the psalm, the path leads **through the valley of the shadow of death.** Sometimes the path of our lives really is hard. Maybe not "our" path, but the path of one of our loved ones is really hard. It might include loss…debilitating disease…suffering…confusion…tears…doubt…pain…excruciating struggle. But no matter where our path leads, He is with us. He comforts us with ***His staff***. He protects us with ***His rod***. One writer says that this statement **…for you are with me** is the turning point in the psalm. It's as if, at this point, God walks onto center stage and David addresses Him directly. It's why the language changes from him describing God in the third person. "He does this…He does this," to "You with me." God is addressing David directly.

So I'm going to give us about five minutes to address God directly in prayer. You can use this time however you choose, but I'm going to suggest three ways. And maybe one of these three is what you need. Maybe it's something else. Perhaps this needs to be a time of confession for you because you've wandered off and you're lost. Or perhaps it's an opportunity for you to express gratitude because He has brought you back and led you in the paths of righteousness, to led you on the right path. Or maybe you're on a difficult path. You're walking a difficult path this morning in your life, and it's a few minutes to talk with God about that. So you have about five minutes to address your Savior, your Good Shepherd, directly.

(Worship Song, singing together – "This is our God" by Phil Wickham)

Matt: Psalm 23:5:

**You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;**
**You have anointed my head with oil;**
**My cup overflows.**

Our Good Shepherd is a host at a table in which He celebrates us with the most generous, lavish feast possible. When I hear this, I think about the story of the prodigal son, also in Luke 15, who runs away with his inheritance, squanders it all, comes home wasted, and his father throws a huge party. He's been waiting and watching for his son so he throws a huge party, at great cost to himself, because of slaughtering the calf and that kind of thing. The father was probably ridiculed because of this, because it was the opposite of what would have been expected in that culture. The son had brought shame upon himself and his family, yet the father didn't care.

There are many, many meals talked about in the Bible. That's just one example. Ryan talked for a while about the breakfast on the beach in John chapter 21, after Peter's failure. The apostles had all scattered during Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, but now the resurrected Jesus has come back, and He comes to meet His disciples, and He offers them breakfast on the beach so that He can restore Peter specifically.

Jesus often told stories about banquets. Jesus often ate with people at great cost to Himself, to His own reputation. Jesus ate with tax collectors. He ate with sinners. He ate with Pharisees. He would eat with whoever wanted to eat with Him. He would share fellowship with whoever they were, no matter who they were. And there's one table where Jesus was the host on the night before He was betrayed. It was a table with His closest followers, in which He instituted a meal we commonly refer to as Communion or the Lord's Supper. In fact, Jesus is still the host of this table, even today, and He prepared it at great cost to Himself.

Our invitation to the table this morning comes at the cost of the very life of Jesus Himself. In a few minutes, we will participate in the Lord's Supper together. We have the opportunity to remember His sacrifice through the elements of bread and juice this morning. We will partake of a cup that brings us life, because Jesus chose to partake of a cup that brought Him death.

Do you remember His conversation the night that He was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane? Before He was betrayed, He was in the garden, and what did He say to His father? “Let this cup pass from me,” referring to His coming suffering, His coming crucifixion. Yet, at the end of that conversation, He said, “Yet not my will, but Your will be done.” Jesus chose to take a cup of death, with crucifixion suffering, so that we could drink a cup that would bring us life.

As the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep, this is the table of the Lord. It has been made ready for those who love Him and trust Him, and for those who want to love Him and trust Him more. So come, you who have much faith, and you who have maybe just a little—a mustard seed’s worth this morning—and you who have been here often, or you who have maybe not been here for a long time. Come, you who have wandered off on a different path, and you who have been brought back. Come, you who have tried hard to follow and you who have failed. Come,

not because I invite you. It is our Good Shepherd who bids us come, and it is His will that all who want Him should meet Him and receive Him here at His table.

(Worship Song, singing together – "At Your Table" by Jared Anderson)

Communion:
Matt: On the night Jesus was betrayed, He was the host at a table with His disciples. And after the meal, He took bread and He broke it, saying to His followers, "This is My body, broken for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." As we break this bread and we crush it between our teeth, take a moment to remember that Jesus' body was broken and crushed for you. Let's partake together.

After that, Jesus also took the cup, saying, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of Me." Remember again the blood that Jesus shed on the cross for you, for your forgiveness. Let's partake together.

I invite you to pray with me:

> *Jesus, thank You that, as our Good Shepherd, You laid down Your life for Your sheep… for us…and You did so on a cross and You covered our sin. We also rejoice today that You are no longer dead, that your resurrection life brings life to us, and Your ascension sends the Spirit to us, so that we can say that You are with us…that You are leading us on paths of righteousness for Your names sake…that You do go with us through the valley of the shadow of death in our lives…that You are protecting us and comforting us. Thank You for doing all of that and more each day of our life. We pray in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen.*

Matt: The last verse of our psalm, verse 6:

> **Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,**
> **And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

Just last week we were on this verse, and Ryan unpacked the idea that the goodness and loving-kindness of God—meaning his *hesed* mercy that's found throughout—that theme, that idea of the *hesed*, lovingkindness, is the steadfast lovingkindness of God. His power, His love, associated with His covenant, works on behalf of His people. Those things—His goodness and lovingkindness—are following us but not just following us. Remember Ryan said that's not a strong enough word. They are chasing us down. The goodness and the lovingkindness of God are hunting us. They are pursuing us all the days of our lives. Now, often for me anyway, it feels like there are other things that are chasing me down: deadlines, responsibilities, fears, anxieties, sin, temptation. Sometimes it feels like my past, my mistakes are chasing me down, and those things might still be following

me, in some sense. But the good news is that those things cannot get to us, because the goodness and the lovingkindness of our Good Shepherd is chasing us down, and is a barrier between us and those things, seeking to bring blessing and goodness into our lives. And they are chasing us down all the days of our lives, and surely we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Do you hear which way that's pointing? It's pointing towards the future. So as we close out the psalm today, I'm going to give you five more minutes to consider the future, to ponder, and not just the future in general. Pick a certain time frame. I'll suggest some. Maybe it's the next school year for you, the next nine months, if that fits into your life. But maybe that's not you, or maybe it's too big. Maybe you just want to pick six months. Maybe you want to think about just the next month. Whatever time frame you choose, I'm going to give you two questions to sit and ponder, to journal about, to pray about. We'll put the two questions up on the screen for that time frame, whatever you pick.

Number one: What would it look like to walk through those days, whatever time frame you're picking, remembering and recognizing God's goodness and lovingkindness is chasing you down each day of that time frame. Or,

Number two, what specific things do you want to remember from Psalm 23 as you enter into walking through those days?

So you've got about five minutes, and I realize five minutes might seem really long. You might get two minutes into this and think, "I don't have anything else to say. I don't have anything else to think about." That's okay. Or, "My mind is running off." That's okay. Just sit in the presence of your Good Shepherd and listen, and we'll let you know when we move forward.

(Quiet music interlude)

You know, five minutes is probably not enough time to consider those questions, those ideas. So I would encourage you, if you find yourself in that place, to continue that reflection at some point with the Lord this week, in your time with Him. But I want to invite you, as we close out the psalm together, to stand with me. We're going to read the psalm together one more time. Psalm 23:

**The LORD is my shepherd,**
**I shall not want.**
**He makes me lie down in green pastures;**
**He leads me beside quiet waters.**
**He restores my soul;**
**He guides me in the paths of righteousness**
**For His name's sake.**

**Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,**
**I 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 have anointed my head with oil;**
**My cup overflows.**
**Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,**
**And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Let's sing together of the good plans God has for us.
(Worship Song, singing together - "He Has Good Plans" by Red Rocks Worship)

At the very beginning of the summer, the beginning of the psalm, Mark Matthewson challenged us to read this psalm every morning and every evening, and maybe by the end of the summer, you would have it memorized. I don't know if that's happened for you or not. My Life Group has this text stream that goes on, and the guys are like, "Okay, I'm almost there. I've finally got it. I'm able to do it without pause," and I think that's wonderful. But as a very special benediction for you, this morning, we have a video of Tyler Sheet's daughter. Tyler is one of our youth pastors. This is Opal Sheets reciting Psalm 23 for you from memory, from the New Living Translation.

(It's worth watching on-line but for our transcript, the adorable pre-school version, is a little difficult to translate, so we'll let you read the NLT on your own.)

So I want to encourage you. Our journey together on the weekends through Psalm 23 ends today but your journey with Psalm 23 doesn't have to. I quote this psalm to myself almost every day, because I find, over the course of my life, different stanzas mean different things at different times in my life. So I would encourage you to continue this practice of reading it or quoting it, at the beginning of your day, or at the end of your day, whatever is best for you. But now, as we go out today, I want to send you forth, remembering that He told you that He is with you, and that His goodness and His lovingkindness are chasing you down all the days of your life. Amen.

Scripture taken from the NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION BIBLE
Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988, 1995
The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.
Lincoln Berean Church, 6400 S. 70th, Lincoln, NE 68516 (402) 483-6512
Copyright 2025–Matt Meyer. All rights reserved.