

## Psalm 23 - The Literal Fulfillment

### Introduction:

1. Psalm 23 is a very famous and well-loved psalm. Even many unsaved people can quote part or all of Psalm 23. Its words are touching and tender.
2. It is written as a sheep boasting about his shepherd and what his shepherd has done for him. It is intimate and personal as it begins, "*The Lord is **my** shepherd...*"
3. Sheep are very high maintenance animals to care for. They are very prone to wander, stray, vulnerable to attack, defenseless, not to mention they tend to be stubborn, doing the same stupid things over and over again. Remember the verse, "*All we like sheep...*"
4. Sheep need a shepherd or they don't stand a chance, but they need a good shepherd - a shepherd who has their best interest at heart.
5. In the Bible, the nation of Israel is constantly compared to sheep. Their leaders were given the responsibility to care for the sheep of Israel, but had failed miserably. **Ezekiel 34:1-10** gives a vivid depiction of how evil Israel's leaders (shepherds) were.
6. What will be God's response to this? God will personally care for and shepherd His flock. He will personally save His flock and establish a King from David's loins to be their shepherd. This, of course, is the Lord Jesus Christ.  
**Ezekiel 34:11-12, 22-24**
7. This will occur when Christ returns to earth and establishes Israel's kingdom on earth. Most people do not realize that Psalm 23 is actually a prophetic psalm that anticipates this day when Christ will return and deliver His flock, the believing remnant of Israel.
8. Christ came to Israel and declared Himself to be the Good Shepherd (**John 10:11**), but they rejected Him. He rose from the dead as the Great Shepherd (**Hebrews 13:20**) and will one day return as the Chief Shepherd (**1 Peter 5:4**). When He returns, Psalm 23 will be literally fulfilled.

### Israel will have the Lord as their shepherd and never lack again. vs. 1

1. David said, "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want* (lack)."
2. The verb tense indicates that David is anticipating a future condition based on the present fact that the Lord was his shepherd. We know that David had been hounded by Saul and Absalom. He had known intense trials, deep poverty, and acute hardship.
3. So David is looking forward in faith to a day described in **Ezekiel 34:11-14, 23-24**.
4. As this psalm continues, it will embellish the thought, "*I shall not want.*" It will demonstrate how Israel will never lack or have need again when they finally turn to Christ and recognize Him as their shepherd.

### Israel will experience total peace. vs. 2

1. Israel's history has been one of turmoil and intense unrest. Notice the peace and rest that the shepherd gives in verse 2 - "*lie down*", "*still waters*"

2. In the Tribulation, Israel will be under the most vicious attack in its history. When it looks as if all hope is gone and Israel is about to be destroyed by the anti-Christ and his armies, the Chief Shepherd will appear.
3. Christ will personally rescue the believing remnant of Israel and will personally lead them from their places of hiding to their own land.  
**Jeremiah 31:8-11, 23:3-4, 6-8**
4. God will cause them to lie down safely. vs. 2; **cf. Ezekiel 34:15, 28**

**Israel will be given complete righteousness. vs. 3**

1. Israel has always been a rebellious lot. They have continually spurned God's principles of righteousness.
2. When Christ, the Chief Shepherd, appears, notice what He does for His flock.  
**Jeremiah 31:31-34**
  - God will completely and totally take away their sin. **cf. Ezekiel 36:25, 37:23**
  - God will place His law in their hearts and minds. **Ezekiel 36:26-27, 37:24**
  - Christ will be their Shepherd/King, and do you know what He is called? - The Lord our Righteousness. **Jeremiah 23:6**
3. Sin will never be an issue again. He will bring full restoration to their souls and lead them in paths of complete righteousness.

**Israel will receive divine comfort. vs. 4**

1. Prior to Christ's return, Israel will go through a time of trouble, darkness, and gloom like they have never experienced before. **Joel 2:1-2; Jeremiah 30:7; Matthew 24:21**
2. Israel will be forced to flee from the wrath of the anti-Christ. The believing remnant will flee into the wilderness as they did when they left Egypt. How was this wilderness described in **Jeremiah 2:6?** - the "*shadow of death.*" The phrase, "*shadow of death,*" is associated with darkness and oppression. **Jeremiah 13:16; Matthew 4:16; Luke 1:79**
3. God comforted Israel during this time by shepherding them, caring for them, and feeding them. This is exactly what He will do again for Israel just prior to His return. **Hosea 2:14; Revelation 12:13-14**
  - **Deuteronomy 32:9-14** is a beautiful description of the loving care and comfort that Israel will receive from the hand of the Good Shepherd.
4. When you are walking in somebody's shadow, it means you are real close to him or her. Israel will walk in the valley of death's shadow, but they won't fear because their Good Shepherd will personally take care of them. **Jeremiah 31:1-2, 25-26; Ezekiel 34:11-12, 3:31**

**Israel will receive a table of blessing and divine favor. vs. 5-6**

1. When Christ returns, He will gather before Him all nations. The believing remnant of Israel and her friends will receive divine blessing and her enemies will receive everlasting punishment. **Matthew 25:31-46**
2. Israel will literally receive the table of God's blessing in the presence of her enemies. **Ezekiel 34:13-16**
  - The table is their land that God will give them. **Ezekiel 36:24**

- The oil of God's Spirit will be given to them. **Ezekiel 36:27**
  - Israel's cup will run over with God's blessing. **Ezekiel 34:26-27, 36:30, 33-38; Jeremiah 31:12, 14**
3. They will dwell in God's house forever! We apply this to heaven, but God will actually take His house and bring it down to them on earth. **Ezekiel 37:26-28**

## Life With the Good Shepherd: True Life Psalm 23

### Introduction:

1. This morning, we have opened our Bibles to the most well known psalm in God's Word. You hear it quoted at funerals often and even frequently on television programs.
2. It opens with the words, "*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*"
3. As we turn to the New Testament, it gives us insight into exactly Who this shepherd is. Jesus came to the earth and proclaimed to Israel, "*I am the good shepherd.*" Jesus is also referred to as "*the great shepherd,*" and "*the chief shepherd.*"
4. But David proclaims, "*He is **my** shepherd!*" It is as if David is literally boasting aloud, "Look at Who my shepherd is - my owner - my manager."
5. Keep in mind that David was a shepherd himself and he knew that the welfare of any particular sheep depended on the type of man who owned it. Some men were gentle, kind, intelligent, brave, and selfless in their devotion to their sheep. Others were very neglectful, cruel, and the sheep would struggle, starve, and suffer endless hardship.
6. Jesus Christ is the One who created the heavens and the earth with great power, yet stepped out of glory and came into our world and died on the cross for our sins.
7. It is with a sense of awe and deep satisfaction that I can say, "The Lord Jesus Christ is my shepherd - my owner - my manager." I belong to Him. I'm one of His sheep!
8. Being the shepherd spoke of control. The sheep's present welfare and future destiny was in the hands of the shepherd. Let me ask you a question: "Who is in control of your life? Who do you belong to?" **Illustration:** abused sheep
9. When Jesus walked the earth He told a group of people, "*Ye are of your father the devil.*" They were under his control. Why would people choose to be under the rule of a tyrant when they could come into Christ's sheepfold and be one of His sheep?
10. When David boasted that the **Lord** was his shepherd, he said, "*I shall not want.*" This simply means to lack. David knew that being one of the Lord's sheep meant total and complete provision. He would have everything he needed.
11. Are you one of Christ's sheep today? Is He your shepherd? In other words, is He in control of your life? If not, you should surrender to Christ today and come into His care and His sheepfold. You say, "Why should I allow Christ control of **my** life?"

### First, because Christ gave His life for you.

1. Let's read Christ's words in **John 10:11-15** and notice two owners are in view.
  - The good shepherd - he lays down his life for the welfare of the sheep.
  - The hireling - he pretends to care about the sheep, but leaves them during time of adversity, and the sheep have to fend for themselves and run for their very lives.
2. The picture is clear. Satan is the hireling. Satan pretends to care. He leads the sheep down the path of sin and evil under the guise of having a good time, but when adversity comes and you find yourself caught in the web of sin, he leaves you to your own destruction.

3. Christ, on the other hand, has so much love and concern for you that He came to this earth and laid down His life for you. He took every one of our sins and paid the penalty of death that we owed so that we could escape eternal death and be set free. **Romans 5:6, 8; Galatians 1:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:10**
4. David said, *"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."* Christ gave His life for you and there is no lack in His provision. Jesus paid it all. He left nothing undone. There isn't one sin that He didn't pay the price for on that cross. **Hebrews 9:26b**
5. When Satan is your owner, he keeps you on the religious treadmill of performance. No matter what you do, it is never enough.
6. But Jesus Christ died for your sins and said, *"It is finished."* When you come to Him in faith, He washes away every sin with completeness and finality. There is no lack!

### **Second, because Christ gives His life to you.**

1. As the good shepherd, He died for us, but as the great shepherd, He rose from the dead. **Hebrews 13:20**
2. Here is the exciting part - When you come to Jesus in faith, you actually receive Christ's resurrection life the moment you believe on Him. **Romans 8:9-11**
3. Before we come to Jesus, we are said to be alienated from the life of God. Satan is our owner and he tries to convince us that we are really **living** as we enjoy the pleasures of sin. But, in the end, we are left lifeless and as sickly sheep in burnt pastures.
4. But the great shepherd rose from the dead and gives us His very life. He shares with us His very life - all that He is. Once you are saved, God's Word describes you as being "in Christ." Jesus Christ himself is resident in the believer. **Colossians 1:27**
5. Like David, I can say, "I have the shepherd Himself living in me - I shall not want. He didn't give me an angel or a cherub from heaven. He imparted unto me His very life."
6. Why would you want to feed on the burnt up, filthy, rotten fields of Satan when you can come to Jesus and surrender to Him? He is the good shepherd who died for you to rescue you, and the great shepherd who takes His resurrection life and gives it to you freely.
7. If you have the life of Jesus within you, you can navigate successfully through any trial or difficulty in this life.

### **Third, because Christ will live His life through you.**

1. When we receive the life of Christ, we are said to be "complete in Christ." **Colossians 2:9-10**
2. David said, *"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want."* Likewise, we can say, "I have Christ and I am complete in Him. I lack nothing. He has given me everything I need to live victoriously."
3. Christ gave His life **for** you so that He could give His life **to** you in order that He might live His life **through** you. **Galatians 2:20**

4. Have you ever wondered why famous, rich, affluent people in this world remain poor in spirit, shriveled in soul, and unhappy in life? It is because they are held in the iron grip and heartless ownership of the wrong master. They have no real life.
5. But then there are others who may not have much of this world's goods, they struggle to keep their head above water, they have known true hardship, yet they are permeated by a deep, quiet, settled peace that is a beauty to behold.
6. It's because they are under the shepherd's care and they know it. They have entrusted themselves to Christ's control and they have found true life, true contentment.
7. As you surrender to the shepherd, a quiet, calm, peaceful assurance floods your heart and mind. Through every trial that life may throw at you, it is just another opportunity to manifest the life of Jesus. **2 Corinthians 4:8-10**

**In Conclusion:**

1. Can you honestly say today, "*The Lord is my shepherd?*"
2. Have you placed your faith and trust in Him? Have you received His life? If so, you can truthfully say, "*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*"
3. He is all I need. Christ is sufficient in every situation. **Philippians 4:12-13**
4. How could Paul say this? Because he knew the good shepherd.

## Life with the Good Shepherd: Rest and Contentment Psalm 23:2

### Introduction:

1. The Bible likens mankind to sheep.
  - **Isaiah 53:6** states, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way...*"
  - Paul likens the church to a flock of sheep in **Acts 20:28**.
2. Sheep do not just take care of themselves, but require, more than any other livestock, endless attention and meticulous care.
3. All of us, like sheep, have gone astray from God. All of us have violated God's righteous laws, and we deserve death. But there was a man who came to this earth named Jesus Christ and declared, "*I am the good shepherd; I lay down my life for the sheep.*"
4. Jesus Christ gave His life on the cross so that we could come into His family and belong to Him and be under His guidance and care.
5. David, in Psalm 23, is boasting about the fact that the Lord was his shepherd. If we have trusted Jesus Christ, we can boast the same thing today. In this psalm, David is glorying about what life with the good shepherd is all about.
6. If you don't know Christ today, I encourage you to give your heart and life to the good shepherd. If you **do** know Him today, it is imperative that you yield to Him. Take your hands off the steering wheel of your life, and give Him your total surrender.
7. Why should you give to Christ (the good shepherd) your total surrender?

### First, because the good shepherd provides rest.

1. Sheep are very restless animals by nature. They are very fearful and skittish. They are easily agitated and tend to be jealous and contentious with each other. It is very difficult for sheep to relax and lie down in peace.
2. Does this describe you in any way this morning? Is your heart full of anxiety and stress? Is your life characterized by friction with those around you? Are you fearful and pacing the floor, so to speak?
3. Notice what David says about life with the good shepherd, "*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures...*" The picture here is one of the flock lying down in total peace, rest, and tranquility. Why? Because they know they are in the care of the good shepherd.
4. Sheep are very timid and easily panicked. A rabbit bounding from behind a bush can stampede a whole flock. Not only this, sheep can be given to tension, rivalry, and cruel competition with each other.
5. Isn't this true in our lives? Aren't we like sheep? Most of our problems that bring agitation and anxiety stem from two sources:
  - Our own inward fears and insecurities.
  - Friction in our external relationships with others.
6. Did you know Christ desires to give your troubled heart rest today? (**John 14:27**) I can either have **my** troubled heart or I can have Christ's peace.
  - "Troubled" means "to stir or agitate."

- You have heard the expression, "He is stirring the pot." In other words, he is creating turmoil. Many people live in a state of constant turmoil.
7. Listen to the words of Jesus in **Matthew 11:28-29**. The question is, "Will you come to the good shepherd and surrender to Him?" He desires to give you:
    - Peace **with** God. **Romans 5:1**
    - The peace **of** God. **Philippians 4:6-7**
  8. I know from experience that when I am in control and calling the shots, fear, anxiety, stress, friction, etc. mark my heart and life. But when I rest in the hands of Christ, He fills my heart with an inexplicable peace and rest. I experience the peace **of** God.
  9. One of the marks of a mature sheep in Christ's flock is that of a quiet inner peace, regardless of the circumstances that may surround you. As you feed on the green pastures of God's Word and grow in your relationship with Christ, you learn that in all things you can trust the good shepherd. He makes you to lie down in peace.

### **Second, the good shepherd provides contentment.**

1. Sheep require water. In fact, their health, vitality, strength, and vigor depend on ample supplies of water. When sheep are thirsty they become restless and set out in search of water to satisfy their thirst.
2. If they aren't led to the good, clean water supplies, they end up drinking from polluted potholes where they pick up internal parasites, diseases, and germs.
3. But the shepherd is the one who knows where clean life-giving water can be found. As they trust the shepherd, he leads them to these places of life and refreshment.
4. You have a physical body that needs water to survive, but you also have a soul and spirit within you that is thirsty and needs spiritual water. Unfortunately, Satan has a lot of mudholes that he convinces people to drink from to try quench that thirst.
  - The most obvious is the mudhole of sin. But there is also the mud hole of education, the mudhole of money - his favorite is the mudhole of religion.
5. Many people are drinking from these mudholes hoping to find inner contentment, but they never satisfy. There may bring a temporary pleasure, but just like with sheep, dirty water brings nothing but more problems.
6. Did you know that there is a place where you find spiritual water that is clean, refreshing, and will bring you true contentment? **John 4:9-14**
7. Christ is the good shepherd and He made it clear that the thirsty souls of men and women can only be fully satisfied when their thirst for spiritual life is fully quenched by drawing on Himself. "To drink" in the Bible simply means "to take in, accept, and believe."
8. When David said that the Lord (his shepherd) leads him beside the still waters, he is saying that the Lord is the One who knows where the still, quiet, deep, clean, pure water is to be found. Then Jesus came along and said, "**I am** the good shepherd and I am the living water all in one. Life-giving water is found in me."
  - You can look for contentment in money, material possessions, physical pursuits, sinful activities, fame, power, etc., but the living water that satisfies is only found in one place - in Christ.

9. When you drink in Christ - in other words, when you accept Him and believe on Him - His Spirit comes to live within you, and you have an endless supply of life-giving water to draw from the rest of your life. **John 7:38; Galatians 2:20**
  - **Illustration:** stubborn sheep drinking from mudholes
10. Will you turn to Christ today? Will you place your faith and trust in Him? Allow Christ to satisfy the thirst in your spirit for true living water.

**Life With the Good Shepherd**  
**“Picking Us Up and Leading Us On”**  
**Psalm 23**

**Introduction:**

1. Psalm 23 is all about a sheep in the good shepherd’s care. As a sheep, David is boasting of how wonderful it is belong to the good shepherd. He is speaking metaphorically, of course.
2. Jesus declared, *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.”* Listen to the words of Christ right before He uttered those words.  
**John 10:7-10**
3. My friend, there is nothing like being in the care of the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. He gave His life on the cross so that we could be part of His sheepfold. This is the kind of shepherd that I want in control of my life - a shepherd who would lay down His life for me so that I could have life.
4. Why would I want to graze on the barren, burnt up pastures of Satan and this world system when I can be in the care of the good shepherd? If you have never yielded control of your life to Jesus Christ, isn’t it time to turn your life over to Him? You say, “Why should I take my hands off the steering wheel of my life and give Christ control?”
5. In this psalm, David is boasting of the benefits of having the good shepherd in control. This morning, let’s look at verse 3 and see two powerful reasons to give Christ control.

**First, the good shepherd is there to pick us up when we fall.**

1. The circumstances of life can knock you down. Job said, *“Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble.”* **Job 14:1**
2. Did you know that sheep can be cast down? A cast sheep is a very pathetic sight. Lying on its back, feet in the air, it flays away frantically struggling to stand up, without success. Sometimes it will bleat for help, but generally it lies there in frustration, unable to help itself.
3. If the shepherd does not arrive within a reasonably short time and restore that cast down sheep, the sheep will die. This is why the shepherd keeps track of His sheep, and if one is missing, off he goes to find and restore that sheep that is cast down somewhere.
4. As you contemplate a cast sheep (on its back frantically trying to get back on its feet), does that picture describe you at times in your life? As you look into the Bible, you find that this was true of some of the greatest saints in God’s Word. David knew what defeat was. Moses ended up on the back side of a desert. Daniel ended up in a lion’s den. Samuel’s sons broke his heart.
5. Paul knew what it was to be cast down (**2 Corinthians 4:8-9**), yet he knew he was not destroyed. Why? He was in the care of Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. When we find ourselves cast down, Jesus stands ready to restore.
6. Sometimes Christ will work through another brother or sister in Christ to restore us when we are cast down. (**Galatians 6:1** – restore; to set a broken bone) We all

have those times when we feel like a cast sheep. This is where the local church is so crucial – having people who love you and care about you.

7. Sometimes, as we go through life, we find ourselves out of joint, cast down, with feelings of defeat and discouragement, and Christ will take His Word and use it to restore our soul. **Illustration:** After Peter sinned against Christ, along came Christ to restore Peter back to a place of useful service. **John 21:15-17**
8. Jeremiah knew what it was to be cast down, but there was the Lord to restore his soul. **Jeremiah 20:8-9**
9. Have you ever felt like there was nobody to help you? You feel all alone. Paul knew what this was like, but listen to Paul's testimony in **2 Timothy 4:16-17**.
10. There are many reasons why we find ourselves as a cast sheep. Whether it's sin, bad choices, or just the trials of life, Christ cares about you (**1 Peter 5:7**). He will never leave you nor forsake you. Christ loves to take His cast sheep and restore them in soul and heart.
  - **Illustration:** How the shepherd helps a cast sheep.

### **Second, the good shepherd leads us on to new heights.**

1. One shepherd said, "Sheep are notorious creatures of habit. If left to themselves, they will follow the same trails until they become ruts, graze on the same hills until they turn to desert wastes, pollute their own ground until it is corrupt with disease and parasites."
2. For this reason, sheep must be kept on the move. It is crucial to their well-being. The shepherd makes sure that he is constantly leading the sheep to new ground.
3. This is precisely what the shepherd/king David had in mind when he said that the good shepherd "*leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*"
4. Jesus Christ loves you so much that He will save you right where you are in whatever condition you may be in. But likewise, once He saves you, He loves you too much to leave you in that condition. **Illustration:** maniac of Gedara
5. God's plan is to lead us in paths of righteousness. He wants to take us to new ground. The problem is that people tend to be like sheep. We tend to be stubborn and resistant and want to cling to the same old habits that we have seen ruin other lives. **Isaiah 53:6**
  - Turning to my own way simply means doing what **I** want, what **I** desire.  
**Proverbs 14:12**
6. Jesus, the good shepherd said in **John 10:9**, "*I am the door: by me....*" Jesus saves us, but then desires to lead us to green pastures where we can grow and be spiritually healthy. He wants to lead us down those new paths - paths of righteousness.
7. But many times, we don't want to enter in. We don't want to be led down new paths of righteousness. We want to do it **our** way and we keep grazing on the same old land until finally it leads to our destruction.
8. When you got saved, at that moment, God placed His Spirit in you to begin leading you down a different path. **1 Corinthians 12:2; cf. Romans 8:14**
9. Do you know how God's Spirit leads you down paths of righteousness today?  
**Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17**

10. As a loving shepherd has to cut away the old wool that is weighing the sheep down, matted with mud, manure, burrs and other debris, the Holy Spirit takes God's Word and begins to cut away that which only hinders us and will cause us to be a cast sheep.
11. As you yield to Christ and take in and digest God's Word, the Holy Spirit begins to transform and change you, and take you down paths of righteousness that you could have never dreamed of.
12. Then, all of a sudden, you look back to what you were, and you say, "Wow, I'm not the same person I was a year ago." The good shepherd has led me down paths of righteousness." **Galatians 4:19**

**In Conclusion:**

1. Why does the good shepherd do this? So that we can point to ourselves and boast of what we accomplished. Look at the end of verse 3. He does it "**for his name's sake.**"
2. Your life begins to reflect the person and the glory and the power of your shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Corinthians 4:10**
3. Whenever the shepherd opens up a gate to new pastures, the sheep are filled with excitement and will literally kick up their heels and leap with delight. They may not like leaving old ground they are comfortable in, but once they are led to new ground, nothing can compare with it.
4. Christian, are you a cast sheep today? The good shepherd stands ready to help. Christian, maybe you are just stagnant on the same old ground. Isn't it time to allow the good shepherd to lead you to new heights?

**Life With the Good Shepherd**  
**“Walking Through the Dark Valleys of Life”**  
**Psalm 23:4**

**Introduction:**

1. Fear is a terrible emotion. It can literally paralyze you. **1 John 4:18** declares, *"Fear hath torment."*
2. People have all kinds of fears. Some have financial fears, some health fears, some have fears regarding relationships, some fear death, some fear living, some fear losing their job, and on and on we could go.
3. The reality is this - Christians are not exempt from any of these things. Christians have health problems, lose their jobs, have relationship problems, have financial problems, etc.
4. But here is the difference - a person who knows the good shepherd, Jesus Christ, does not have to be overcome with fear when going through any of these valleys of life.
5. Here in Psalm 23 David pictures himself as a sheep who has the Lord as his shepherd. In verses 1-3, David boasts of all the benefits of his position, but in verse 4, he begins to personally address the Lord, his shepherd. Let's read verse 4.
6. In the Bible, the phrase *"shadow of death"* speaks of darkness and oppression. David is speaking of a deep, dark valley where there seems to be no ray of light and you feel like you are not going to make it. Have you ever been in a valley like this?
7. But then the psalmist declares, *"I will fear no evil."* Why? *"For thou art with me."* Notice in this psalm, the sheep doesn't die in the valley. The good shepherd leads and navigates the sheep **through** this dark valley.
8. Christian, the valleys of life need not be dead-end streets. You need not fear the dark valleys of life. The disappointments, frustrations, discouragements, and dilemmas of life, though they be shadowed valleys, need not be disasters. They can actually be the road to higher ground in our walk with God.
9. If you belong to the good shepherd, you can walk victoriously through the deepest, darkest valleys of life. Why? Because God is with you in two very real ways, which we see depicted in **Psalm 23:4**.

**First, you possess the rod of God's Word.**

1. The rod was a vital part of the shepherd's equipment. Shepherd boys would carefully select their rod and then practice for hours learning how to throw it with amazing speed and accuracy. It was his main weapon of defense for himself and his sheep.
2. Do you remember what Moses was before he became the great leader of the nation of Israel? He was a shepherd. When Moses went to Israel and to Pharaoh to convince them of his divine commission and authority, what did he use? His rod.
3. The rod symbolized and demonstrated the spoken Word and revealed will of God. It carried the impact of *"Thus saith the Lord."* It was called the rod of God.
4. Today, the Scriptures are God's rod. They are the extension of God's mind and will to mortal man. Just like Moses' rod, God's Words are powerful, potent, and convicting.

- The Word of God is likened to a sharp sword (**Hebrews 4:12**), a hammer (**Jeremiah 23:29**), a lamp (**Psalms 119:105**), a complete diet of food, etc.
5. This world can get confusing and chaotic. As you go through the ups and downs of this life, you'd better have something sure, steadfast, and reliable - a place where you can go and get absolute truth on which to base your decisions and attitudes.
  6. What a comfort to know I have an authoritative, clear-cut, powerful instrument by which to conduct myself through the valleys. I have the rod of God's Word.  
**Psalms 119:49-50, 54, 92**
  7. When Jesus went through a 40-day wilderness time period, Satan tried to exploit Christ during a time of physical weakness. Do you know what Christ used to counter Satan's attacks? The rod of God's Word. **Matthew 4:1-11**
  8. When going through the valleys of life, and darkness seems to be surrounding you, what a comfort to know that I have the light of God's Word, and in it is divine power.
  9. When going through dark valleys in this life, I will fear no evil. Why? God is with me through His written Word. I possess the mind, wisdom, and power of God.

**Second, you possess the staff of God's Spirit.**

1. The staff is an instrument used uniquely for the care and management of sheep. It is shaped and designed for the needs of sheep. It is used for their benefit.
2. One shepherd said that no other single word can better describe its function on behalf of the flock than that it is for their **comfort**.
  - Picture a staff – a long, slender stick often with a hook on the end. The shepherd used the staff to comfort and guide the sheep.
3. Who in the Bible is identified as the Comforter? The Holy Spirit. **John 14:26**
4. Christ said that the Holy Spirit would come and guide us into all truth.  
**John 16:13-14**
5. The moment that a person trusts Christ, Paul taught us that God's Holy Spirit immediately comes and takes up residence inside our spirit. **Ephesians 1:13**
  - In fact, in **Romans 8:9** calls Him the Spirit of Christ.
6. The staff of God's Spirit takes the rod of God's Word and makes it real to our hearts and minds. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual understanding and makes the life of Christ (our shepherd) real, personal, and intimate.
7. No matter what trial I face or valley I go through, God's Spirit is there, bringing to mind the fact that I belong to Christ and nothing can separate me from His love.  
**2 Corinthians 1:21-22**
8. As I yield myself to God's indwelling Spirit and read God's Word, the Holy Spirit makes it alive and vibrant in my heart, and brings comfort and assurance. As I walk through the dark valleys He calms me down and brings peace. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**
9. Sometimes a sheep would find itself caught in the brambles of a bush where it had pushed to find a mouthful of grass. The thorns hook its wool and it can't possibly get loose. It is entangled. The shepherd uses the staff to free it from its entanglement.
10. Many times, when we are going through a dark valley, we will make decisions and do things that are contrary to God's Word and are not good for us. We can get entangled with the affairs of this life. This is when God's Holy Spirit comes and

takes God's Word and brings conviction to our heart and says, "No, child, this is the way."

**In Conclusion:**

1. The shepherd many times has to take the sheep through valleys in order to get to the high ground where the richest fields are.
2. As the Lord's sheep, we are not exempt from the valleys of life. Sometimes they are dark and the shadow of death seems to hover around us.
3. What a wonderful thing to be able to say, "The Lord is my shepherd." As our shepherd, He has made provision for our every need when walking through the valleys of life.
4. God has given us the rod of His Word and the staff of His Holy Spirit. As we walk through the valley we can boldly say, *"I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."*
5. Even when a believer has to walk through the valley of death (not just the shadow), it is nothing to be feared because Christ has taken the sting out of it. Death isn't a period at the end of the sentence; it is simply the comma that leads us to eternal life.
6. Jesus said, "He that believeth on me shall never die." We walk right through the valley of death and when we come out on the other side, heaven is our eternal home!

## Life With the Good Shepherd "A Life Like No Other"

### Introduction:

1. I cannot imagine what my life would be like apart from the good shepherd. I know the direction my life was heading, and I shudder at the thought of where I might be today if I didn't have Christ in my heart and life.
2. But after knowing Christ now for a number of years, I can tell you this without reservation: Life with the good shepherd, Jesus Christ, is a life like no other.
3. And this is what David is trying to get across here in Psalm 23. He says in verse 1, "*The Lord is my shepherd...*" and then he proceeds in this psalm to describe what life with the good shepherd is all about.
4. Jesus said, "*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*" Jesus gave His life on the cross for our sins so that we could come into His family and be part of His sheepfold.
5. What does it mean to belong to the good shepherd, Jesus Christ? Let's look at verse 5-6 and see exactly what it means.

### First, it means a table of blessing.

1. It won't be long and it will be Thanksgiving. As you look at the table with the turkey, dressing, etc. you think, "Wow - what a table of blessing."
2. Here in verse 5, David talks about a table being prepared. The shepherd would always go ahead and prepare the tableland of pasture for the sheep to graze in.
3. Did you know that Christ, our good shepherd, went before us, to prepare a table of blessing for us? What do I mean? Christ left the glories of heaven and came to this sin-cursed earth.
4. He entered fully and completely into the life of mankind (**Hebrews 4:15**). He encountered our sorrow and suffering, and then died our death on the cross (**Hebrews 2:9**). Why? He was preparing the tableland of blessing for us.
5. He became a curse for us on the cross so that we could have the blessings of life and righteousness (**Galatians 3:13-14**). How do I receive these blessings? By my good works and by keeping the law. Look closely at **Galatians 3:21-22, 26**.
6. It is through His cross-work that you and I have been raised to sit in heavenly places (**Ephesians 2:6**) and received all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (**Ephesians 1:3**). The good shepherd went before us and prepared a table!
7. According to these verses, I already have these things as a **present** possession. God has done this for me in the presence of my enemies - Satan and the demons of hell that are still on the loose on earth. My good shepherd prepared this table of blessing for me in the presence of mine enemies!

### Second, it means an endless supply of power.

1. The sheep would many times get insects and flies on them, and they would torment the sheep. The shepherd would apply a special oil on their heads and immediate relief would come to the sheep. Now they could finally rest.
2. In the Bible, oil is a picture of God's Holy Spirit. **Hebrews 1:9; cf. Acts 10:38**

3. When a person trusts Christ to save him, God immediately gives to that person His Holy Spirit to come and dwell inside of him. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**
4. He is there to daily (hourly) fill us with His power and provide supernatural strength to face the sometimes aggravating and tormenting circumstances of life.
5. How much of the Holy Spirit do we get when we get saved? **Titus 3:5-6**
  - This word "*shed*" is a great word. It means "to pour forth, to gush out, and to spill."
6. If you know the good shepherd today, you have the oil - His Spirit - and your cup runneth over. You have all that you will ever need. **Ephesians 3:16, 20**

### **Third, it means a position of acceptance.**

1. In this psalm we have seen all the benefits enjoyed by the flock under the skilled and loving care of the shepherd.
2. Verse 6 sums it up with one simple statement, "*Surely goodness and mercy shall...*"
3. The sheep with such a shepherd knows of a surety that his is a privileged position.
4. My friend, if you know Christ today as your Savior and you belong to Him, you have a privileged position. You ask, "What is my position?" You are **in Christ!**
5. What does this mean? Let's read **Ephesians 1:3-7**. Wow! And it is all because of the good shepherd! We are objects of His love grace, mercy, and goodness eternally. **Ephesians 2:6-7**

### **Fourth, it means a life that will last forever.**

1. As we read the end of verse 6, we see a picture here of a sheep so satisfied, so fully contented with the care it receives, and so much at home with the shepherd, that there is not one shred of a desire for change.
  - He says, "Not only is this marvelous shepherd **my** shepherd, but I get to be with Him forever."
2. My friend, when you come into Christ's sheepfold, He loves you so much that He is not letting you go. **John 10:27-29**
3. When your heart comes to trust Christ as your Savior, God gives you the gift of eternal life (**Romans 6:23**). God is not one to give a gift and take it back. **1 John 2:25, 5:11-13**

### **In Conclusion:**

1. As I said at the beginning of the message, there is no life like life with the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. I don't even want to think about where my life would be without Christ.
2. Maybe you are here today, and your life is sort of a mess and mixed up. Can I tell some good news? There is help. There is a different life - a life of rest and peace, a life of true contentment and satisfaction.
3. But this life does not exist apart from the good shepherd. You must come to Jesus in faith and realize that Christ is the answer in your life. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life.*" Jesus also said, "... *and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*"
4. Christ will gladly take you into His sheepfold today. He specializes in taking bruised and battered sheep and restoring them fully and completely.