

Psalm 23 - Trusting the Shepherd

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Preacher: Jesse Kincer

[0 : 0 0] All right, thank you. Okay, good morning, everybody. Nice full crowd today. Good to see your faces. And those of you who don't know me, my name is Jesse. I'm one of the pastors here. So glad that you are with us. Just want to briefly pause and say those who are going to be listening online, thanks for doing that. And we are in a series called Psalms. And Psalms is this amazing book of the Bible that is full of songs and prayers that God's people have been praying and singing for a long, long time, right? And kind of our goal for this series is that we would not just pray more, but we would pray more honestly, more authentically with God. We would be able to bring our true selves to God. And I don't know about you, how it's been for you. I've been really enjoying this Psalm series.

It has been helping me be more honest with God because if you're like me, you might suffer from emotional constipation. And I have found like the different Psalms are kind of like laxatives for the soul. It just helps me just get these emotions out that I am so good at repressing and suppressing. But many of us, I mean, you're probably like, many of us are like that to be perfectly honest, all joking aside. Many of us are taught growing up to be scared or ashamed of any emotions that they feel, not to let them out. It's better to be stone-faced and look like nothing gets to you. But God says, man, you know what? I created those emotions. I created those things that you're feeling. They aren't bad, they're good. And but he says like, hey, there's a way to deal and handle them well, and it's to bring them to him. He knows that he's the safest place for you to be yourself, to bring your emotions and what you're feeling. And here's why. God is more than just a sounding board where we just get to vent and get it all out. He's more than that. He is a God who guides us through our emotions too, so that we don't end up blowing up or imploding. And that often happens if we don't handle our emotions correctly or just don't deal with them. And that's why we need a God who gives us more than couch time, right? We actually need him to shepherd us, to guide us. And that kind of shepherd is described in Psalm 23. And that's the Psalm we're going to be in today. So Psalm 23, verse 1. If you have a Bible, you could turn there. There's going to be verses up on the screen as well. It says this, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down and greet pastures, green pastures. He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. 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.

[3 : 1 0] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. This is God's word. No doubt many of us have heard this Psalm read somewhere, have maybe have seen it crocheted somewhere, something like that. It's a very famous song, right? Like all the Psalms are kind of the biggest hits, prayers of God's people, but Psalm 23 might be like number one. Yeah. But for good reason. It is comforting to know that there is a God who cares for you in a way that these verses describe. It starts out by saying that God is like a shepherd to us. It says, the Lord is my shepherd. And we like that idea. We like the idea of God being our shepherd, but I would venture a guess that we don't fully understand all that this is implying.

For one thing, if he's our shepherd, that means we are sheep. And you know, the first thought of when we think of sheep, it's like the cute, cuddly, soft, fluffy animals that everybody loves, right? And they're like, hey. But you know what? It's not as flattering a metaphor, a comparison that you might think it is. Sheep are stupid animals. They are weak and they are helpless. I say this as a sheep. I'm like owning that. Like I know I'm part of God's sheep pen, right? I'm a sheep. But you know what? That's what God wants you to know about yourself.

You're a sheep. You are more helpless than you realize. Let me read a little clip. I found this on the internet and I was like, oh, this is so good. Here's a little clip from a Middle Eastern newspaper that demonstrates what sheep are like. This is like something that happened and it made the newspaper. It was so big. Hundreds of sheep followed their leader, another sheep, off a cliff in Eastern Turkey, plunging to their deaths this week while shepherds looked on in dismay. 400 sheep fell 15 meters, which is about 50 feet. I think like five stories. They plunged 15 meters to their deaths in a ravine in Van province near Iran. Shepherds from a nearby village neglected the flock while eating breakfast, letting the sheep, leaving the sheep to roam free. That's a real story. That really happened. Sheep need a shepherd, right? Shepherds weren't there. Off a cliff.

[5 : 43] Sheep are like, they look cute, but they have like no cool powers, right? If you, if your kids watch the Wildcrats, there's like creature power things that they're always talking about. I don't think sheep is ever going to be an episode they get into. Sheep don't run fast. Sheep don't have, they don't fight back. I don't even think they bite hard. They're not very big. And apparently they have no sense of direction. Sheep are good at getting eaten and getting lost. That's what sheep are good at.

So this isn't a very flattering comparison for you and me, is it right? It's most of us, when we don't, we don't want to think of ourselves as sheep or see ourselves as sheep. We're thinking like, hey, you know what? I know how to tie my shoes. I put conditioner in my hair. Like I'm not, I'm not going filming Louise off any cliffs in my car. Like that's not happening. I got this. I know what I'm doing. But, but that's not why the Bible calls us sheep. It doesn't look at it and say like, you know, you guys are pretty competent about staying alive. No, it's actually, we're, we're called sheep because we are spiritually hopeless. We don't know what's good for our souls. We don't know how to care for our souls. We don't know the right way to live. We don't know how to make the best choice in every situation we face. And often if we're honest with ourselves, our instinctive response proves to be the worst impulse. I know that's true for myself and I have a wife that could back that up a lot. But when life brings us to forks in the road, why do you, why do we often choose the one that lands us in trouble? Because like sheep, we don't know where we need to go. But the good shepherd does. Psalm 23, one to three, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Jesus is our shepherd that leads us well. You see that word lead multiple times in these verses. You know, the life of a sheep is tenuous, right? They don't have built-in GPS to find the next green pasture. And David wrote this Psalm from the perspective of a Middle Eastern shepherd.

You know, they didn't have corrals with feeding troughs back then where food came to the sheep. Actually, shepherds had to take the sheep to the food. That's how they lived. And this also happened in a desert climate. Don't think like, you know, middle of North Carolina, like it's always green everywhere, rolling hills. It's like nonstop smorgasbord of food for the sheep to eat. No, it's not those green rolling acres. The shepherds had to know where to take those sheep to those places of pasture.

[8 : 35] And that's what Jesus does for us. He's the shepherd of our soul. He knows where those green pastures are and those still waters are. And that's what he loves to do. He loves to bring us to those places where there's peace and there's calm and quiet and where our souls can be restored. And he says, lie down, rest. You know, we don't just need a shepherd that keeps us busy moving in the right direction, although a good shepherd will do that. We need a shepherd that makes us lie down too.

You know, there's something beautiful and necessary about rest that we need to discover or maybe just rediscover. And that kind of rest isn't like, hey, I'm going to take a day off and just binge on Netflix all day. That's not like rest for your soul. That's just not working.

There's a difference there. There's a big difference. Real rest is resting with Jesus in the spots that he knows will restore our soul. Now, I try my hardest to do that. I fail at it a lot, but I try to get one day a week where I can really Sabbath. That's kind of the Bible word for rest that we see quite often. And it's a day where I try my best not to pick up my phone, which is a hard thing to do in this day and age. And where our family, we don't watch TV. We don't turn the TV on that one day. We try to be disconnected from screens and we press into things like reading and praying and trying to get outside when it's not 20 degrees like today into creation and to spend time with loved ones.

That's what we're trying to do in our Sabbath. And the whole point is just to not, it's just not being

rushed on that day because life is lived at, often we live it at just a breakneck pace. It's a day just to be, to slow down and just be, be present with God in an unhurried way, unhurried way, be present with people around you in an unhurried way. And Sabbath, it's a day that's filled with this, you want to plan it so it has lots of empty space. You don't just want to like, well, let's make sure every hour we have an activity that we're going to do next because we don't want to be bored. No, it's a great time to create empty space where you might be bored.

So you can take the time to go slow and be present, to just learn how to enjoy every moment. And the good shepherd, he loves to lead us to that kind of rest. But this doesn't mean we turn and, you know, people can take that and be like, man, that's awesome. That sounds, let's see, I can just wake up and like not do anything. That sounds awesome, right? For those of us in the room who are introverts, that sounds like heaven. Like, give me a book, put me in a corner, leave me alone, like at a slow pace. I love that. Yeah, I see some hands waving out in the crowd.

But it doesn't mean we swing the pendulum all the way to the other side. All of a sudden, we have this license to lead this full lifestyle of leisure, right? God gave us one day to rest, but he also gave us six to work. I mean, he established that right at the get-go.

[11:46] So we should be taking rest seriously, but also we should be taking work seriously too. And what is the work that he calls us to do? Well, I look around the room and I see a ton of different types of people. There's Marines and there's sailors and there's doctors and there's lawyers and there's students and there's guys in the construction field. There's business owners. I mean, the list can go on and on and on. But all those callings, they have a greater calling. Like you can do those things and that's great and you should, man, work hard, but there's a greater calling that you tuck in behind. And in those callings, you're meant to bring your faith into them. No matter what we're doing, if you're a disciple of Jesus, you're meant to bring your faith into your everyday life. Bring Jesus into your work. Bring Jesus into your studies, into the school halls that you occupy. Bring Jesus into your home if you're a work-at-home mom. He's the good shepherd that leads us every day, in every moment. I think that's what the end of verse 3 is getting at.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his namesake. Like, part of that is coming to church. I'm not going to dog on that. But like, paths of righteousness, man, we wake up and Jesus, our good shepherd, is saying, hey, follow me on paths of righteousness. That happens on Monday too. That happens on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday. He leads us in paths of righteousness. righteousness. He doesn't lead us into sin. He's leading us into his righteousness. That marks every facet of our life, every hat we wear. So think about this. Think about this. What would it look like for Jesus to shepherd you through your work day or your school day, if you're at school, if you go to school, or your mom day? Whatever your typical day is busy with, whatever that is. And here's what I think that would look like. I think you and I would be compelled to walk with more awareness of God being with us, but also integrity, compassion, like realizing that we hold truth and we could share that with people. We would be humble. I think we'd be a lot more humble and servant-hearted as well, looking at ways to serve and bless others. I think that's what our day would look like more and more.

But we don't do it in hopes of getting a raise and a promotion. I'm not saying that's bad. Like, hey, get that raise and that promotion if it's coming your way. But that's not the ultimate aim of why we would behave that way. We do it for the sake of the shepherd's name. That's what it says in verse 3. It says, righteousness fits his name. Not unrighteousness. Righteousness does. And this is how you and I can just be on mission throughout the week. You don't have to stand up at lunchtime or at the conference table and start preaching a Billy Graham message. That's not like not necessarily being on mission. But there's just simple ways that we could do that. You know, the whole thing about discipleship, one of the chief things that Jesus calls his disciples to do is just bear witness. Bear witness to him. The way we act and the way we live and the way we talk, the way you interact with others, the way we're diligent and faithful, those things bear witness to what Jesus is like.

[15:07] People can see him. They can look at us and they can see like, man, that person is very different. And in the way our lives are lived and the fruits that are coming out of them, they see him. That's bearing witness. And I think it can just be as easy as just inviting Jesus at the beginning of your day. We wake up, our feet hit the floor, and before we get into our car or wherever we're going, wherever our vocation spot is, not vacation spot, vocation spot, and we just invite Jesus.

Jesus, man, I need you today. Help me. Without you, it's going to be impossible. Lead me through this day. Ask that simple prayer. Bring your faith into your work, into whatever you do.

That's how Jesus guides us in paths of righteousness every day of our lives. And sometimes that path is a hard one to follow. You know, there's a false gospel out there that implies that Jesus is the good shepherd that only leads us to green pastures and still waters, right? It's that kind of like, hey, paths of righteousness, if I follow Jesus and I'm obedient and I do everything he wants, it's just going to be green meadows and sunshine all day long, every day, 24-7. But Jesus doesn't always lead us to the places we would like to be. Psalm 23, 4, just after it says he leads us paths in paths of righteousness. So there are many paths. Here's one of them.

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.

Now we think, oh, valley of the shadow of death. That's like the last little test. Just before I die, that's going to, I think everyone's a little bit scared of that moment, right? But it's more than that. This valley of the shadow of death is more than just a physical death. In fact, the Hebrew implies like just a general deep darkness. That's what it's getting at. Like even though you walk, you may be walking through deep darkness, fear no evil.

[17:26] It's true that you and I will suffer because we follow Jesus. The good news is that we just don't suffer alone. Jesus is the good shepherd that never leaves our side. We often, I think we often, when we go through trials, we equate that with like, man, Lord, where are you at? We equate trials or troubles with God's absence. And a part of this is, I think it, you know, it makes sense because the thing we know most about God is he is our deliverer, right? This whole idea is like, man, the whole idea of salvation is that he came and rescued us. He rescued us from like our own sin.

He rescued us from the penalty of sin, which is death. And so it can be confusing than like seeing God as savior and deliverer is like, well, why am I experiencing trouble in this life then?

Why doesn't God keep us out of the deep darkness, out of the valleys of the shadow of death?

That's a good question to have, but I also think that question betrays how little we know about our hearts, how little we know about ourselves. We assume that if God kept our lives peaceful and plentiful, if it was all those green meadows and sunshine, that we just like, we would just be growing in holiness and worship. Like, Lord, just keep the blessings coming because man, I'm just going to like, that's, that's where I'm going. I'm just going to be increasing in that, but it's just not true. Like we wouldn't end up better. We'd end up more like Veruca Salt in Willy Wonka. If that's all we got is our way and God indulged us in that sense, we'd be in spoiled, entitled brats.

That's what would happen. And God knows this about us. You may not know this about ourselves, but God knows this about us. And so he purposefully brings us into trials. That's what happens.

And even like, consider this, when, when Israel got into the land, God brought them into the promised land, the land of Canaan. They've been looking forward to it for a long time, right? They came in and he went before them. All the battles they fought, they won. They possessed the land. They portioned it out. They settled down. But look at what it says. It says God left them neighbors, not just any neighbors, just angry neighbors to test their faith. Judges 3 verses 1 and 4 says this.

[19:42] It talks about this. Now, these are the nations that the Lord left to test Israel by them. That is all in Israel who had not experienced all the wars in Canaan. And then it goes on in verse 4, and it goes on to name all these nations that the Lord left, but it says in verse 4 why he did that.

They were for the testing of Israel to know whether Israel would obey the commandments of the Lord, which he commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses. Nothing exposes your need for God better than adversity in your life. And God is willing to bring you into that. Not because he hates you, because he loves you. He's a good father who is willing to treat his sons as sons. He's willing to bring us through some discipline. We need that.

Because here's the thing. When things are going well, we tend to drift away from God. We tend to do that. Not always, but that's a tendency. If things are going really well, we're just like, hey, God, we don't need you as much, not as dependent. We get more self-dependent, I think, more complacent.

And actually, that's the pattern of Israel's history that we see throughout the Bible. When things were too good for too long, they worship less, and they send more. That's what happened. And it's not that we should turn around and look at this and say, oh man, I should just hate and reject God's blessing.

If God's going to send me anything, I'd be like, no thank you. That's a temptation I can't handle. No, man, we should receive God's blessings with gratitude. We shouldn't despise them, but we have to

realize too that God has a purpose for the darkness that we walk through. Notice David's switch, how David switches his language in verses one to three. Sorry, sorry, from verses one to three and the switch that happens in verse four. So verses one to three, he talks about, he makes me lie down in green pastures.

[21 : 35] He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. All right, he's talking about God. God. He's declaring God's goodness to others, but in the valley of the shadow of death, he turns and says, you are with me. What's the change there? Now he's talking to God. See, in verses one to three, in the time of blessing and flourishing, he was talking about, and that's not a bad thing.

When things are going well and God's blessing you, you just want to, man, look what's happening. I want to share it. Look how good God is. You want to share it with others. There is nothing like a trial. There's nothing like adversity. There's nothing like going into deep darkness that shifts us and says, like, pivots us and say, no, God, I need you. I need to be with you. I need to come to you. And that's what God uses our trials for. They bring us closer to him. We realize we don't just need Jesus to be for us. We need him to be with us. And he is the good shepherd that is always with us.

The closer you are to Jesus, the more you realize the kind of shepherd he is. And even when things seem their darkest, you can still experience peace. Look at David. He notices something about this good shepherd. He notices that things that bring him peace. He says, man, his rod and his staff, they comfort me. And we have to stop and ask, like, okay, why do a couple of sticks? Sticks comfort David? Like, what is the big deal here? A shepherd's rod was used to fight off predators. He's looking at the good shepherd and he's like, man, you're the good shepherd who has a rod that beats away the wolves, who beats away those who would seek to devour me and consume me. You fight back on my behalf against my enemies. David is comforted because he knows God is able to protect him. But he's also comforted by the shepherd's staff. And the shepherd would use his staff to move sheep, keep sheep moving in the right direction. He would just gently prod them and push them with the staff. If they were going the wrong way, he would steer them back. If they're going too far, he would, like, hook them with the hook on it and bring them back in. And if little lambs were, like, stuck somewhere, he could use it to pick it up and set it gently with the mothers. That's what they would use the staff for, keeping the herd together. But it wasn't just keeping them moving in the right direction. The whole point, the shepherd was always doing that. He was keeping the sheep close to him as well. That's what was happening. And David knows his shepherd is going to keep him close with his staff. That's what's going to happen. Even though as sheep, we have a tendency to get ourselves in trouble, to lose ourselves, to wonder, here's the good news. Jesus, as the good shepherd, won't lose us. That's where David wants to be. He wants to be near God. And that's where his comfort lies. Not in the green pastures and the still waters. Now, those are wonderful times and amazing gifts.

We should be thankful for those when God brings us into rest and restoration. But the true comfort of the soul is being with Jesus and that Jesus is with us. And he's leading us through. Remember this, remember this. You walk through a trial. Jesus leads you through a trial. You don't dwell there.

[24 : 55] Jesus doesn't take you into the pit and say, hey, man, this is, let's just set up shop here for the rest of our lives. Welcome home. Here it is, deep darkness. This is going to be your life forever with me. Isn't this great? No, when Jesus is your shepherd, his dwelling place for you isn't in the dark valley. He's bringing you, he may bring you through the valley, but it's not the stopping point. He has a better place prepared for you and for me. Verse five, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. And this is what it's saying. Jesus, our shepherd, brings us into his home. He hosts us. And what does he do in his home? He exalts us.

The paths of righteousness that Jesus takes us through can be tough sometimes. But following Jesus is this pattern of passing through life, through death into life. It's passing through death into resurrection. We take up our cross before we can gain the crown. We don't get to put those things the other way around. And in one sense, David is talking about the joy of being with God in the temple. He's saying, man, I get to dwell in the house of the Lord for many days. It's kind of that Hebrew word for forever. He's thinking about that time that like, regardless of what he's going through, man, I get to be in the Lord's house. I get to be where his presence is. That's where he knew that without a doubt, God is going to be. If I show up in the temple, I know because of God's

promise and who he is, God's presence is there. And I will be able to, in other Psalms, he says, man, I've looked upon your glory in the temple. Your steadfast love is better than life, it says in Psalm 63. So David knows, and that's the place where he wants to be. That's the place he knows where God is going to always lead him to. It was a place not just of worship, but it was a place of celebration and feasting with God and before God. But so we get to enjoy that, like David says, in this life. But in another sense, David is looking ahead to the ultimate blessing and the ultimate rest, which is dwelling in God's forever house. And in this place, God does two things. He sets a feasting table for David to eat at while his enemies look at him. And the second thing he does is anoint David's head with oil. In the ancient world, to eat at someone's table was a sign that they accepted you. It was a sign of acceptance. So you see David's feasting at God's table. It's this sign that God says, yeah, you're mine. You belong in my house. You have a place at my table. And then it says his cup is overflowing with wine. It's this place of lavish joy and celebration and generosity that God is giving to him. His cup is overflowing. And Jesus, the good shepherd, he leads David to that place. He leads

David to that feasting table. But he does another thing. It says he anoints David's head with oil. And this is a, it was an ancient practice and a very interesting one. When you got invited to a dinner party, if you came in and somebody poured oil on your head, that means you were an honored guest.

That's what that meant. And so we see that Jesus brings us into his home and exalts us before our enemies. He lifts us above our station. That's what happens. And think about this. What did David do to deserve such a thing? What do we deserve to deserve such an exaltation as this? Nothing, except that we trusted the good shepherd. That's all David did. He trusted his good shepherd and he followed him.

[29 : 07] That's what we do too. David has no boast in saying that he got to lead the way and he figured it out. He knew where to go, the right path to take at all times. All he did was to submit to follow the shepherd in every season, the good, the bad, and the ugly. So in one sense, David is in God's house because the good shepherd led him, but you could also say, well, he was a sheep that followed him.

But in another sense, David was also being followed. Psalms, the first part of verse six, it says, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. I think this is a fascinating thing. We not only have a shepherd that leads us out front that we get to follow, but it's goodness and mercy is hemming us in behind and propelling us forward. We follow Jesus and we can follow Jesus because his grace and mercy never leave us alone. When it says his goodness and mercy follow me, it could also mean it's pursuing. That word there can mean pursuing.

God is always after us. The good shepherd's love and goodness and mercy is always chasing us down no matter what. And that is good news, right? That word mercy in the Hebrew is that word *chesed*.

I didn't have anything in my throat. That's how you say it. And, you know, if you were here for our Ruth series, we really unpacked what that meant. That's that word for steadfast love, that covenant love, that promised love, that love that brings us in, that God uses to bring us into his promises and show us his faithfulness. It's that love that never ends and never runs out and never stops. It's a love that is generous and committed and serves and gives in lavish ways. And so we see that here. David's saying, man, his mercy, his steadfast love, his *chesed*, his goodness, they are always pursuing me.

Not one moment in my life, but all the days of my life. And so what David is doing here, he's just very clever and subtly shifting any attention he could possibly give or any boast he could possibly give to himself as like, hey, I was a good sheep. I followed as a shepherd. And he's giving all the glory back to God. That's what he's doing. He's giving it all to God. So in the end, like him, you and I, all we have to boast in is in Jesus, how he's led us and how he's kept us. We've done nothing.

[31 : 38] We've done nothing that we get to boast in at the end of the day. We get to boast in him and him alone. And then we get to end up feasting at a table with oily heads, apparently.

Here's the thing. None of us deserve to dwell in God's house forever. None of us do. In fact, we deserve the opposite. Without Jesus, we just end up stuck in the valley of the shadow of death forever. And here's the other thing, guys. We have two enemies, sin and death. They don't want to feast with us. They want to feast on us. But here's the good news of the gospel. Jesus is the shepherd that died for his sheep. So we get to sit with him at his table in his house. That is the

mercy and goodness that follows us all the days of our lives. That is why we see him as the good shepherd, not just another good shepherd, the good shepherd. And that's why we follow him. He isn't just another good one. He's the one that died on the cross for us and the only one that died on the cross for our sins. He endured the valley of death so that we could pass through its shadow and into God's house.

And all that sin and death can do now is look at us from the outside. They have no power over us. There is no penalty that we need fear of anymore. They look at us from the outside while we're safely inside God's house, eating and feasting and rejoicing and celebrating. And that's what we get to do.

As the band comes up, how do we respond? Well, I want to say this. If you're here and not yet a Christian, man, I hope that you have heard about this amazing Jesus who was an amazing shepherd.

Like I hope that came through loud and clear. And I want to invite you, man, we're all going to face death. All of us are going to die one day. And what is your hope in that moment? What is your hope that you're just going to pass through death's shadow versus being swallowed up by it? Well, the Bible says, and Jesus says, your only hope is him. Your only hope is faith in believing that he died for your sin.

[33 : 53] That he took on death for you. And Jesus is calling you, if you don't believe that, he's calling you to put your faith in him today, to respond to him today. And the Bible says, when you believe that, when you can say without a shout of a doubt, man, Lord, I believe that in my heart and I confess that you are my Lord and my savior. It says you will be saved. That's what your response is. And I want to invite you to do that today.

Okay. Now for us in the room who are Christians, we're going to take communion together in a moment. And why don't we get ready by standing for that? But first, as we stand, let's take a moment to examine our heart, but I want us to invite God to examine our hearts as well. He's good at doing that and showing us where we need to make adjustments in our life to show us maybe where we haven't been following the good shepherd. And this isn't to make you feel bad. Actually, man, God's, this is part of God's mercy and grace following you all the days of your life. He gets to show you those things because he loves you. And you can go and you can repent where maybe you haven't been following the good shepherd. And you know what? He always forgives. He never holds a grudge. He loves you. So in that freedom and that place of grace, just go to him right now. Let's do business with God. And then I'm going to lead us in communion.

Jesus, I'm reminded in John 15, where you said, apart from me, you're saying this to your disciples, apart from me, you can do nothing. So the cry of our hearts as we've examined ourselves is Lord help.

Help us, empower us, enable us to follow you, but also to want to follow you in every area of our life that we would grow and surrender because you're good.

And you lead us well. Amen. As we take communion today, and I just want to say this, those of you who are in the room and aren't yet a Christian, man, again, we would say that this thing that we're doing is really kind of meaningless for you at this moment, just because we believe that as we're taking this in remembrance of our Savior. And we're doing it in response to remembering what he has done for us. And so while we're doing this, this is a great time for you not to just check out, but actually to consider why these people in the room are eating some bread and drinking some juice and reflect on it and what it means to put your faith in Jesus as your Lord and Savior. And but today for the rest of us, before we eat the bread and drink the cup of Jesus' suffering, I want us to consider the words of Isaiah and their meaning with regard to our Savior, both as shepherd and sheep. And then in response, we'll eat and drink together with gratitude. So Isaiah 53, I'm going to take some selections here, starting in verse 6, says this about us. All we like sheep have gone astray. We have turned everyone to his own way. And the Lord has laid on him, Isaiah's prophesying about Jesus, the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He, Jesus, was oppressed. He, Jesus, was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth.

[38 : 22] Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shears is silent, so he opened not his mouth. In verse 10, it says, yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him.

He has put him to grief. When his soul makes an offering for guilt, for our guilt, here's the good news. He shall see his offspring. He shall see his offspring. He shall prolong his days.

The will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul, he shall see and be satisfied. By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide him a portion with the many. He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors. Yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors. We remember him, our shepherd who died for us. Let's eat and drink together.