

# The Lord Is My Shepherd

*A Full Expository Sermon Outline • TheSermonOutline.com*

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## Key Scripture

Psalm 23:1 (ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

## Sermon in One Sentence

In a world of insatiable desires and persistent anxieties, we find ultimate contentment and peace in knowing and trusting that the sovereign God of the universe is our personal, all-sufficient Shepherd.

## Introduction

Have you ever felt a gnawing sense of dissatisfaction, a constant longing for something more, even when surrounded by abundance? It's a pervasive feeling in our modern age, fueled by endless consumerism, social media comparisons, and a relentless pursuit of the next best thing. We chase after financial security, professional success, relational fulfillment, and personal comfort, only to often find that even when we attain them, the deep hunger of our soul remains. This relentless pursuit often leaves us depleted, anxious, and ultimately, unfulfilled.

This insatiable want, this spiritual emptiness, points to a fundamental need within the human heart that no earthly possession or achievement can satisfy. We are designed for more than what this world offers. We are designed to find our rest, our provision, and our very identity in something – or someone – far greater. This morning, we turn to one of the most beloved and comforting passages in all of Scripture, a psalm that, in just a few profound words, offers the antidote to our modern malaise and speaks directly to the deepest longings of our souls.

The 23rd Psalm, penned by David, the shepherd-king, opens with a declaration that has resounded through generations, bringing comfort to the afflicted, hope to the despairing, and peace to the anxious: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." This seemingly simple statement is a profound theological truth, a personal affirmation, and a radical reorientation of our entire existence. It invites us to exchange our anxious striving for a restful trust, our desperate wanting for a deep, abiding contentment.

## Historical & Biblical Context

Psalm 23 is a deeply personal and theological reflection, likely written by King David from the perspective of a former shepherd, familiar with the intimate care a shepherd provides his flock, now applying that understanding to his relationship with God. David, himself a shepherd in his youth, knew the dangerous landscapes, the constant threats, and the total dependence of sheep upon their shepherd. He understood the shepherd's role in leading, feeding, protecting, and restoring. Writing perhaps in his later years, looking back on a life filled with both triumph and tribulation, David articulates a profound trust in God's faithfulness throughout every season.

The psalm is a song of confidence, a testament to God's providence and presence, even in the "valley of the shadow of death." It is addressed to the common person, then and now, who experiences the trials and uncertainties of life. The enduring relevance of Psalm 23 lies in its universal portrayal of human need and divine provision. In a culture where livestock was a primary measure of wealth and survival, the imagery of a shepherd was immediately understood. For us today, in a world far removed from sheep and pastures, the metaphor remains powerful, speaking to our spiritual hunger, our need for guidance, protection, and restoration in the complex landscapes of modern life. It transcends cultural and temporal boundaries to declare the unchanging character of God as our benevolent Guardian.

## **Main Point I — The Unwavering Sufficiency of Our Shepherd**

**Scripture:** Psalm 23:1a The LORD is my shepherd...

Our journey into Psalm 23 begins with one of the most powerful theological statements in all of Scripture: "The LORD is my shepherd." This is not merely a poetic flourish; it is a foundational declaration of who God is and who we are in relation to Him. The Hebrew word for LORD here is Yahweh (often rendered as Jehovah), the covenant name of God, the "I AM WHO I AM." It signifies the eternal, self-existent, sovereign God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This almighty Yahweh, the creator of the heavens and the earth, condescends to be *our* shepherd. This isn't just *a* shepherd; this is THE LORD as *my* shepherd. It speaks to a personal, intimate relationship where the infinite God actively guides, guards, and governs the life of an individual believer.

This truth fundamentally reshapes our understanding of God and ourselves. It moves God from an abstract theological concept to a present, active, and personal caretaker of our lives. Just as a physical shepherd knows each sheep in his flock by name, knows its temperament, its needs, and its vulnerabilities, so too does Yahweh know us. He is not a distant deity; He is intimately involved in the details of our existence. To state "The LORD is *my* shepherd" is to claim a covenant relationship, to assert personal reliance upon His character, and to find our identity not in our accomplishments or shortcomings, but in our belonging to Him. This deep, personal connection forms the bedrock of our security and contentment.

## **Main Point II — The Radical Contentment of His Provision**

**Scripture:** Psalm 23:1b ...I shall not want.

Following the profound declaration of God's identity as our Shepherd comes the revolutionary consequence: "I shall not want." In an age defined by discontent and an endless pursuit of more, this statement stands as a radical counter-cultural truth. It does not mean we will have everything we *desire*, nor does it promise an absence of struggle or hardship. Rather, it signifies a deep, spiritual contentment and an assurance that in Christ, all our *true needs* are met. It means that because the sovereign Yahweh is my Shepherd, I lack nothing essential for my physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. My deepest longings and spiritual cravings are satisfied in Him.

This contentment stems from understanding the nature of our Shepherd's provision. A good shepherd provides nourishing food, refreshing water, safe resting places, and protection from danger. Similarly, our heavenly Shepherd provides for us in ways that transcend mere material blessings. He provides spiritual

nourishment through His Word, living water through His Spirit, rest for our weary souls, and protection from the unseen dangers of sin and spiritual attack. To truly grasp "I shall not want" is to shift our focus from what we lack to what we possess in Him. It is to recognize that our greatest treasure is not found in earthly goods but in the Shepherd Himself. This profound truth allows us to live with open-handedness, generosity, and an abiding peace, regardless of our external circumstances, because our ultimate satisfaction is found in Him.

### **Main Point III — The Constant Guidance and Restoration of Our Soul**

**Scripture:** Psalm 23:3 He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The third facet of our Shepherd's care, revealed in Psalm 23, speaks to the profound spiritual work He performs within us: "He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The phrase "He restores my soul" is rich with meaning. It speaks to bringing back to life, to refreshing, to rejuvenating. Sheep are prone to getting cast down ("cast"), meaning they roll onto their backs and cannot get up on their own, leaving them vulnerable to predators and starvation. A good shepherd carefully lifts and restores such a sheep. Spiritually, we too get "cast down" — burdened by sin, overwhelmed by worry, depleted by the demands of life, or straying from the path. Our Shepherd lovingly seeks us out, lifts us up, and breathes new life into our weary spirits.

Furthermore, "He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake" underscores the Shepherd's active, intentional guidance. He doesn't just restore us and leave us to wander; He sets us on the right course. These are not merely paths of moral correctness, but paths that are "straight," "true," and "safe" for the sheep. He guides us in ways that align with His pure character, not for our own glory, but "for his name's sake." His reputation, His honor, and His loving character are intrinsically linked to how He cares for and leads His flock. This means His guidance is always good, always wise, and always for our ultimate benefit, even when the path seems challenging. We can trust His leading, knowing that His purpose is to conform us to His image and demonstrate His faithfulness to a watching world.

### **Illustration**

In the early 2000s, there was a news story about a shepherd in Turkey named Abdullatif Me■e who, along with his entire flock of 1,500 sheep and goats, dramatically plunged off a cliff. The sheep, following one another in their instinctual, almost blind obedience, began falling off a 15-foot high cliff after the first one went over. What seemed like a complete disaster turned into a miraculous story of survival. About 450 sheep died in the initial fall, crushed by those who fell on top of them. However, the subsequent 1,000 sheep that fell landed on the growing pile of dead and injured sheep, effectively cushioning their own fall. They walked away mostly unharmed, albeit shaken.

While tragic for the lost sheep, this illustrates the absolute dependence of sheep on their shepherd, and the potential danger of blind following. But more profoundly, it highlights the safety provided by a good shepherd — and how he would risk everything to prevent such a catastrophe. Our Shepherd, the Lord, goes further. He *is* the one who catches us, even when we stumble. He *is* the one who ultimately laid down His life to ensure our eternal safety. He doesn't just prevent disaster; He transforms it. Just as the surviving sheep

found a strange cushion in the bodies of others, we find our ultimate safety and rescue in the Shepherd who became the ultimate sacrifice, cushioning us from the fall of sin and death, so that we "shall not want" for salvation, for comfort, or for eternal life.

## Practical Application

- 1. Cultivate a Posture of Daily Dependence:** Begin each day by consciously acknowledging, "The LORD is my shepherd," and surrender your anxieties and plans to His loving care. Instead of striving in your own strength, invite Him to lead and provide.
- 2. Practice Spiritual Contentment:** Regularly examine your heart for areas of discontent or covetousness. Rather than focusing on what you lack, intentionally give thanks for God's provision, reminding yourself that your true fulfillment is found in Christ alone, not in accumulating more.
- 3. Engage with God's Word for Guidance:** Just as a shepherd leads his sheep to green pastures, God guides us through His Word. Dedicate time daily to reading and meditating on Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal the "paths of righteousness" He desires for you to walk.
- 4. Seek Restoration in Confession:** When you feel "cast down" by sin, discouragement, or weariness, don't hide it. Confess your struggles to God, trusting in His mercy to "restore your soul." If necessary, seek wise spiritual counsel from a trusted pastor or mentor.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does the image of God as a "shepherd" personally resonate with your understanding of God's character? What aspects of a shepherd's care are most meaningful to you?
2. In what areas of your life do you most struggle with "wanting" or feeling insufficient? How can the truth "I shall not want" speak to those specific anxieties?
3. Can you recall a time when God specifically "restored your soul" or "led you in paths of righteousness"? What did that look like?
4. What practical step will you take this week to live more intentionally under the care and guidance of "the LORD, your Shepherd"?

## Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, our good and faithful Shepherd, we thank You for Your unwavering presence and Your abundant provision. Forgive us for the times we have doubted Your care, for the times we have strived in our own strength, and for chasing after fleeting desires instead of resting in You. Restore our souls, lead us in Your righteous paths, and fill us with the peace that comes from truly knowing that because You are our Shepherd, we shall not want. Amen.

## Benediction

Now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20-21, adapted)