

His Favor, Now and Forever
Psalm 23:5-6
January 18, 2015
Tom Pennington, Pastor-Teacher
Countryside Bible Church

Well, I invite you to turn with me one last time to Psalm 23. I have thoroughly enjoyed this journey. For me it began some time ago. In fact, I guess it was back in May or June when I was away and spent a couple of weeks on my own just working my way through this Psalm, and then it sort of grew longer because I didn't have enough time in the time I was away to work through it, and then I thought it would be a great encouragement to all of us. I don't remember exactly when all of that unfolded, but it's been a great journey for me and I hope for you as well.

Let me read it for us one last time. Beginning in verse 1, "A Psalm of David," Psalm 23, he writes,

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 steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life,
And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

There's a reason this is the most favored Psalm in the Old Testament. There's a reason it is the most well known passage in the Old Testament Scripture. It's because it's words answer to the deepest needs of the human heart. We read these words and the thing we long for we find there, our Lord and His tender care for each one of us.

David spent his early years as a shepherd caring for his father's sheep so for him the image that best captured the goodness and the grace of God in the lives of those who belong to Him is the image of a shepherd. Essentially the message of the Psalm is this, because Yahweh is our Shepherd, He will always care for us and we will lack nothing that He determines we need.

David doesn't ask God for anything in this Psalm. Instead, it is a celebration. It is an expression of his confidence in God, in God's goodness, in God's care, in God's presence both in this life and in the life to come.

David builds this Psalm on a single metaphor and that is the metaphor of a shepherd king. First, he identifies the nature of our relationship with God in verse 1, in the first part of verse 1, and in the rest of the Psalm he explains that, he explains the practical benefits of that relationship. So far, we have seen: How to Think About God, One Powerful Illustration of Our Relationship with Him. This is the first half of verse 1. This is how God Himself wants us to think about Him, the illustration of a shepherd. Yahweh is my Shepherd. He is my Shepherd King.

As we've noted, the New Testament is more specific. Our Shepherd King is none other than Jesus Christ. In John 10 Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd and I lay down my life to purchase My sheep," and in Hebrews 13:20 the writer refers to "the great Shepherd of the sheep, even Jesus our Lord." He is the perfect fulfillment of the Shepherd Psalm. Jesus is, to those who are in His flock, everything that this Psalm describes the shepherd, Yahweh, is to us because Jesus is Yahweh, the second person of the Trinity. So when we say, "Yahweh is my shepherd," in New Testament terms we are saying, "Jesus is my shepherd."

Now, the rest of the Psalm reveals for us what to expect from God. In light of His being our Shepherd in the first half of verse 1, the rest of the Psalm develops six practical benefits of that relationship with Him. The second half of verse 1 sort of gives us a summary of those benefits. "I shall not want." And verses 2 through 6 detail some specific benefits. In fact, David identifies for us here six practical benefits that we will never lack because Yahweh is our Shepherd King.

So far we've considered four of those benefits. First of all, provision. We will never lack for provision. Verse 2 says, "He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters." The idea in both of those expressions has to do with sheep who not only have eaten and not only have drunk and are full, but are full to the point of complete satisfaction and they lie down and rest, and there's still more provision. This is a picture of God's care for us, both spiritually and physically. That doesn't mean physically we always have and all of God's people every day have everything they need. It means that in the scope of life God may choose to take us through lean times, but in the scope of life He always provides for His own. Provision.

We also will not lack, secondly, restoration. Verse 3 says, "He restores my soul." We saw that even this morning, didn't we, in Matthew 18, He's the Shepherd who looks and sees a sheep who has strayed and He seeks to bring that sheep back. So, when we talk about restoration we mean He causes us to return when we stray from Him into sin. He's the shepherd. He sees when the sheep strays and He's not the kind of Shepherd who is going to let one of His sheep stray and die. He's going to go find him and bring him back. That's a great comfort to me. We also mean, when we say, "He restores my soul," He recovers us from both physical and spiritual

sickness. He's the one who is the Great Physician who restores our *nefesh*, our whole being, and He is the one who revives the spirit of the weary and the exhausted. I think all of these ideas are wrapped up in this expression, "He restores my soul." Poetry always sort of summarizes a lot, condenses a lot, into a short amount of expression.

Thirdly, we will never lack direction. Verse 3 goes on to say, "He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake." We looked at this and we discovered that really two ideas are here. He guides us by His providence in our circumstances. In other words, the path you're on right now in your life is the path your Shepherd has decided. Your circumstances were marked out for you before the world began, and He's leading you down the path He wants you on, for His own sake and for yours. But it also means that He guides us by His Word and His Spirit into the right patterns of thinking and living, the paths of righteousness. Our Shepherd is going to make sure that those who are His sheep walk on the right paths.

Last time we studied this Psalm we learned a fourth benefit of Yahweh being our Shepherd King and that is, we will never lack protection. Verse 4 says, "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." For sheep in Israel, and I showed you pictures last time, dark valleys were just a reality. All of the wadis that cut across the land meant that to get anywhere in Israel the shepherd had to lead his sheep through those deep wadis and up the other side, and it meant a lot of deep dark valleys, and frankly that's a reality in life as well. Life is filled with dark valleys. Dark valleys will come in every life and we noted, dark valleys are our Shepherd's plan. These are still the right paths. When we're lying down in green pastures those are God's design for us at that moment, but the dark valleys are His design as well. It's the only way to get somewhere in Israel. The shepherd was leading his sheep somewhere, he had something in mind, he had a destination, but to get to the destination meant you had to go through the dark valley.

We noted how we should respond to those dark valleys in life and that's the idea here. By "the valley of the shadow of death," he literally means, the deep, or deepest dark valleys. It can certainly include death, and we noted that, but it's not just death. It's all of the dark valleys of life, the trials and the difficulties, that we go through. How do you respond to those things? Well, don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. David says, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil." I'm not afraid. Why? Remind yourself of Christ's presence, "for You are with me." You will never, Christian, go through a single event in your life that your Lord will desert you in. He will always be there, always has been. You may not have been aware of it. You may not have sensed it or felt it, but it's His promise, "I will never leave you. I will never forsake you." Find comfort in Christ's protecting power. "Your rod." That was an instrument the shepherd used to fend off predators, to defend the sheep. He protects His own. He will only allow to happen to you what He deems is best and nothing more. He will protect you. And find comfort in His direction. The staff, "Your staff." That was used to direct the sheep as much as anything else. As they were walking along the path, the end of that staff would

simply prod the sheep back into line and He does that with us. So this is how you respond to the dark valleys, don't be afraid, remind yourself of Christ's presence, find comfort in His protecting power, and comfort in His direction through that difficulty and trouble, out the other side.

Now, tonight we finish our study of this great Psalm and the last two verses identify two more practical benefits of our relationship with Him, and I love these. First of all, vindication. Number five, vindication. Look at verse 5, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You have anointed my head with oil; my cup overflows." Now I don't know if you've ever been reading this Psalm, and sort of had this jolt, like, wait a minute, I think something happened. I think we just left one picture and went to another picture. Many commentators think that David suddenly changes metaphors here, from the metaphor of a shepherd in verses 1 to 4 to that of a gracious host in verse 5, and that is possible, but it's not necessary to see a change of metaphor for this Psalm to make sense. As I've pointed out to you before, in the ancient world kings were often called the shepherds of their people. So the image of a shepherd works perfectly because Jesus is both our Shepherd and our King, or He is our Shepherd King in the same way that David was the shepherd king to the people of Israel. This is the reason, by the way, that the old metrical version of Psalm 23 in our hymn book reads, "the king of love, my Shepherd is." He is our Shepherd King.

Now, understanding that connection makes the image of God as a royal host in verse 5 fit seamlessly with that of a shepherd in the first four verses because most sheep don't sit down and feast at a table and they don't drink from cups, but when you understand that the picture is of God as our Shepherd King, it all fits together. It moves seamlessly between the picture of a shepherd watching his sheep to that of a shepherd king whose people are his flock. Now, once you understand that the images in verse 5 become vivid. Notice, David uses three expressions in verse 5 from a royal banquet. First of all, "You prepare a table before me." This is a powerful picture. I think sometimes we don't think enough about the Scripture and it just sort of washes over us, but think about what David is saying. He's saying, God is the Host at a royal banquet at which I am the invited guest, the honored guest.

Reminds me of another banquet God threw, one you may not have seen before. Go back to Exodus 24. Exodus 24. This is at Mount Sinai. After the founding of the nation's covenant back in chapter 19 and the giving of the law, something unusual happens. Verse 7, this is Exodus 24:7,

Moses took the book of the covenant, and read it in the hearing of the people and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!"
[*They're pledging themselves to belong to God and to be His and to obey Him.*]
So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

[Then, once the covenant is sealed, once they are God's people, God's nation.]

Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, *[they went up]* and they saw the God of Israel; and under his feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

God held a feast for the leaders of the nation. The picture here in Exodus 24 and the picture back in Psalm 23:5 is of communion and fellowship with God Himself when God says I'm having a feast and you're the honored guest.

Go back to Psalm 23. He continues to develop this idea of a banquet, of a royal feast. He says "You have anointed my head with oil." This was typical in the ancient world. Before the king's honored guests entered the banquet hall they were first anointed with oil. This was typical of all celebrations. This happened at major events, weddings, feasts, you anointed, you bathed, which they didn't do every day, they did on special occasions especially, and then they anointed themselves with oil. This was the sign of a celebration. Typically perfumes were added to an olive oil base to create this anointing oil. It was applied to the head and to the face, especially, as I said, on festive occasions, in the case of celebrations. This is a banquet. God is throwing a banquet.

The verse goes on to say, "My cup overflows." This image is obvious. It pictures the fact that the king is a gracious and generous host. He spares absolutely nothing to make his guests feel welcome and spoiled and privileged. Reminds me of Psalm 36:8, of God, the Psalmist says, "They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; and You give them to drink of the river of Your delights." God is like that, isn't He? So, verse 5 then describes a royal feast or a banquet, a celebration, and amazingly we are the honored guests of Yahweh our Shepherd King, of Jesus Christ our Lord. But this is a most unique celebration, a most unusual feast because, notice verse 5 says, it's held, "before me in the presence of my enemies." In other words, the king demonstrates whom he favors publicly and unmistakably.

In the ancient world when a king invited someone to a meal it was a sign of his favor on that individual. For example, 2 Samuel 9:7, you remember the story, "David said to Mephibosheth, 'Do not fear for I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly.'" It was the sign of the fact that the king had set his favor on Mephibosheth because of his relationship to Jonathan and Saul. So that's the idea here. By inviting us as His honored guests to a feast He has prepared, our Lord demonstrates to everyone that we are the object of His special favor.

Now, before we go any further here we need to determine who are the enemies in this verse, "in the presence of my enemies." Well, there are a couple of possibilities. They could be human

enemies. David often had human enemies because of his faith. Spurgeon wrote, “The good man has his enemies. He would not be like his Lord if he had not.” Could be human enemies, but Ephesians 6 makes it clear that even behind our human enemies, those who hate us because of our faith, and make no mistake, there are plenty of people on this planet, in this nation, in North Texas, who hate us because of our faith, but Paul makes it clear in Ephesians 6 that what drives that, our real enemy, is not flesh and blood, our real enemies are spiritual enemies, specifically, in Scripture, the devil and the demons, but also the world and the flesh.

So, I think these enemies, this term is general on purpose, could be human enemies against us because of our faith and what we believe, could be the spiritual enemies we battle, but He throws this feast for us in the presence of our enemies. So what does this feast, thrown in the presence of our enemies, describe? Well, I think it describes three things. First of all, it reminds us that our Shepherd King preserves and protects us from our enemies. You see, in the ancient world when you were a guest at someone’s table they assumed responsibility for your safety as long as you were in their home. So the idea may be that we feast with Yahweh while our enemies look on and they can do nothing about it. They just have to stand at the window and gawk, so, that person is the king’s favorite.

Turn back to Psalm 3. I want to show you what this looks like. David, when he fled from Absalom his son, he says in verse 1,

O LORD, how my adversaries have increased!
[*These are human adversaries.*]
Many rising up against me.
Many are saying of my soul,
“There is no salvation for him in God.”

And likely they’re using that word in both the physical sense and the spiritual sense. They are looking at David and they are saying, God’s not going to rescue him from Absalom and because of his sin God’s not going to spiritually save him either. God doesn’t want him.

But You, O LORD, are a shield about me,
[*Here is our King’s protection of us from our enemies.*]
You are a shield about me,
My glory, and the One who lifts my head.
I was crying to the LORD with my voice,
And He answered me from His holy mountain.
I lay down and slept;
I awoke, for the LORD sustains me.
I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people
Who have set themselves against me round about.

Why? Because my King preserves and protects me from my enemies. I think that's part of the idea of verse 5 in Psalm 23, but I think there's another part and that is, our Shepherd King defeats our enemies. David may be describing, in Psalm 23, keep your finger here in Psalm 3, but in Psalm 23 David may be describing a royal feast at which the enemies are present either as captives or as unwilling conquered guests. In other words, they're sitting there, and this often happened, they're sitting there as a defeated enemy having to eat with the honored guests of the king. In other words, our King has defeated them. He is the victor.

This reminds me of so many Old Testament texts that demonstrate that God is the one who fights for His people and who wins the victory for them. While you're here in Psalm 3 look at verse 7. David gets to this idea,

Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God!
For You have smitten all my enemies on the cheek;
You have shattered the teeth of the wicked.
Salvation belongs to Yahweh;
Your blessing be upon Your people!

He protects us from our enemies, but He also defeats our enemies.

I think there's one last idea in this expression, our Shepherd King vindicates us before our enemies. All of those who had threatened and persecuted David would be proven wrong. They would know he was right, they were wrong. That God had set His love on him. Turn over to Psalm 7. Psalm 7, and you can see this idea here again, David under siege by enemies. Verse 6, Psalm 7:6,

Arise, O LORD, in Your anger;
Lift up Yourself against the rage of my adversaries,
Arouse Yourself for me; You have appointed judgment.
Let the assembly of the peoples encompass You,
And over them return on high.
[In other words, defeat them.]
The LORD judges the peoples;
[and here's David's concern,]
Vindicate me, O LORD, according to my righteousness in my integrity that is in me.

Listen, in this world it's often hard for people to tell who's really in the right and there are times when human justice falls short of real justice. I was talking with a member of our church this morning who is enduring that very situation and in this world's justice system it's not turning out well. But the truth is, the day will come when God will vindicate all those who are His. It may happen in this world. The truth may come out in this world, but if it doesn't come out here, it will come out at the judgment. God will set everything right. He will vindicate the one who was

in the right and I think that's part of what David means when he says, He will throw a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. They will know Whose I am and Who I serve.

It's the same for us. So whether human enemies are attacking us or our spiritual enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil, God preserves and protects us while we are under attack. He defeats our enemies, both in this life and ultimately, and He will vindicate us before our enemies. Sometimes He does so in this life, but if not before, He will vindicate us as the special objects of His favor at the judgment, and even during all of that, He throws a perpetual feast, our cup overflows, and our enemies can do nothing that our King doesn't allow.

There's one final practical benefit of having Jesus as our Shepherd King, not only vindication, but we have His wholehearted devotion. This one, I think, encourages me more than any of the others we've examined, His wholehearted devotion. Look at verse 6 of Psalm 23. "Surely goodness and steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." First of all notice, "Surely goodness." Psalm 119:68 describes God's goodness this way, "You are good and You do good." In other words, God is good in Himself and since He is good in His person He is also the fountain of all good to His creatures. That's the most common sense way in which God's goodness is used in Scripture, His benevolence. Because God is good He's the source of everything good. James 1:17, "Every good thing given, every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow."

So God's goodness then has to do with His acts of kindness, with His benevolence. Who are the objects of that goodness? Well, all men, all creation, according to Psalm 147 or, excuse me, 145 talks about "God is good to all," but God is especially and uniquely good to His own. Let me show you several passages, Psalm 31:19, "How great is Your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear You, which You have wrought for those who take refuge in You." God especially reserves the acts of goodness for those who are His own. Psalm 84:11, "No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly." Lamentations 3:25, "The LORD is good to those who wait for Him, to the person who seeks Him."

But what about God's goodness especially captured the heart of David? Well, the answer comes in the next expression, "Surely your goodness and lovingkindness." Underline that word lovingkindness. It really is the key word, not only in this verse, but in the entire Psalm, but sadly its richness is obscured by its translation. As I've mentioned before, I love the NAS. It's an excellent literal translation of the original Greek and Hebrew languages, but at least for me, lovingkindness is the most unfortunate translation in the entire New American Standard. The Hebrew word for lovingkindness is *hesed*. We've talked about this some before, whenever Scripture exegetes God's character down to its most basic level this attribute is always there. It's in His self-revelation in Exodus 34:6, the one that's repeated six other times verbatim in the Old Testament. This concept became the bedrock confidence of the Old Testament believers. This

word *hesed* occurs more than 250 times in the Old Testament. Sometimes, on occasion, it speaks of the relationship between two humans, but most frequently it describes an essential characteristic of God and the relationship between Him and His people.

This word *hesed*, translated lovingkindness here, contains two equal ideas. First of all, it contains the idea of a profound love that's found only in the deepest of relationships, but it also contains the idea of a tenacious stubborn commitment to loving that person in that relationship. It is a covenant-based love. It is a legally binding promise kind of love, the kind that ought to exist in a marriage when you stand in front of God and witnesses and say, I will love this person whatever comes. It's that kind of love. It contains the ideas of both love and loyalty. In light of that, some translations use "steadfast love," which I like. Others use "unfailing love," but you get the idea, those two parts, love and loyalty. Steadfast love, this is the one unchanging certainty in an ever-changing world, God's steadfast love. Now, these two words together, His goodness and His steadfast love, they describe what you can count on, in a human level, what you can count on from the best and closest and most loving family members, and the deepest and dearest friends. That's what these words describe.

Notice what David says about God's goodness and His *hesed*, His steadfast love. First of all, he says we will experience God's goodness and steadfast love through every day of this life. We will experience these every day of this life. "Surely goodness and steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life." That's a familiar section, but the word for follow is not the normal word for follow. It's not the ordinary word that means to come behind. You know, it follows me, way behind me on some days; that's not the idea at all. Instead, the word that's used here for follow is a word that means to pursue, to chase. In fact, it's used of God's judgment pursuing the wicked, and it's used of predators pursuing their prey. David is confident, notice what he says, "Surely God's goodness and His steadfast love will pursue me like a wild animal on my trail, like the hounds of heaven." These two qualities of God will chase me down and they will pursue me, and I love this, "all the days of my life." No exceptions, "all the days of my life." We would say, "every day of my life."

In other words, and this is so important to understand, wherever you find yourself, whatever you may be experiencing, whatever your circumstances, God will find a way in that day to express His goodness and His steadfast love to you, on your best day and on your worst day. When you find yourself in the sunlit uplands and in the darkest of valleys. It's true when you're lying fully satisfied beside still waters and among green grass and it's true when you're in the dry and barren places. It's true when everybody likes you and it's true when enemies surround you. It's true when you're well; it's true when you're sick. It's true when you're full of life and it's true when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. "Surely," certainly, "our Lord's goodness and steadfast love will pursue me like a predator," it will chase me, "every day of my life."

Philip Keller writes, “How many Christians actually feel this way about Christ? Of course, it’s very simple to speak this way when things are going well. If my health is excellent, my income is flourishing, my family is well, my friends are fond of me, it’s not hard to say, ‘Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.’ But what about when one’s body breaks down? What do I say when I stand by helpless and watch a life partner die by degrees under appalling pain? What is my reaction when my job folds and there’s no money to meet the bills? What happens if my children can’t make their grades in school or get caught running with the wrong crowd? What do I say when suddenly, without good grounds, friends prove false and turn against me. These are the sorts of times that test a person’s confidence in the care of Christ. These are the occasions during which life is more than a list of pious platitudes. When my little world is falling apart and the dream castles of my ambitions and hopes are crumbling into ruins, can I honestly declare, ‘Surely,’ yes, ‘Surely goodness and steadfast love will follow me all the days of my life.’” Listen Christian, you can be confident with David that whatever comes in your life, whatever a specific day may be like, God will find a way in that day, good or bad, to express His goodness and His steadfast love. You’ll never experience a day without it. “It’ll pursue me all the days of my life.”

So, David says we will experience God’s goodness and His steadfast love through every day of this life, but he also says in verse 6 that we will experience God’s presence forever. Notice what he writes, “Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life,” that clearly is here through our lives on this planet, and “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” Now, notice the marginal reference in verse 6. Literally the Hebrew says, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days.” Now, that expression “for length of days” can simply mean through all the days of my life here on earth. In other words, it would be identical to the expression used in the first line of verse 6. It is used that way in the Old Testament, but this same expression is clearly used in other places to mean forever. Let me give you two examples. First of all, Psalm 21:4, same Hebrew expression, “He asked life of You, You gave it to him, length of days,” there’s our expression, “forever and ever.” Clearly, we’re not talking about just this life in that text. In Psalm 93:5, the Psalmist speaking to God says, “Your testimonies are fully confirmed; holiness befits Your house, O LORD, for length of days,” doesn’t mean just through my life here. Holiness always befits God’s character, His house, and therefore translate it forevermore. So clearly the word, the expression, can mean forever. In Psalm 23 David’s whole point is that God’s steadfast covenant love will never end, it has to last forever, and so here the translators were right to translate it as forever.

David was confident that God’s goodness and steadfast love would accompany him all the days of this life and he was equally confident that death itself could not alter God’s love for him. Instead, God’s steadfast covenant loyal love would transcend his brief life here and stretch into eternity. In other words, listen carefully, this is amazing, our Shepherd King, our Lord Jesus Christ, will always be devoted to us. Nothing can change His love for us. I think Paul may very well have had this passage in mind when he wrote his famous words at the end of Romans 8.

Turn there with me, Romans 8, because he deals with both of these concepts, God protecting us in the face of our enemies, verse 5 of Psalm 23, and nothing separating us from God's love in this life, death, or anything beyond. Notice Romans 8:31,

What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? [*What enemy can ever hurt us?*] Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? [*What enemy is going to ruin God's love for us?*] Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

No, verse 37, "in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us." We win the battle. Our King defeats our enemies and His love for us is constant. Verse 38,

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Believer, you have Jesus Christ's eternal devotion. He has covenanted with you. He has made a legally binding promise to love you and to be your Lord, to be the One who cares for you, to be your Shepherd, and nothing in this life, not death, and nothing in the life to come, can ever change that reality. No wonder David said, "Surely goodness and steadfast love will chase me down all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Now, I want you to turn back with me to Psalm 23 one last time. There's one other thing we need to note and this is so encouraging to me. I want you to see the progression of David's thought. In verses 1 to 4 we are described as what? As God's sheep, or in the motif of a Shepherd King, His subjects. How are we described in verse 5? We are the honored guests at a banquet He throws in His house. So we're first His subjects then we're the invited guest at a banquet He throws. How are we described in verse 6? We are described as His children at home forever in the Father's house.

David was right. The Lord is our Shepherd. Therefore, we shall not want. We will never lack His provision. We will never lack His restoration of us. We will never lack His direction. We will never lack His protection. We will never lack His vindication of us in this life and the life to come, and we will never lack His eternal devotion to us. What a Shepherd! This is our Shepherd King.

Let's pray together. Father, we are amazed at Your goodness. You owe us none of this. What You really owe us is judgment for our sins and yet in Christ, through the One who laid down His life for His sheep, You have made us Your own. We are the sheep of Your pasture. We belong to You and in Your Son You are our Shepherd King. We thank You Father for all that that means. For the reality that it means we will never lack anything we need, that You determine we need.

Thank You for all that You promised, but Father, thank You most of all for Your eternal covenant love. Thank You for Your steadfast love, for Your *hesed*, on which all of this is based. You set Your love upon us and it's because You set Your eternal love upon us that we have become Your sheep in Christ, and will always be Your sheep, and not just Your sheep, but the honored guests at Your table when You throw a feast and we enjoy, literally, communion and fellowship with You our Maker, like the elders of Israel did in Exodus 24, when we will sit down with You in the Kingdom with our Lord Jesus Christ and we will feast together. But Father, thank You that we're not merely His subjects, not merely His honored guests at a banquet, but by Your grace we have become Your children who will dwell, who will live forever, in Your house as our eternal home. Thank You, O God, for Your grace to us in Jesus Christ our Lord, amen.