



Summer Song
Part 5 – Psalm 23
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As I said, I've been at camp all summer long. The Robbins family kind of disappears along with a number of Woodland Hills' families during the summer because we are on mission, chasing after the next generation to raise up a godly generation to lead for Christ.

We are on a great adventure right now. Ashley and I have been at K-2, doing teen ministry for years and years. I was out there for nine summers and she was out there for fifteen. We made a transition after the legendary Chris and Diane Cooper retired from K-1 which happens to be our elementary camp. They asked us to go over and try to fill in their shoes. It has been a great adventure. It has been tremendously challenging. We are learning a lot. I have little kids, but dealing with them in masses is new. I've done a little bit of work in Critter Street, but we are learning on the fly.

One of the things I severely underestimated was the amount of lost and found. In the course of a two week term, I bet we filled an 18 wheeler full of lost and found that we pick up every day and return back to kids. It is unreal how much litter and lost and found... There are socks, underwear, and I don't even know where they come from. We're picking up after kiddos in masses, but we are having a blast doing it.

I do know that you guys are living in the world and really, for us, I don't even know what's going on in the news. We are totally kind of tuned into everything that's happening just across Taney Como. But the little glimpses I do get... and what I hear is that things are tough out there. You turn on the news and it is difficult to swallow. This morning, just to kick off the message, I want to bring you some hope and some testimony from the front lines. Up this point, just at K-1 in particular, we've had 1,100 kids come through our gates. So in the last seven weeks, we've had over 200 kids make a commitment to surrender their life to Jesus.

I think it's easy to get skeptical about what is truly happening in the hearts of kids when they go off to a summer camp experience. My vision and my understanding of a child-like faith have been exploding. It's one of the most fascinating things. I can't quite wrap my mind around it, but it is a beautiful, godly, and powerful thing.

A couple of weeks ago, on day three of a two week term... Our team gathers together in the morning with all the guys. There are like 180 little rug rats all gathered together. We do a walk through the Bible. We teach the kids all the books of the Bible. We walk through the Old Testament where they learn 77 steps through the Old Testament. We teach them facts about their Bible.

On day three – where we kind of begin to do the walk through the Bible – we, almost kind of flippantly, decided to share the gospel on kind of that first morning where start our walk through the Bible. As we were sharing the gospel, I was kind of watching the kids. It was almost eerie how quiet these boys were. It was as if they were hanging on every word. I realized that as the gospel was being rolled out, there were kids that were clinging to every single word.

Now we go from that little meeting in Taney Como Court off into madness. It's straight into competitions, all the fun stuff that boys love. But we had a little invitation. Anybody that wants to stick around and talk about this gospel message is welcome to come down to church and talk with us. So we go walking down there and I turn around and there is a mob of boys following me. I stopped and told them where the competitions were and let them know we were just bringing the ones that wanted to talk about a relationship with Jesus down to the church. They all wanted to go.

So we brought them down there and sat them down. I'm talking seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven year old boys. The first thing I do is just try to qualify it. A lot of times, kid just want to make sure that they are going to heaven, right. They just want to make sure. I kind of ask those qualifying questions and of this group of boys, there were only two that were there for some kind of rededication. They rest had never made a commitment to follow Christ. At 10:00 am on morning three, we had 33 boys ring the bell. We ring the bell to just celebrate a heart given to Jesus.

Right next door in our Spiritual Training Center which we call The Nest, all of our staff was singing and praying and they all hear the bell ring. They came pouring out of the nest and just a mob of staff gathered around these kids. It's just jaw-dropping as these boys are just swinging from the rope on the bell and our staff was tearing up. It was just one of the most amazing things. When we gave that message just a few days ago, we had two boys give their hearts to the Lord. It was the same message, same morning, but for whatever reason, that morning, God chose to move in a powerful way. The spirit of God decided this was the morning he was bringing some souls home with him and we got to be a part of it.

One of our leadership guys came down out of there and we were talking afterwards about this 33. He said "Shay, when I was up worshiping, I was just praying in my heart that the Spirit of God would wash over this camp. Just moments later, I hear the bell ring."

That's what we get to be a part of and I'm here to tell you that our college staff... And this ought to be encouraging to you. Our college staff is committed this summer. Acts 6: 4 is kind of our heartbeat for our staff. It's that we would be committed to prayer and the ministry of the Word. I have seen our college staff take hold of this with a hunger and urgency for the gospel and I've seen a change in them.

When we have our evening worship events, there are kids that give their heart to the Lord; that's pretty typical. When you have an evening worship event, that's when a lot of kids come to faith. But when our staff latches onto the urgency of the gospel and they're responsibility to take that gospel and preach it to every kid during every opportunity, the bell starts ringing at random times. It will ring early in the morning, during shower period, during FOB which is nap time right after lunch.

Our staff have become savages for the gospel. I want you to know that to be encouraged because there is a godly remnant that is rising up in this country. As I said, it's tough going out there. In this life, we will face trials; that's truth. This life is tough. You are either going into a trial, right in the middle of one, or you're coming out of one. Life is cyclical and trials are a part of it.

One of the things that I've learned to do over the years is as I wake up in the morning and I go to spend time with the Lord, I kind of look at it like I'm going to the doctor's office. Every morning, being a broken man, I walk into the doctor's office and I go to the Great Physician and he helps me determine my ailments of the day. Sometimes I need to go and apologize to my wife first thing. Sometimes I feel the weight of the Holy Spirit because I need to have a tough conversation that God's calling me to. Sometimes my heart is just being squashed by anxiety and nervousness and I know that I need to take that anxiety to the Lord. Sometimes I'm walking through a trial and I just feel flat beat up. When I go to the Great Physician, he's always good to show me my ailment of the day and through his word, he will hand me a prescription that is meant to heal and minister to and to refresh whatever the ailments of the day are.

Many, many times over the last year as I've done that, the Lord's prescription for me has been Psalm 23. As you guys have been marching through the Psalms series this summer, when I was given the opportunity or the choice to choose a Psalm, it wasn't hard for me. Psalm 23 has been my jam. It's been my song for at least the past year. I want to walk through Psalm 23 with you today. For those of you who are note takers and really love points, this is not a pointed message. What I want to ask you to do as we process through God's word together today is that you would stick with what sticks to you. As we walk through this passage, whatever hits your heart, whatever is profound to you, that's what God's got for you today, that's your take home, that's your application point. So we are kind of going to go to the doctor's office today because life is tough. Let me read through Psalm 23 and then we will walk through it together.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

It's pretty soothing just to read it, isn't it? So Psalm 23 is the psalm of David. David was a shepherd and he speaks using a word picture; that of a shepherd and his sheep. While I live in Branson, I grew up a country boy in Illinois and Iowa. Our people in our family are pork producers and have raised livestock and crops on both sides of our family. So as a young man, I grew up scooping manure and cutting down row corn and walking bean fields and loading turkeys and sorting hogs and I loved every bit of it. I don't have a ton of experience with sheep except that there was a period of time where Pa and Granny had some sheep that would roam around their farm and they had this old ram that would chase you around.

So I just remember being afraid and running from that thing. That's about the extent of my personal experience with sheep, but I've been studying to kind of understand everything that David is trying to help us unpack. As I studied this passage, I learned some really neat things about shepherding that I didn't really know

The first thing I want us all to understand, that I've learned recently, is that Psalm 23 is taking us through the annual cycle of a shepherd and his sheep. The cycle starts in the winter on the home range. In the winter, it's on the lower lands and the home ranch is a generally safe place. It's fenced and protected. It is a place where there is a good food supply and there are plenty of still waters to feed on.

When the spring comes, a shepherd... The delicate balance in raising a healthy flock of sheep is you've constantly got to move your sheep. Sheep are dumb. They will not manage their resources for themselves. So if you leave them on the same plot of ground, they will consume all the vegetation all the way down to the roots. They will literally dig up the ground and eat the roots and turn what was formerly a lush cropland into a wasteland. So come spring, it's time for a shepherd to move the flock out of the home ranch.

They enter into the process of moving from that home ranch up to the mesa land at a higher altitude. It's kind of the flat tops where the sheep will graze during the summer. The challenge with that is that in order to get to these high altitudes or these high ranges, you have to go through the valley. In the spring, the valley is a particularly dangerous place. After a long winter, all the predators have empty bellies and they are hungry. And as you walk through the valley, there are rocky crags and there are plenty of places to hide. You're moving your flock through a place that is exposed. You've got predators on both sides of you, not to mention that the weather is unpredictable. In a valley, a flash flood can happen just like that. So there are all kinds of danger. But you have to go through the valley to get to the mountaintop.

As you know, in the valley is where the greatest fruit is produced. In our life in general, we love the mountaintop experience, but the reality is that most of our growth takes place as we pass through the valley. So through the spring, the shepherd is moving the flock through the valley and making his way up the foothills and then up on top of the mesa.

Then during the summer, the shepherd will camp out and literally take up a homestead on this range with their sheep. There are a lot of liabilities that come with that type of shepherding because you're not in the safety of the home range. There are no fences on the top of the mesa. So the shepherd works hard with his rod and his staff to protect and to guide his sheep and to keep them healthy and moving throughout the vegetation.

Then come the fall, they have to make their way down off of the high altitudes, back through the valley. Then make their way to their winter homestead on the ranch. David is walking us through this process and as we kind of understand that, it brings alive the passages as we walk through them.

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. Let's make the roles that are in this clear. The Lord is the shepherd. Jesus said in John 10: 10 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays his life down for his sheep." This first passage is a passage of salvation.

Isaiah writes in Isaiah 53: **6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** You and I, as sheep, are prone to wander. We are prone to be stiff-necked. We are prone to be foolish. We are prone to be ignorant. Our nature is to wander off from the flock and do our own thing. For us to even enter into this passage to understand it, we've got to understand that the Lord is our shepherd.

I want to start off this passage with the gospel and the gospel is this: You and I are broken people. We are sheep and we have wandered off in our disobedience and that disobedience has caused a separation. We have put ourselves in danger. When you wander off from the flock, there are ravenous wolves, poisonous weeds, rocky ledges, and all of those things will consume us. We have no hope apart from the Good Shepherd. God is the kind of God who is not slow about his promises, but he is patient, wishing that none would perish. He is a good shepherd that is willing to leave the ninety-nine and come after the one.

This morning, I believe that as I stand here and I share this gospel message, there may be stray sheep sitting right out here. This is your opportunity; this is the Shepherd coming after you. The Lord Jesus has come and he wants to gather you up, he wants to bring you back into his flock that you might walk with him under his protection and care. The only way that you can accept that is to humble yourself and confess that you are a sinner and that your sin and disobedience has caused you to wander off and you are in desperate need of a Savior. It is as simple as making that confession and then inviting God or allowing him to become the Lord of your life to enter back into his fold. And then something special happens. A relationship is formed.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Here is where things can get a little bit twisted with the gospel. There is a gospel out there that tells us that if I am righteous enough or if I'm good enough or if I do things right enough, that everything is going to go well with me, that prosperity will come, that my finances will be secure, that my relationships will be excellent, that everything that I touch is going to turn to gold. The shame in that is that when people buy into that and everything is going good for a while, then when they hit one of life's trials, they think that God has left them and this gospel isn't real. The problem is that is not a true gospel; that's been twisted or perverted.

When we walk with God and the Lord is our Shepherd, we shall not be in want because we know that he is there to take care of us. He's a protector, he's a provider, he's a lover. When we engage in a relationship with Christ, he begins to give us the things that we need. What we need isn't to have more money in our pocket; it's to have a little bit of food in our belly this morning, and as I walk through a trial, the Lord will be there to give me strength and comfort and to give me wisdom and discernment as I walk through the challenges of this life. I think it's more accurate to say that if I choose to follow Jesus, if I step into the fold, things aren't going to get easier; they're going to get harder because we are moving against the grain in a fallen culture.

There are ravenous wolves and lions and bears that will come and attack. Those of us who walk with Jesus have hope because the good shepherd is there to protect us and ultimately, as we will find out shortly, death has no power over those who walk with Jesus.

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters... This is such a beautiful picture because these green pastures and these quiet waters were a place of peace to be at the home ranch. The cycle of the year was pretty intense both for shepherd and the sheep. When the sheep settled into home, it was a time to rest and relax and to get fattened up. There was a lot of safety and security in there. The Lord being our Shepherd, he is that safe place. He is a place to go and get fed. Jesus himself said "I am the bread of life; I'm the living water."

Sheep primarily get their water from three different places. One is from bodies of water. Another one is from deep wells. And then another one is from eating grass that has dew on it. I didn't know this, but sheep can go months without having a drink of water if they wake up early in the morning and feed on the grass that has heavy dew on it. I think that is such an amazing picture as we pursue a relationship with Christ.

Years ago, as I was growing in my faith, I was starting to become consistent in spending time with God and studying his word and growing in my faith. Coming out of college, I was a night owl. On an average night I would stay up until 2:00 am. I just functioned well as a night owl. As I was growing in my faith, a guy named Keith Chancey charged me to start waking up early in the morning and spending time with the Lord. In my heart, I kind of reared up; I was kind of fleshly and proud. I thought I didn't need to do that. Reluctantly, I decided to do it.

As I began that discipline, what was very difficult in the beginning – I would say for six months or even a year or year and a half – was kind of a grind. I would set my alarm early and wake up in the morning and just kind of feel sick to my stomach. I wanted to roll back in and go to bed. But what happened, as I continued in that discipline, was that hunger and that thirst and that longing for the morning began to grow. It's not that it's not tough to get up sometimes in the morning, but there has become a longing in me to spend time with the Lord first thing in the morning. I'm not here to say that this is THE way; I think it's a great way.

As we get up and we spend time with Him... I want to talk in the men in particular. I want to challenge men that if it works with your work schedules that you would be the first person up in your home. Here's why. We know, if we are honest with ourselves, that we are getting up... and we are jacked up human beings. We have a lot of junk in our life. And if I can discipline myself to be the first one up and to spend time with the Good Shepherd, to go to the doctor's office and allow him to minister to me to kind of unleash the power of the Holy Spirit that resides in the life of the believer, then I could wake up my wife and my kiddos and I could be more godly man than I would have if I was just rolling out of bed. So there's just this healthy picture that if we, as sheep, would get up and follow Jesus' model... He would wake early and he would go to a lonely place and spend time with his Father in prayer. If we would seek him and start our day off, it creates just this calmness in the flock no matter what kind of difficulties and challenges we encounter.

3 ...he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. How many of you guys have woken up over the last week and just needed God to restore your soul? I know I have. Camp is a wonderful place, but it is a grind. When you work with people, it's hard. God uses camp to just grind me up. This is my tenth summer, but it has not gotten any easier.

God is going to use something in our life. It could be marriage, work, family, relationships, trials. He is going to use something to make us look more like him. There is always going to be something. For me, the ministry at camp is so challenging and so stretching. I find myself giving everything I've got and I go to bed thinking *I don't know if I can get up and do this all over again; I'm exhausted*. So you wake up in the morning and say "God, I need you to restore me. I need a fresh wave of energy and passion and strength and vigor. I need you to restore me."

When I'm in sin, I just find myself quoting David's words from Psalm 51. "Restore to me the joy of my salvation. Fill me up, Lord. I need you." What's really cool is as you walk with God, what I've found is that in the midst of trials, it's hard to recognize that restoration on a daily basis. It really is. I think it's a perspective issue. You can't see the woods when you're standing in the trees. But when I've gotten on the back of some really kind of mighty, brutal trials over the past decade, I look at them and I think to myself *you know what, they weren't that bad*. It's not that they weren't brutal, but now that I have this perspective, I look back and I see how God was carrying me through it.

You guys have probably heard the story of a man who is walking on the beach with the Lord. They go on this long journey together. The man stops and he looks back and he sees only one set of footprints and says "Lord, where have you been?" The Lord says "I've been carrying you the whole time."

When we walk with Jesus, when we step inside his flock and allow him to be the Good Shepherd that he longs to be for each one of us, he will be the one that will carry us throughout these trials. **He guides me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.** Simply put, our obedience brings him glory. As you walk through trials... And what I've experienced is that as I'm walking through trials, I am overwhelmed with my sin nature. I am just overwhelmed with how broken and what a sorry dog I am. When everything is going great, you can kind of just bounce around with a little pep in your step and say "I've got things figured out. I'm doing well. I'm really striving in my faith and doing well." But when we walk through a trial, the Lord kind of brings the issues of life to the surface.

In Peter 1: 6-7, he talks about trials. He writes **6 In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. 7 These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.** He is saying that as you walk through trials, it's going to prove your faith.

When you pull gold ore out of the ground, does it look pretty? No. It's kind of just this muddled old rock with a bunch of impurities in it. But when you take that gold and you put it into the furnace and you smelt it, all the impurities rise up to the top. Then you take those impurities and you wipe them off and you are left with something that's more refined and beautiful than you had before.

So as we walk through trials, all the junk in my heart and my life are raised up and frankly I'm disgusted with it. Recently, I got to the point where I felt like *I am tired of the Holy Spirit dragging this sorry carcass around*. Again, when you're on the mountaintop and everything is going on, this concept of holiness or even the desire for holiness seems kind of detached or hard to wrap your mind around. But as you are walking through trials, if you are anything like me and you see all this dross rising to the surface... Frankly, it's shameful, it's sorry, it's disgusting, it's sad. I begin to long for holiness.

As Peter quoted "Be holy for I am holy." He is quoting the Lord himself. So these trials stir in us this longing to be more like Christ, to walk more closely with the Good Shepherd. Is that a good thing, church? You bet it is. I genuinely want to be a godly man. When I maintain that perspective, throughout my trials, I can be okay. I can be okay with the hardship; I can be okay with the grind because I want to be more godly, more than I want to be comfortable. I want this junk gone. I'm tired of it. I want to be better for my Lord. I want to be better for my wife. I want to be better for my kiddos. I want to be better for the ministry. I want to be better for Woodland Hills. But I can't become more like Christ without walking through the grind and allowing him to restore me. As I walk through that, God is glorified and I'm so grateful for that.

So we've moved out of this safe place – the ranchland – and we are walking through some challenging territory, into the valley. David writes ***4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*** This is such powerful imagery. So as you walk through the pass... If any of you have gone up to the mountains in Colorado, you know you have to go through the passes in order to get there. The passes are intense. In the winter, they are covered in snow and you're dropping off sheer cliffs. The incline is tremendous. If you were taking a flock of sheep and you were pushing them up that pass, the amount of predators that could be hidden long the way and the danger that lurks around every corner is just overwhelming.

As you walk through the valley, there is very little sun that actually hits you. Noon is really when the sun is hitting you because there is shade being cast both ways. Here's the deal and this is beautifully written. We're not walking through the valley of death, but as believers, when we walk with the Good Shepherd, we're walking through the valley of the shadow of death. When Jesus crawled upon that cross, he conquered death and the grave when he rose again. And he removed the sting from death. For those of us who have moved into the flock and have chosen to walk with the good shepherd for our lifetime, the sting of death has been removed. And the treachery that comes with that valley is only a shadow. Have you ever had a shadow hurt you? A shadow doesn't hurt you. It doesn't matter what kind of weapon it might be; a shadow cannot hurt you. So we walk through the valley of the shadow of death and we fear no evil.

Paul writes to Timothy and says "We've not received a spirit of timidity or of fear, but one of power, love, and self-control." You take an earthly shepherd who is the best in his trade, who is skilled with both of his tools – his rod and his staff – and he knows the path and the course... He can be a tremendously efficient shepherd, but every great shepherd can't overcome everything. There will be loss in that flock. But in the flock of God, there is not one loss. There's isn't a single one that slips through his fingers. When you walk in the flock of God, you have a promise of hope in heaven. It cannot be snatched away, it's can't be taken from you. So the valley is just a shadow of death.

It says “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” So the shepherd had two tools. One was a rod and the rod was really a weapon. When he was talking to Saul, getting ready to face Goliath, David said “When the lion and the bear rose up, I grabbed them by the beard and I struck them and I killed them.” He killed them with his rod. A rod is a picture of strength and security and sometimes discipline for the flock.

The staff is a long, slender stick with a hook on the end. It was used to guide the sheep very gently. When the sheep would get into a bad situation by wandering off or falling off on a cliff, the shepherd would leave the ninety-nine and go and get the one and reach down and grab that sheep by the neck and pull them up to safety. So God uses both tools. Not only is he strong and a savior and a disciplinarian, but he is also a comforter. He is a ministry for you and me, for every sheep in his flock. He wants to care for you. As you’re wounded... If you’ve got a hitch in your giddy up, if you have a little disease in your eyes or your wool is starting to fall out, he is there to minister and to heal you up.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Here we get to the point where the shepherd has brought the flock up on top of the mesa and it’s a great feeling to be in the summer pasture and they begin feeding, but there are enemies lurking all around. Again, the safety of the home ranch and the fence is gone. So the shepherd is on high alert at all times. But a good shepherd keeps his sheep safe.

Again, in watching the news, are there ravenous wolves prowling about? Dealing with these kiddos at camp... Some of the things that they are enduring at 9,10, and 11 years old... The things that they’ve been exposed to, the kind of anxiety that they have, the kind of wounds that they have, it’s horrific. Satan spares no one. We live in a broken and fallen world, but when we walk with Jesus, we can sit down and dine with him even while there are predators on the outskirts. The Lord is there to protect those who walk with him.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. As we walk with him intimately, if we stay within the confines of the flock and don’t wander off, he can protect us from those major predators. But in the flock, there are gnats and flies that drive sheep crazy. When they get in their eyes and their nose, the sheep don’t have a long tail like a lot of animals do, so they end up rubbing their face on trees and rocks and in the dirt. They will rub their faces raw. They pick up a disease called Scab and get worms in their nose and it is a terribly unhealthy thing. They’re just being nagged.

I feel like in life there is so much of that. There are these nagging gnats and flies. The way that the shepherds would tend to this is they would make this oil concoction and they would take that staff and pull the sheep in and take the oil and anoint them or smear it all over their face. It would give them relief from all the nit-picking gnats and flies.

As we walk in the anointing of God’s spirit, the Holy Spirit, there are going to be a lot of these nit-picking and nagging things. Whether it’s finances or issues at work or challenges with kids that you just can’t find the solution to... You walk in the anointing of the Holy Spirit. As you walk with him, he is going to provide answers each step of the way. He’s going to give us what we need to remove those anxieties, those fears, those concerns, those burdens, those sins. He will remove them if we walk by the Spirit.

He says “my cup overflows.” One of the things I love about having perspective, looking back, is all the joy that has happened in the midst of trials. Ashley and I have never loved being a family more. Lulu is five years old and she’s going into kindergarten. She has a huge appetite to learn and grow. She’s super maternal and we just love that little girl.

Belle is our little adventurer. In fact, just yesterday, she rode on the wet zipline with me for the first time at four years old. You’re going off of a 150 ft. cliff down into a body of water. She’s so brave and adventurous.

Knox is a little bull. He is your definition of a strong willed child. He eats spankings like they are Skittles. And we love him for it. He loves wrestling and waking up at 6:20 every single morning.

Tess is just as feisty and loveable. She’s this perfect little concoction; this little doughy toddler walking around. When the kids and staff get in her face, she got the best stiff-arm in the business. She creates space.

We just love our family even in the midst of the grind. We find so much joy in this life. Our cup overflows. That’s because the joy of the Lord is in our home and he helps walk us through the hardest of trials.

6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life... Now the shepherd is coming down off the mesa, through the foothills, and back through another challenging pass through the valley. But as we walk with the Good Shepherd, we know that he is right there, following us each step of the way. He is goodness and he is loving kindness and he is long-suffering and he is our source of joy. As we walk with Jesus, we will never be in want for those things; they will come. Even in the midst of hardship. When the flock finally reaches its home, its resting place for the long winter months, the home ranch...

David writes ***and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*** Really, this passage begins and ends with the gospel. For those of us who choose to enter into that flock, there is a promise and that promise is that you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I will remind you of Psalm 27: 13-14. If you are walking through a trial and it’s kind hard to cling to hope right now because hope is just kind of hard to grasp, Psalm 27 says ***13 I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.***

I want to leave you with that charge today. Yes there are many challenges out there that we face, many trials that we are walking through, but if you are willing to walk with God, you are not alone.

In closing, I would love for everybody to close their eyes and bow their heads. If there is anybody in the audience that is ready to surrender their life and know that they’ve been straying and that they have been a sheep that’s been disobedient and has walked away from God, I want to give you an opportunity

to step into the fold and become a child of God. The way that we do that is simple. It's a prayer of confession that you are a sinner, you recognize a need for a Savior, and then simply invite him to be the Savior of your life and accept the sacrifice that he gave on the cross. If you were ready to make that commitment today, would you mind raising your hand? Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, we thank you so much for your word. I pray, God, that we would leave this place encouraged and that you would take Psalm 23 and you would speak to us each individually in specific ways and that you would minister to us in the way that we need. I pray a prayer of joy that would settle in over this flock. I pray, God, that we might walk intimately with you under your care and protection. It's in Jesus' name we pray; Amen.