



CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Psalm 23

December 30th, 2018

Psalm 23

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Good morning everyone it is always a privilege to get the opportunity to preach the Word of God. It's a privilege to get to sit out and worship with you all. I hope that you are blessed by today's worship, I certainly was. It sets up beautifully where we're going with today. But before we get to any of that I just want to say is really good to see all of you here today real, live, living breathing people. I've been a bachelor since Thursday morning at 6:00 a.m. when I sent my family off to Spokane ahead of me, I'm going to join them later this afternoon. But I was startled with how quickly I found myself starved for human interaction. So far, it's just been Bartholomew and I holding down the Orr family fortress and unfortunately Bartholomew is not a dog, he's my Roomba. And he works very, very hard, but we've had way too many conversations to be considered healthy at this point. So, just so you know even if what I'm about to share with you is terrible, I'm having the time of my life mostly because you are all here so, thank you for that.

I'd love for you to get your Bibles open to Psalm 23. I don't know if you've ever experienced this, but Psalm 23 is the passage of scripture that I believe the Lord has continually called me back to throughout 2018. If I had to choose a single passage of Scripture to sit as a banner over my last year of life it would be Psalm 23. And so on May 14th when I found out that I was going to be preaching the last Sunday of the year, I knew immediately what passage of Scripture I wanted to go to because this is the piece that the Lord has used to encourage me, to offer me hope, to set my eyes, and my heart, and my trust back on him and my hope and prayer is that today he will do the same for you. Now, with that said I need you to look at me for a moment. I need you to temper your expectations. Just because I've known about this message since May 14th, does not mean I've been working on this message since May 14th so I'll be the first to admit that with eight months of lead time this thing should be way better than it is. So, if you come into today with super low expectations no is going to be disappointed, that's all I ask. So, here's the plan for the day, we're going to spend the first half of our time looking at verse 1 of Psalm 23. Because this verse really frames the entire rest of the Psalm. And then we're going to take a brief look at the rest of the Psalm through the lens

of this verse. So if you have your Bibles open let's all stand out of respect for the Word of God and let's read together Psalm 23.

“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 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. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the House of the Lord forever”. Let's pray. Father, I am thankful for your word and I'm thankful for your truth. God I just pray for every single one of us standing in this room today that you would prepare our hearts for what you would teach us. God, I pray that you would humble us. I pray that we would not allow ourselves to move too quickly past this passage of Scripture that many of us have probably become overly familiar with in our life. But God may your words speak truth, and peace, and hope into every person standing here today, in Jesus name we pray, amen. You can be seated.

So, diving right in our first point for the morning is this; the Lord is our shepherd. David writes, “The Lord is my Shepherd”, who is my Shepherd? That is the Lord. We can't allow ourselves to move too quickly past the first two words of this passage. The Lord, Yahweh, God's personal name given to Moses, the great I am, the eternally existing God of the universe, the beginning and the end, *this* God is my shepherd. This is a profound thought, because a shepherd is one who knows his sheep, who serves his sheep, who protects his sheep, who individually cares for and provides for his sheep. The role of a shepherd is a humble role, and it should humble us to think that the God of all creation, this star-breathing, planet-forming God, the one who was, and who is, and who is to come, that he would love us so deeply, and so fully, and so humbly, that he would make himself available to be *our* Shepherd. Now I can tell based on the look on your faces that I need to expand on this a little bit more because I know it's early, but you guys are not nearly as excited about this as you should be.

Think about who your Shepherd is. Our shepherd is all knowing. Hebrews 4:13 says that nothing in creation is hidden from God's sight. Who better to have as our Shepherd than the one who knows all things? Our Shepherd is all powerful. Psalm 33:7 says that God controls the very forces of nature. Proverbs 21:1 tells us that God controls even our flawed human governments. Psalm 139 tells us that he is sovereign over every detail of our lives, that he has laid out before us every day we are ever going to live before we were ever born. Our God is all powerful. Who better to have as a shepherd? Our shepherd is all present. We cannot flee from his presence. Psalm 139 paints this beautiful picture that it does not matter where we run, how far we go, what corner of the earth we find ourselves in, we cannot outrun the presence of our Shepherd. This is our Shepherd, the one who deserves all glory, and honor, and praise. The one who should have been perfectly served through us, but instead was betrayed by us. And yet in infinite love that we will never understand, he has stepped down in time and space and made himself available to be our Shepherd, to love us, and to serve us. To use his perfect wisdom and knowledge to lay out the exact course for our life. To use his infinite strength to sustain us each and every day and then to carry us

into the next life when this one is over. To offer his perfect presence to go with us in every season of life offering hope and offering peace that transcends all circumstance and all understanding. Church, this is your Shepherd if that blesses you this morning, then I need you to prove to me that you are with me and say with conviction, amen. Amen.

So, the question we're going to come back to throughout today, the question I hope all of us can answer at the end of our time is this; was the Lord your shepherd in 2018? Was it God or was it you? Was it God or was it your bank account, or your occupation, or your family? What guided your decision making? What steered you the direction that you went? Was it the God who knows all things, is all powerful, overall things in his present everywhere? Or did you settle for a cheap imitation in 2018? More on that later. Point number one, the Lord is our Shepherd. Point number two is this. We belong to Him. The Lord is my Shepherd. This is an ownership statement. I belong to my Shepherd and my Shepherd belongs to me. Notice the personal nature of this statement. I want you all to look at me for a moment this might be the most significant thing you hear all day. This truth is significant because it is meant to be your identity. This is equally an ownership statement and an identity statement. Who am I? I am a sheep in my Shepherd's flock. I belong to my Shepherd and my Shepherd belongs to me. See our belonging to God it's meant to sit at the very core of who we are.

And here's why this should encourage you today, if you belong to God than your worth and your value are unshakable. Why? Because you are who your Shepherd says you are, not who the world says that you are. So when the world tells you that you are unlovable, you have a God that says no you are so loved that I sent my one and only son to the earth to die in your place so that you could have peace with me. When the world says, you are worthless your Shepherd says no, no, no. Ephesians 1 said that I have placed such a value on you that I consider you to be my inheritance, you are valuable not because of you but because I have treasured you. When the world tells you that in order to matter you have to be influential and affluent. God says no, no, no all I ask of you is that you would seek first my kingdom and my righteousness, and would you just trust that if you live obediently one day at a time that I will use you to accomplish my eternal purposes. You matter because your Shepherd says that you matter. You matter because you belong to your Shepherd.

See when my identity is wrapped up in who I am in Christ, that I belong to him then nothing can take away my value or my belonging. But when my value is tied up in wealth, or the approval of people, or my job, then my value is constantly being threatened and it will inevitably fail me or be stolen from me. But when my worth is in the truth that I belong to the Shepherd, then my value is a movable. So for any of you who are sitting here today that struggle with belonging, for any of you that feel like outcasts, unloved and uncared for, be reminded today that you have a Shepherd who loves you, and who sees you, and who hears you, and who knows you. You belong to your Shepherd and nothing can change that. So I'll ask you again, was the Lord your shepherd in 2018? Who have you belonged to? Who did you wrap your identity in? Did you try and find your value in meaning, or in money, or in people, or things, or in your good Shepherd? The Lord is our Shepherd we belong to him.

Point number three is this, we can be satisfied. *“The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.”* The NIV reads *“The Lord is my Shepherd I lack nothing”*. The NLT, which might be my favorite translation in this moment says, *“The Lord is my shepherd I have everything that I need”*. See it’s believe that David wrote Psalm 23 at the end of his life, that is an old man is an old king he’s looking back over the course of his life and he’s making observations about his relationship with the Lord. And so what David is writing for us here today is listen the Lord, Yahweh, God has been my personal Shepherd, my personal caretaker, I belong to the Shepherd. And if I have the Shepherd, then I have everything that I need. If I have the Shepherd then I shall not want, if I have the Shepherd then I lack nothing, if I have the Shepherd then I am satisfied. This is a powerful thought. If I have Christ, then I am satisfied. With what the world has deemed as the impossible question to answer what and where do we find true happiness, David has spelled out for us in plain language, if I have Christ, if I have my Shepherd, then I have everything that I need, and if I lose everything, but I have Christ then I’ve lost nothing.

Let me ask you as you sit here this morning, December 30 of 2018, could you say the same thing with a clear conscience? I couldn’t. If I’m being honest, I can’t. I like I want to be this person and some days I am this person, but all too often I’ll be the first to raise my hand and say I allow my heart to wander. I look for satisfaction in things that have failed me and will continue to fail me. If I were being honest with you today, I would tell you that one of my most common prayers prayed in 2018, I think one of the reasons why the Lord has continually drawn me back to Psalm 23, this prayer has been God help me to find satisfaction in you and you alone. Because I am tired of looking for it in my job, in my bosses, in this congregation, in my family, and what people think of me. God help me find satisfaction in you and you alone. I think one of the most convicting experiences of my life, was found I had the opportunity to preach in Kenya to a group of villagers. And when I say villagers, I mean truly villagers from our standards these people had nothing and yet what rocked me during that experience is these people had a joy that I had a hard time explaining. They had nothing, but they had Christ, and you could see it on their face. And I found myself sitting back at the compound going why are these people so happy and why are we as a culture, as Americans, who have all the things that should make them happy, why are we miserable?

May I suggest it’s because *things* were never meant to bear the weight of our satisfaction. Whatever that thing has promised will inevitably fail us. And we’ve seen this play out in our lives, haven’t we? I mean how often do we see that one thing man, if I just got that promotion, if I just made a little bit more money, if I could just move from where I am into this kind of house over here, if I could just get this person to like me, or my spouse to respect me, then I would be happy. But what inevitably happens is we work towards that and we achieve it, and then what? We’re satisfied for a few hours, few days maybe, for really lucky a couple months. And then inevitably that thing that we’ve placed our satisfaction in fails to deliver what it promised. Why is that? Because you and I live under a universal truth, that it does not matter whether you live in Africa or America, whether you live in poverty or you live in wealth. The only thing that can truly satisfy is the Lord.

Are you satisfied this morning? Are you satisfied? Can you sit here and nod and smile in agreement with the words of David? Could you say with Paul in Philippians 3, *“indeed I count all things as lost because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord”*. Or do you find yourself sitting here today thinking, secretly wishing, you could say the same thing? Because if you were being honest, if you had truth serum running through your veins, you would admit that your life is not marked by satisfaction or contentment, but instead a deep gut level desire for fulfillment that you've never been able to satiate. That no marriage, no promotion, no salary, no charitable, cause can ever seem to fulfill. So, I'll ask you again, was the Lord your shepherd in 2018? Was your identity wrapped up in him? Was he the source of your satisfaction or not?

Now to answer that question, I think we can use the rest of Psalm 23 as a sort of litmus test. Because while these main points are true, if you are a son or a daughter of God then this is true. God is your Shepherd, you do belong to him, and in him you can be satisfied, but the truth remains you and I we can still be bad sheep, can't we? We can still choose to live as if these things aren't true. We can cheat ourselves out of the blessings that come with walking with the Shepherd. And so, this today this passage should be a call to step back into the blessing that is ours and as sons and daughters of God. So now we turn our attention to the rest of Psalm 23 and as we do I think we're going to see based on how David writes, how a godly person one who lives as if these things were true, how he responds in every season of life, and I think that we can honestly ask ourselves, do we respond the same way? Are we living like these things are true? *“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 namesake”*.

Let me ask you this, as you have lived through and experience seasons of blessing in your life, do you find yourself like David overwhelmed with gratitude constantly going back to God and attributing to him your success? Do you see your success as an opportunity to make much of and point people towards the Lord? Or do you find yourself taking credit for your success in those seasons? Do you find yourself pointing to your smarts, your hard work, your being a self-made man or woman? In those seasons of blessing, is your time, and your money, and your thought life, is it all devoted to the things of God are you serving in your church? Are you living generously with your finances, are you spending time daily before the God who is giving you these good gifts, or do you find that in these seasons of blessing you are too busy thinking about and building your own kingdom here on Earth? If you want to know who your shepherd was in 2018, look at how you handled seasons of blessing and it'll show you.

“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”. When you have found yourself walking through seasons of suffering, seasons of hurt, seasons of pain, the valley of the shadow of death, could you like David say I will fear no evil because my God is with me? Did you find yourself with an attitude of trust, an attitude of reliance on the goodness and the proven faithfulness of your Shepherd? Or did you find yourself angry with God? Did you find yourself asking questions like How could God do this to me? I deserve better than this, if my God loved me, he never would have let

this happen. Listen these are not the responses to the questions of someone who is walking with the Shepherd. I want to be really, really careful in this moment because I know that in a room this size there are men and women who have suffered and who are suffering in ways that I will never understand that I at this point can't even identify with. And so I want you to hear loud and clear from me, I'm not speaking from a place of personal authority on this issue, I'm trying to teach what I believe Scripture says to be true. There is a way to suffer well and that includes pressing into the Shepherd during those seasons, not pushing him away.

And there will be days in which that road is walked well, praise God for those days. And then there will be days where we and our humanity where we fail but listen this grace for those days. I am not for a second suggesting that the person walking with the Shepherd will walk this road perfectly every time, because you won't, and you can't. But what I am saying is that the overarching theme that sits over the life of the person who is suffering with the Shepherd, is that their eyes will constantly be called off of the valley and placed back on the Shepherd. On his providence, on his power, and on his protection. And even in those valleys of the shadow of death there can be peace, there can be satisfaction. How you have responded in the valley, will tell you if the Lord has been your Shepherd in 2018.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil my cup overflows,” this might be my favorite line in the whole Psalm, *“surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the House of the Lord forever.”* Do you want to know if the Lord has been your shepherd in 2018, look at how you view the future. Do you look forward to 2019 with a calm, and with a peace, and with a trust, confident in the Lord's continued goodness and mercy? Or do you find yourself nervous and anxious and worried? Do you go to sleep at night tossing and turning over the unknown of what's to come or do you rest peacefully knowing that your Shepherd has walked with you up to this day and he will continue to lead you in his mercy and his faithfulness moving forward? How you look to the future will show you whether or not you have allowed Yahweh to be your Shepherd in 2018.

So, what do we do with this? Each and every week we are confronted with the decision. Will we be hearers of the word only or will we be doers of the word? It's not enough to simply know whether the Lord has been our Shepherd or not we have to step into that relationship, we have to make a decision who are we going to be moving forward? What are we going to do in response to these things? And so I'm going to give you a little bit of homework. I would ask it tomorrow morning you sit down with Psalm 23, and you read through it and here's your next step. Step one is evaluate. Evaluate. We have to begin here with some honest introspection as you read Psalm 23. You have to ask the question, “is this me?”. See one of our problems in the modern American churches is oftentimes we love the idea of the Lord as our Shepherd, we don't love the implications that come along with it. We love to live the way that we want to live with the security of knowing that God is our Shepherd, but we only want to have to live any certain way in response to that truth. So tomorrow as you read the Psalm, honestly answer the question “has the Lord been my Shepherd?” and whatever your answer because some of you are going to read that

you're going to go yes this is me, yes and a man you keep on doing what you've been doing. Some of you are going to look into that Psalm and go man this has not been me. And I pray that no matter which of those camps you fall into that you would step into this next directive which is this; decide. Evaluate and decide. Decide what you are going to do in response to these things. Not what you think you should do, or what you would do in a perfect world, right? If all of a sudden you could magically do with a little less sleep, or if the kid slept in and gave you a little more time, or somehow magically all of your favorite TV shows got cancelled at the same time. This isn't about deciding what you should do it's about deciding what are you going to do what kind of man or woman are you going to be in 2019 as you step into and under the Shepherds care? This is the season for resolutions, is it not?

There three questions that I want you to answer before the Lord. And these questions that you have to answer will hopefully give you clarity as to what you need to do to proactively and practically step under the Shepherds care in 2019. The things that you're going to do to make 2019 different than 2018. Question number one; How am I going to listen to my shepherd in 2019? If we are going to walk with the Shepherd, we have to be listening to the Shepherd. And we live in America, we have unlimited access to the living, breathing, active word of God. The Lord *is* speaking to you, but we have to stop, and we have to listen. So maybe 2019 is the year where you say, "listen I'm going to be in the word of God every day, I'm going to allow him to speak to me every day". This can look a lot of different ways, maybe this is the year in which you redeem that commute or that time in your car and you start listening to messages, to podcasts, things that build you up and speak truth into your life. Maybe this is the year where you join a LifeGroup and allow real life people to see into your life and to speak truth and hope in the places where there has not been that. How are you going to listen to the shepherd, make this a practical goal?

Question number two how am I going to talk to the Shepherd in 2019? How am I going to talk to Shepherd? This might be my one of the most amazing aspects of belonging to the Shepherd. It's that the God of the universe, he wants to hear from you. The God of the universe listens to your prayers he desires your prayer. Think about that the God that is actively sustaining every atom in the universe, he's listening for *your* voice. He wants to hear what's on your heart, what your pains are, what your hurts are. what your worries are. what your joys are, what you're grateful for. So maybe this is the year that you decide your time of prayer isn't during the commute, and it isn't during those few moments of the twilight in the evening when you're falling asleep in your bed. Maybe this is the year in which you set aside actual time to speak, and talk, and share your heart with the Shepherd. For me 2018 was a year in which I prayed a lot of scripture. As the Lord kept calling me back to Psalm 23, he knew that that's what I needed in my prayers. If you look through my prayer journal, I can't tell you how many times you will see Psalm 23 written out. God remind me of who you are, remind me of who my Shepherd is, God may I draw strength and worth from who you say that I am not who the world says that I am. God when I am in seasons of blessing, please don't let me for a moment believe the lie that I'm being blessed because I've earned it, but remind me that every good and perfect gift comes from you. In those seasons of anxiety, that season in the valley, God would you call my eyes off of the valley and place them back on your presence. How are you going to talk to the shepherd in 2019?

Question number three, how am I going to obey the shepherd in 2019? In order to be with the Shepherd, we have to be obedient to the Shepherd. And so I would ask that when you sit down tomorrow morning with Psalm 23, that you would honestly ask the Lord the question, “Where in my life do you need to see changes? Where in my life is there sin that I've been blind to? Or that I've been ignoring that I need to put off? Where are the godly traits that you'd like me to put on?” Listen, if you ask the question, one hundred percent I believe the Lord will answer that question. But you and I we have to be faithful to listen and then be faithful to obey. How am I going to listen to the Shepherd, how am I going to talk to the Shepherd, how am I going to obey the Shepherd?

The Lord is your Shepherd you belong to him and in Him alone you can find satisfaction. If we would live this out, if we would actively step into the Shepherd's care, our lives would look dramatically different in 2019, our church would look dramatically different in 2019. Because here's the thing, none of us knows what this next year holds. We all walk into the new year on level ground. This could be a year of celebration, or a year of suffering, a year of plenty, or a year of famine, a year of joy, or a year of pain. So, while we don't know how the year will unfold around us, we do know that we won't be alone. We can go forward in the care of the good Shepherd. The Lord is our Shepherd we belong to him, and no matter what if we have him, we can be satisfied.

Would you pray with me? Would you just take a moment, and would you thank the Lord for being *your* Shepherd. Would you ask him in this moment to remind you of his character, and what a privilege it is to be called a member of the flock of God. Would you do that right now? Would you thank the Lord for purchasing you with the blood of Jesus, you belong to him nothing can snatch you away. You are valuable and you are loved, because he says you are valuable and loved, would you do that right now? Would you pray that in 2019, you would find your satisfaction in him. Ask him to show you where you've been distracted and ask for the discipline to pursue him and him alone. Let's do that together right now.

Father, I am so thankful for your faithfulness. May your faithfulness in the past give us confidence today and hope for tomorrow. God, I pray that whatever 2019 holds we would walk confidently knowing that you, in your perfect knowledge, strength, and presence are our Shepherd. That you are walking with us and working through us. Father, would you remind us that we belong to you, that we are who you say that we are not who the world says and certainly not what the enemy says, we are who you say that we are. No matter what happens our satisfaction is secure in you. God may we be satisfied even if all we have is you, may your character, promise, and presence be what gives us hope, as we move into this next chapter, in Jesus name we pray, amen.