

23.10.22 pm

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Date: 23 October 2022

Preacher: Reverend Kenny I Macleod

[0 : 0 0] Good evening everyone and welcome to our evening service. I think most of you will have heard the announcements this morning, so just very briefly highlight a couple of things.

So Rita Nikemba, the founder of Dwelling Places Uganda, will be in Lewis on Tuesday night to speak at the MA MacLeod Memorial Hall at 7.30pm. If anyone wishes to attend that meeting, please have a word with Shona if you're needing transport.

The meetings through the week, Road to Recovery prayer meeting, and the clubs for the young people on Friday are at the usual times. Next weekend we have Joe Barnard preaching here on Sunday morning.

He's from Holyrood Evangelical Church and was formerly in Kiltarlity Free Church. He's speaking at the Pursuit of God conference over the weekend.

It's a reminder of that Friday night. He'll be speaking at a meeting in the County Hotel for men. And there's a ladies' meeting in the MA MacLeod Memorial Hall, led by Ali MacDonald of Smithton.

[1 : 0 8] And then other meetings here on the Saturday. Parents, carers and youth workers on the Saturday morning at 10.30pm. And then on Saturday night at 7pm for the 18 to 30s.

And finally on Sunday night, Big Youth Fellowship at 8pm up in Stornoway. So please make an effort to go to at least one of those meetings if you can.

So we welcome this evening once again Reverend Kenny I. MacLeod to our pulpit and pray for God's blessing upon him as he shares God's word with us just now.

Thank you for the welcome. We're going to begin our service singing to God's praise in Gaelic in Psalm 89. The 89th Psalm. The 89th Psalm. The 89th Psalm.

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[6 : 25] The 89th Psalm. The 89th Psalm. The 99th Psalm. his mind or his intentions regarding his people. And we come with a full assurance that that you are the God who never changes. As your word says, the God who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And we pray that we might have that settled assurance in our own heart that you are this God that we come to. And we pray that you will bless us with every spiritual blessing. And that you will equip us for the battle in which we are engaged. Because every day we face new challenges. We have new opportunities, but we also face difficulties. And help us, Lord, to be clothed with the armor of God. And help us, Lord, to be equipped with all that you give us. Help us, Lord, not to be trying to fight the Christian warfare on our own. Because when we do, we are guaranteed to fail. We can almost say that every time that if we try and face temptation on our own, we will fail. And so we pray for the grace and we pray for the willingness on our part to look to you for help and to look to you to help us in all our battles and all our struggles. We give thanks,

O Lord, that you're gracious. And even when we do fall and we do go aside and go astray, that you are the God who seeks us out. And that you win us and you woo us back to yourself.

We give thanks, O Lord, that that is part of your faithfulness. And that you will not leave us to ourselves. And so we pray that you will bless us tonight as we wait upon you. And that we will hear what God the Lord will speak because to his folk he speaks peace. And we pray that we might know that peace in our own heart, not just as we worship you just now, but that it might be an integral part of our daily lives. And that we will know that peace day and night. That you will equip us with it as we journey on. And that we will know that you are our God. O Lord, bless us. Enrich our lives in the knowledge of Christ. Help us to know you more and more and help us to understand that it is by being with you that we come to a greater knowledge of you. And we pray that we will enter into the Apostle's prayer that I might know him. And we pray that this will be our desire more and more. Help us, Lord, to have a hunger for the things of God. And deliver us from our willingness maybe to be sidetracked so often by so much that pulls us in another direction. Lord, we pray for the spread of the gospel even this very day. Not only in our own land, but right throughout the world. We pray that many will come to faith. We pray that you will encourage those who minister in very difficult situations. We think of those in some of the persecuted lands where it costs a lot to be a

Christian. We pray for those who risk life and limb to indeed witness on the side of Christ. And we ask, Lord, to be with the persecuted church. Be with those who are imprisoned for their faith. Be with those who are being tortured because of their faith. We ask, Lord, that you will deliver them and that you will help them just as you did, Peter, as we reflected on this morning. Lord, our God, we pray for this world that we are part of. And we see there's so much, so much that is harrowing, where we see of drought and we see of famine, we see of war, we see of so much that is preventable. Because when we look at all the wealth that exists in the world, we see of the wealth, we see of the wealth that we are in the wealth. And so we pray, Lord, for those who are in most need and that you will help them.

We give thanks, Lord, for the fact that we are able to bring our needs before you and that we're able to pray for those that maybe we can't do anything for, but we can pray for them. And that's a wonderful thing because there is no limit to what you can do. You are the God of the impossible.

[10 : 51] That is the answer. The question is asked, is anything too hard for the Lord? And the answer is given with God, nothing is impossible. And so we pray that we might have that kind of faith that fixes upon you. The more our eyes are by faith fixed upon you, the greater we see how things can be.

We pray for our own land and we pray your blessing on us. Oh, Lord, we pray for wisdom and direction in the way that we should go. We ask, Lord, that you will give wisdom to those in our authority over us. And may they have a sense of their own obligations and responsibilities before you, because the authority that they have been given indeed is an authority that one day will require an answer. And so we pray that there might be a sense of that responsibility in our hearts of our leaders and that you will bless all in Westminster and in Holyrood and here locally also in the council.

Lord, protect us and keep us. And we pray for those who are in most need tonight. Pray for those who are ill, those who are laid aside, those who are struggling with health issues. We commit them to you.

Lord, we pray for those who mourn, whose hearts are heavy and sore. And whether the passing of loved ones has been recent or whether it has been somewhere in the past, yet there is still a settled sore, there's an emptiness, there's a pain. Oh, Lord, into that sorrow and sadness, may you pour the oil and joy of your comfort as only you can. Lord, oh God, we pray for those who are facing difficult times. And we know that more and more the squeeze is on financially. We pray that in the light of all the restraints that are being placed upon us more and more, that thou wilt help us and bless us, we pray. Pray for this congregation. May it be an increased witness within the community here. We pray that more and more will come to faith and that you'll bring more and more people in under the sound of the gospel and that it will be a wonderful church where the windows of heaven have been opened and you have poured down your blessing upon this congregation. And we pray for David and his wife and family. We pray for all the office bearers and for all the membership and all those who come to support. Pray for all those who do so much work. And we know that in the functioning of our church, there are so many willing hands, so many that do, and so many sometimes behind the scenes that work away. And so we pray to encourage every single one. And we ask, Lord, to remember that nothing done for you and by you is ever in vain.

And that not even a cup of water given in your name is in vain. There will come a day when the books will be opened and the records will be shown and you will show your people things that they never realized that they had done for you. Oh, Lord, help us then to live more and more by faith.

[14 : 05] Cleanse us from our every sin. And we come before you seeking that you will forgive us all our sins. We pray all of this in and for the sake of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We're going to conclude. We're going to continue singing in Psalm 100. And it's from the Scottish Psalter, traditional version.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice. All people that on earth do dwell.

All people that on earth do dwell, sing to the Lord with cheerful voice.

Him said with mirth this praise foretell. Come ye before him and rejoice.

[15 : 37] Know that the Lord is God indeed. Weren'tdag continue.

Enter then His gates with praise. Approach with joy His courts unto.

Praise the Lord and bless His name always. For it is seemly so to do.

For while the Lord of God is good. His mercy is forever sure.

Is true that all times firmly stood. And shall from me to each end you.

[17 : 26] I will read God's word now. First of all, in the Gospel of John. John chapter 10. We read verses 1 to 18.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep, to whom the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.

This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them. So Jesus again said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[18 : 45] All who came before me are thieves and robbers, for the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees.

And the wolf snatches them and scatters them. He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd.

I know my own and my own know me. Just as the father knows me and I know the father and lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold.

[19 : 47] I must bring them also. And they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the father loves me because I lay down my life that I may take it up again.

No one takes it from me. But I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down. And I have authority to take it up again. This charge have I received from my father.

And then we turn to the book of Psalms, Psalm 23. We're going to look at this Psalm. We're going to look at the whole. I've looked before at some of the verses.

But I want to look at the whole Psalm tonight just very briefly by way of an overview. 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 name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

[20 : 55] 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.

So we're going to look at this, the whole Psalm, Psalm 23 tonight. But before we do, we're going to sing again from Psalm 36. This is from Sing Psalm, Psalm 36.

And we're going to sing from verse 5. Psalm 36 from verse 5. Verses 5 through.

Your steadfast love is great, O Lord. It reaches heaven high. Your faithfulness is wonderful, extending to the sky.

[21 : 50] Your righteousness is very great, like mountains high and steep. Your justice is like ocean depths. Both man and beast you keep. And so on.

We're going to sing from Psalm 36, verses 5 to 10 to God's praise. Let's sing from Psalm 36.

Psalms 36.

Precious is your steadfast love. What confidence it brings.

Both high and low find shelter in the shadow of your wings.

[23 : 33] Take peace within you, and bring from streams of pure delight.

For with you is the source of light. In your light we see light.

To those who know you as their God. Your steadfast love impart.

In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light.

In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light.

[24 : 39] In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light. In your light.

■■■ head. It was, this was sung at the Queen's funeral. It was apparently sung at the, was it at the Queen's coronation or the Queen's wedding. It was part of her spiritual journey.

And I'm sure it's part of everybody's spiritual journey. If you're a believer, if you're a Christian, this psalm will be part of your life as well. And the older you get, in many ways, the more wonderful it becomes.

And, of course, this psalm was written by a shepherd. And I don't know, I'm sure some of you have read, as far as I'm concerned, it's the best thing I've ever read. The late Douglas Macmillan, who was at one stage a professor in Edinburgh in the college.

But before that, he had been a minister. But before that, he'd been a shepherd for about 14 years. And he used all his shepherding experience. It was a series of conferences in Wales.

[26 : 14] It's been turned into a book, The Lord of Shepherd. And if you haven't read it, then I would say I would thoroughly recommend you getting hold of it.

Because it's just, it's a wonderful, as it were, commentary on this psalm. And it's a commentary by a shepherd. And he, of course, says that only a shepherd.

Of course, we know that the word of God is spirit-breathed. But he was saying only a shepherd could really have written this psalm. And, of course, David was a shepherd.

It's interesting how we see that the great place that the shepherding has in God's purposes and plans. And Abel, the very first martyr, was a shepherd.

Moses, who was given the great task of leading Israel out of Egypt into the land of promise, spent 40 years, the first 40 years of his life, he was in the palace.

[27 : 11] And, again, under God's providence, he was teaching him in all the ways of administration and learning. Remember how he killed the Egyptian and he had to run.

And for 40 years, he was a shepherd in the wilderness looking after his father-in-law's sheep. And then, of course, he became the great shepherd of leading God's people to the land of promise or leading them to the borders of it.

And then, of course, the man who wrote this, Sam David, he was a great shepherd king. And before ever he became a king, he was a shepherd. And God references himself often to his shepherding of his people.

Here, Israel's shepherd. We find that in the Psalms. And right throughout in the Old Testament as well, the Messiah was prophesied as a shepherd.

And then, of course, when Jesus came, he refers to himself, we read that, as the good shepherd. And the good shepherd who gives his life for the sheep.

[28 : 14] The good shepherd who has come to seek and to save that which is lost. And that's what he's doing even today, tonight. He's looking for those who are lost, those who have wandered.

And he does two things. He looks for those who have not yet come. Because we read that in John's Gospel. I have other sheep that have not yet. They're not yet in.

And he's looking for them tonight. Maybe there's somebody here. And you're not quite in. And Jesus, the good shepherd, is inviting you into the fold to be part of the flock.

The invitation is here. And so he's saying he has come to seek and to save those who are lost. And if you're without Christ tonight, that sadly is your condition is lost.

But it's for those who are lost. That qualifies you straight away in order that you can go to Jesus. Because he's come for those who are lost. But he's also shepherding those who do wander.

[29 : 15] And I think some of this psalm indicates the fact that sometimes we need to be brought back. Because it uses the word, he restores my soul.

Which, of course, in order to be restored, it means that you've kind of slipped. You've fallen back. You've wandered a wee bit. So the psalm begins, the Lord is my shepherd.

I shall not want. And what we love here is how definite David is. The Lord is my shepherd. And if you're going to underline one word there, it would be the word my.

He's mine. And I think it's very important because it helps us as Christians to know that God is our shepherd.

It makes a huge difference to knowing your relationship to the Lord than if you're left not sure. Because sometimes people say, well, I don't know if I'm a Christian.

[30 : 14] I don't know if I am or if I'm not. And if we're in that situation, then that really impairs our Christian life. It makes our witness difficult.

Because you can't be really witness to someone if you're not 100% sure of exactly where you are yourself. And it affects our whole enjoyment.

We cannot enjoy the Lord in the way that we can when we really know that he is our God, that he's our Lord, that he belongs to us and we belong to him.

So David is very, very definite here. The Lord is my shepherd. And if tonight you aren't able to say that, say to the Lord, help me tonight to actually say, Lord, you are my shepherd.

Give me to know that I belong to you. And so he says, because the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. That's what David said, I'm not going to want.

[31 : 12] And throughout the psalm he kind of tells us why he won't want or why he's not lacking anything. And he tells us this, that he makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters. And it's a beautiful picture. Makes me to lie down in green pastures. And that's a wonderful picture of contentment.

And if any of you have sheep, you know that the one thing that sheep will not do is lie down if they're not content. You can't get a hungry sheep to lie down.

You can't get a frightened sheep to lie down. They're very sensitive animals, although they can be very stubborn and they can sometimes drive you daft when you're trying to pen them or whatever.

But they're very easily frightened. But they won't lie down if they're hungry. They won't lie down if they're not content. And so we find here that this is his picture of contentment.

[32 : 17] And so the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. So here's a picture of a field with sheep. And they're lying down because they're content.

And very often when you see sheep lying down, you know, well, they've had a good feed. And they're probably there. They're chewing their cud. They're happy. They're content. And that's a beautiful picture of the Christian who is fed and nourished and is content with what God has given them and what God has done for them.

And that is so important. That's one of the great, wonderful things when a person becomes a Christian is how wonderful God's word becomes, how real.

Because, you know, back at the, I'm sure like a lot of you, there were a large part of my life while being brought up in a Christian home and believing in my head how true it was.

I hadn't come to a belief within my heart. I still used to read the Bible. Well, I would like to say I read it every night, a little, but it was often, it was usually just to salve my conscience to make me feel a little better because of the way I'd been brought up.

[33 : 33] You know, when I became a Christian, the word of God became so different. It became a real book, a living book. God was speaking. And this was, this is one of the wonderful privileges as Christians where we in prayer can speak to the Lord and where God in turn speaks to us.

And it's real. And, you know, it's lovely if whether it's in the morning or the evening and you're reading his word and you say, oh my, you just feel God is speaking to you. And I say it so often because something I do, it was something I myself was taught to do and taught to do and it's so important.

Better than reading. And don't get me wrong, by all means read huge chunks. Read the whole Bible. Yes, read it. Read it. You can never read it enough. But every day get a little of God's word and meditate upon it.

Because meditating is where God's word will soak into your soul. And where you get God's word and reflect on it prayerfully and say, Lord, open my eyes that I might behold wonderful things out of your law.

Open my eyes that I might see what's being said. Help me to get this on board so that it'll affect my life, that it'll impact my life, that it'll change my life.

[34 : 52] And it is so important because a meditating Christian is a growing Christian. You'll come to a greater knowledge of who God is, a greater knowledge of who you yourself are, a greater knowledge of what God is requiring of you and what God is doing in you and for you.

Very often we find in the word of God talking about the importance of meditating. And one of the great examples is when Israel were about to go into the land of promise.

And Joshua was going to lead them in. And God says to Joshua, make sure that the word of God doesn't depart. The law doesn't depart out of your mouth. Meditate upon it day and night.

And then the Lord says, if you do that and you adhere to my word, then I will make your way prosperous and you will have good success. You'll have a successful campaign.

But the key to it was not the military strategy. The key to success was meditating upon God's word. We're told in scripture that the one who meditates on the Lord, that their heart is fixed.

[36 : 00] That's a great idea. You know, in this world so often we're tossed this way and that, torn with this and that. If we're meditating upon God, there's a stability brought into our life, a fixedness.

And that's what God is saying. It's so important that his word, my word, is an integral part of your life. Well, do it through meditating. Make this such a vital and integral part of your life.

So here's this picture of the sheep and they're lying down. And he says, he makes me to lie down in green pastures and he leads me beside these still waters.

So there's this great picture of contentment. And again, the great symbol that we have in the scripture is of the water.

Water, of course, again, speak Jesus himself. Talked of being the water of life. Jesus himself speaks in the Bible. Speaks of how the water is like the Holy Spirit coming down and refreshing us.

[37 : 04] Sometimes in the Bible it talks of floods, like on weary land or on thirsty land. Other times it's like the dew.

Big difference between the dew and the floods. You can, sometimes you won't know the dew has fallen. But you're not, you always know afterwards when the dew has fallen.

But when the dew is actually falling, you're not out seeing unless it's a very, sometimes you get a very, very heavy dew. But very often you're not going to say, poor, a dew's really heavy the night.

The dew is just doing its work very quietly. But then there are times there are floods. And sometimes that's the way God works. Like there's revival. Times of revival where God, as it were, is really opening the windows of heaven.

He's pouring down. And communities are affected. People are affected, a large number of people. But very often it is just the little droplets of dew.

[38 : 05] Week in, week out. And it's doing its work. And you're getting, you're just getting enough every day. Just it's sufficient. That's what it's doing.

And it's important that every day you have something of this refreshing. Then it says, he leads me beside still water. He restores my soul.

And again, as we said, restoration very often speaks about having gone. Now we know at the very beginning that we run away.

And that's like where the sheep, as we said, if a sheep is frightened, a sheep runs. And that was the impact of the fall. Because the very moment that when God came calling for Adam after he had sinned, what do we find Adam doing?

He ran away to hide. Because he was afraid. I was afraid, he said to God. And that's where people are today.

[39 : 05] And they don't know it. That's why so many people have dismissed God. Why do people build these great big towers of atheism and humanism and secularism against God?

God's out of it. God doesn't exist. There's no God. There's no God. There's no God. Why? Because the alternative is, if there is a God, and there is a God, then we are accountable.

We are all accountable. So the easy option for a while is that people try and remove God out of the picture. This is part of the running away.

And you know, in a sense, everybody in this world is running in either one of two directions. They're either running to God or they're running away from God. It's either or. And this is a wonderful thing.

It's when the Lord deals with us, we've stopped running. Because prior to that, we've been running away. We're estranged. We're enemies. We're on the run from God.

[40 : 09] All of us, by nature, are running like Adam ran from God. We often don't realize it until God stops us in our tracks and begins to work in our heart. And often has to show us what's wrong and where we are.

So the wonderful thing is that once we have come to faith and have stopped running away from God, even when we do wander and go astray, and the Lord is coming to deal with us, instead of hiding because of our sin, we go to God because of our sin.

That's a big difference. In the past, we run away from God. Now we go to God. A classic example of that is David. Remember how David, in his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, but then to make matters ten times worse, what does he do?

He killed, has Uriah killed, to try and cover what he has done. And David, in that period, was in a period of backsliding. And we know that he had become very self-righteous.

And he didn't realize just how bad things were until God sent Nathan the prophet. Remember, Nathan the prophet came to David. And Nathan told David a wee story. And he said to David, you know, there were two men.

[41 : 32] There was a very rich man and he had loads of sheep. And beside him, there was a poor man. And he just had this, there he was with his family, and just had this one wee sheep. And a friend came to the rich man.

And the rich man thought, no, I'll have to prepare a big meal here. So what does he do? He jumps over the fence, takes a poor man's lamb, kills it and dresses it well. When I say prepares it for a meal.

And when David heard that, he was absolutely incensed. He said, that man shall die. That man has to repay so many sheep back. That's the most awful thing.

And David at that point couldn't see what he was just about to see. And then Nathan said, David, you're that man. That's you. And it was at that moment, God's spirit just banged straight into David.

And David said, that's me. And that's where we have Psalm 51. And that's why I'm saying that when we come to faith, rather than run away from God, we actually run to him.

[42 : 40] And that's what David did. He ran to God. And that's why he's saying, restore a right spirit within me. The psalm, we believe, was written before Psalm 51.

But when David is saying there, restore a restoration, my word, he did know later on in his experience just what that restoration really was. And so this is part of the great thing of how God restores us.

And sometimes God has to tell us that we wandered. Because sometimes we don't realize it. Sometimes we're off the path a bit. But God has to show us and remind us of where we are and bring us back to himself.

So he leads me beside still water. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. And when the Lord leads us, the moment we become Christians, we begin to follow the Lord.

It's a lovely word, a follower. We use that expression up here. When did he or she start following? Very biblical expression. When did he start following? When did she start following?

[43 : 53] And maybe it's not used as often now, but it certainly used to be often. That would be used when a person, they heard that a person had become a Christian. When did he or she start following?

Following the Lord. It's important that we follow. Because the Lord will always lead us in the paths of righteousness. He leads us in the right way.

But the further back we are from following him, the more dangerous it becomes for us. Peter is a classic example of that. Remember how Peter had made the proud boasts of how he was prepared to die with Jesus.

Go to prison for Jesus. But it tells us at this period after that that Peter followed afar off. He followed at a distance. That was a dangerous place.

It was good he was still following. But he went on to deny Jesus. Maybe if he had been following close, he might not have denied Jesus.

- [44 : 54] It was good he was following. But the further back you are, the more dangerous it becomes. And so it's important that as the Lord leads us in the paths of righteousness, that we will follow him.

And everything, of course, is for his name's sake, his glory's sake. Race through verse 4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Now it's great, it says, though I walk through the valley. It doesn't say, though I go down into the valley and stay there.

I walk through the valley. You're going through it. And see also it says, so I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Now it talks of a shadow.

And as we know, before there's a shadow, there has to be light. I'm sure when we were young, when we were wee, we were often scared of shadows. Lots of things. Shadows could frighten us.

- [45 : 53] Sometimes shadows, they loom large. But a shadow can't. It's Spurgeon who says, the shadow of a dog can't bite you. And the shadow of a sword can't kill you.

And the shadow of death cannot ultimately destroy you. And that's true. The shadow can't ultimately destroy. And that's what's talked about here.

It's a shadow, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil. Why? For you're with me. You know, in life, if a person lives life, and it doesn't matter how enriching their life is and how much support they have in life, when we come to die, we die on our own.

We're on our own. There comes a point when nobody in this world can do any more for us. But if you're a believer, you're never on your own.

Even as you slide down into death, the Lord is with you. And I think often God's people, there are periods where you might say to yourself, See, if the Lord came for me tonight, I'm just not ready.

- [47 : 11] I just don't feel ready for dying. I don't feel ready. Well, that's because you're not. As far as we know, dying, of course, none of us know at what point we're going to go.

But I believe that the Lord, who gives us the grace every day for living, will give us the grace for dying as well when that time comes. I believe he'll do that for his people. And this verse indicates that, that we won't be on our own, that the Lord will be with us, that we will become very conscious, even when maybe we're not conscious of anything else around us, there will still be awareness that he's with us.

And it says, you're with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. And again, we're with the shepherd, the rod, the staff. As we know sometimes with sheep, if you have a rod, you have to prod them and push them to get them moving on.

You've got to prod them. The Lord sometimes has to prod us as well. Because there are things that we want, we're maybe pulling back from, service that we're not prepared to give.

And what we've always got to remember is, God doesn't send angels from heaven to preach, or to lead with singing, or teach in Sunday schools, or to witness, or to testify for him, or to 101 other things.

- [48 : 31] It's us. He uses us. We, every believer, every person who comes to faith, come straight into service for the Lord. You, tonight, are serving.

Wherever you are, from the very youngest to the oldest, wherever you are, you're serving their king. But sometimes we're reluctant, and we need a wee push, a wee prod.

So there's the rod, and sometimes the rod is needed in discipline, all the days of our life, right to the very end. And your staff, they comfort me. Now, the staff, we know, is something that you would lean on.

It's the same thing, the rod, the staff. You use it to prod, but you can use it to lean on. And that's a picture of the Christian. That's a picture that we have of the Christian coming up out of the wilderness, leaning on our beloved.

That's how we come. We're leaning upon Christ. We journey through this world, leaning upon Jesus. Now, some people will say that this, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, that it refers to all the difficulties, and the issues, and the problems of life.

[49 : 40] I believe it includes that as well, and that the Lord is with us in all these situations, but it also is talking down into the shadow of death. Very briefly, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. At the beginning, it says, the Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. Now we go, in verse 5, to where we see, not only is it we're not in need, but it's an overflowing.

It's just, it's like a huge banquet. The table there, it's just filled with everything. And there's this anointing in my head. There's, again, anointing.

It's a picture of priests and of kings. That's a privilege that we are. We're told in Revelation that the Christian, when you become a believer, that we are priests and kings.

And, again, there's a sermon in that in itself. Douglas Macmillan, in his book, he mentions there, in this verse, he says, you know, sometimes we feed the sheep, we put the food in the troughs, wooden troughs for them to eat from.

[50 : 55] And he said, in the East, apparently long ago, sometimes they used to have put little raised wooden tables for the sheep to eat from, to keep them from getting the parasites and bacteria, so that it, quite possibly, that this is what is being referred to here by the psalmist.

But the Lord does this. He feeds us, and sometimes he fills us in the midst of trouble and difficulty and all spiritual enemies.

He fills us so that our cup within ourselves is overflowing. We're so full of spiritual joy. We're so full of the Lord. We're so content in the face of all the enemies round about.

And we'd say, truly, my cup is overflowing. And then, lastly, last verse, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Now, I think, hand and heart, if you're to be offered anything in life. And somebody came up and said, you know, I can give you fame, I can give you fortune, I can give you wealth, I can give you honour, I can give you, or, you can have God's goodness and mercy following you every single day of your life.

[52 : 22] What would you take? Well, I'm quite sure, as a Christian, you would take God's goodness and mercy. And where it's, the word follow has the idea, not of, sometimes when we follow something, or if we're saying, I'm going to follow on there, and you may be trudging and plodding.

The idea here is of active pursuit. It's like the Lord is chasing you to bestow goodness and mercy upon you. That's the idea.

Not now and again, but all days of my life. And you know, the more you read that, the more wonderful actually it becomes. Some people have said that God's goodness refers to our life, our needs, and his mercy refers to our sins.

But it, both goodness and mercy covers every aspect of our life as Christians. It's a journey. David's on a journey. And we see where this journey ends.

It ends in glory. Douglas Macmillan in his book, he likens it, goodness and mercy to the two sheepdogs. That's their names. One is goodness and the other is mercy. And goodness and mercy are guiding the sheep home all the way.

[53 : 33] It's a lovely picture. And we will dwell. The idea dwell is living forever. That's our journey. Here it's temporary. We're only, we're only passing through.

In glory, it's forever. And that's where we're going to dwell, in the house of the Lord forever. Great question is, where are you going?

Where is your dwelling place tonight? Is it still a year here? You know, the Christian, the Christian really in this world is of no fixed abode.

We have our homes, but at one level, we're so aware we're just passing through. We're pilgrims. We're on a journey. We're going to somewhere where we're going to dwell forever.

I hope tonight that all of us here can say, yep, this is my journey. I'm going home. I know where I'm going. If not, ask Jesus, even now, to become your Lord so that he will be your shepherd and then take you home.

[54 : 36] Let us pray. Lord our God, we give thanks that we have this wonderful psalm for us, the shepherd psalm. And we see it speaks to us of the shepherd, the good shepherd, who has come to seek and to save those who are lost, the good shepherd who has given his life for the sheep, the good shepherd who has never, ever, ever lost any lamb or any sheep.

And so we pray that you will bless us with every spiritual blessing and that you will guide us and take us to our home safely. Bless our homes and our families and all whom we love for giving us our every sin in Jesus' name we ask it.

Amen. We're going to conclude singing from this psalm but sing psalms, Psalm 23, the 23rd psalm.

The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know. He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

So we'll sing the whole psalm, Psalm 23, to God's praise. The Lord is my shepherd, no want shall I know.

[55 : 59] He makes me lie down where the green pastures grow. He leads me to rest where the calm waters flow.

My wandering steps He brings back to His way. In straight paths, all righteousness making me stay.

And this He has done His great name to display. Though I walk in death valley where darkness is near, because you are with me, no evil I'll fear.

You're out and you're stopping me comfort and cheer. In the sight of my enemies, the table you spread.

The isle of rejoicing you pour on my head. My cup overflows and I'm graciously fed.

[57 : 24] So surely your covenant mercy and grace will follow me closely in all of my ways.

I will dwell in the house of the Lord Almighty. Now may the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit rest and abide upon each one of you now and forevermore.

Amen.