

Ps 23 (ESV) The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. ⁽²⁾ He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. ⁽³⁾ He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. ⁽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. ⁽⁵⁾ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. ⁽⁶⁾ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Ps 23:6 (ESV) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

1. Psalm 23 is about the contented sheep

- A. Those sheep who enjoy the blessings of being cared for by a that good shepherd

2. Verses 1-5 tell us what those blessings are

- A. Rest: *He makes me lie down in green pastures*
- B. Peace: *He leads me beside still waters*
- C. Restoration and encouragement when I feel discouraged or fail: *He restores my soul*
- D. Guidance in life: *He guides me in the paths of righteousness.*
- E. Courage and companionship in those dark days of life: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil for you are with me.*
- F. Comfort in times of difficulty: *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.*
- G. Protection from those who want to harm me: *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*
- H. Power when it is needed: *You have anointed my head with oil.*
- I. Abundance from a generous shepherd: *My cup overflows.*

- 1). Our shepherd is not stingy or miserly – He loves to bless His children

Mt 7:11 (ESV) If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!*

Thought: Now we come to one of my favorite promises in Scripture

Ps 23:6 (ESV) Surely *goodness* and *mercy* shall follow me all the days of my life...

- A. The sheep under the good shepherd's care need not be afraid
Need not worry as they look out into the future
 - 1). For this goodness and mercy will extend to all the days of their life
 - 2). What confidence – what contentment this thought brings

3. This is David writing out of the experience of His life

- A. David was a man who had experienced all the extremes of life
 - 1). From the mountain top experiences of great success – defeating Goliath – Anointed as King
 - 2). To the miry depths of failure – A man famous for a monumental fall
- B. As he looks back upon it all – his history - ups and downs
What emerges is this beautiful panorama of divine faithfulness
 - 1). He sees plenty of personal failure that was always met with God's faithfulness
 - a). He thinks "My life is a testimony of divine mercy"
"My shepherd has never stopped being good"

Point: So David picks up his pen and out of this history of walking

- A. He looks behind him and sees that goodness and mercy have *always* been with him
Therefore he confidently looks ahead and says it will always be with me – every day

4. This is a Psalm written for us

- A. This isn't just for David – for some reason God was treating Him better – differently than me
God doesn't do that: Ro 2:11 (ESV) For God shows no partiality.
 - 1). Psalm 23:6 is for me too! It's for all who truly know the Lord as their shepherd

- B. I know I can relate to David as I look back on my life – I’m sure you can too
- 1). Through all my failures – stupid decisions – struggles - pain
 - 2). Through all my spiritual wanderings – mini-backslidings – heart growing cold towards God
 - a). God’s goodness and mercy have pursued me AND restored me. Again and again!
 - 3). One commentator referred to this “goodness and mercy” as God’s sheepdogs
 - a). They follow – they watch – they nip at our heels to lead us back onto the path
 - b). My heart is so “Prone to wander. So prone to leave the God I love”
 - 1a). But since 1978 God has relentlessly pursued me with goodness
Mercifully turning me back again and again
 - 2a). My heart is so willing to get distracted – so prone to idols
But God in His goodness keeps re-directing - correcting
 - 3a). My heart grows cold – and God mercifully re-ignites it
 - 4). I am in the grip of love – in the grip of the good shepherd

Point: So I look at Psalm 23 and think “That’s me too David! I can relate!”

Transition: Now let’s talk to a select group – those who always seem to see things darkly

5. This Psalm should affect all the spiritual Eeyore’s “I’m blessed. Praise God”

- A. Verses like this are meant to drive the Eeyore out of you
- 1). As we look back and see the goodness and mercy that have always been in our life
 - a). Those times you didn’t think you would make it financially but you did
 - b). Those times you felt the trial would overwhelm you but it didn’t
 - 1a). In the end it worked for your good – it changed you – taught you
 - 2). This is why James says about trials
Jas 1:2–4 (ESV) Count it all *joy*, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, ⁽³⁾ for you *know* that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. ⁽⁴⁾ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.
- B. The Bible is so serious about having joy - WHAT a life we’re called too!
- Ps 47:1 (ESV)** Clap your hands, all peoples! *Shout to God with loud songs of joy!*
- 1 Pe 1:8–9 (ESV)** Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and *rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory,*
- Ne 8:10 (ESV)** ... *the joy of the LORD is your strength.*”
- Ro 14:17 (ESV)** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace *and joy* in the Holy Spirit.
- Is 35:10 (ESV)** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; *everlasting joy* shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain *gladness and joy*, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.
- Point:** So we are called – commanded to have joy (Lousy Christian life!!!)
- A. And it promises like this that fuel that joy – joy is sustained by truth
- 1). God is in control – my life is not a series of haphazard accidents – I’m lucky or unlucky
 - a). It is all being conducted for my good – I must cling to that promise
 - 2). AND I don’t look into the future with dread
 - a). Every day I will be met with these divine twins of *goodness* and *mercy*
Who will relentlessly pursue me into my day – everywhere I go – there they are
 - b). Isn’t that what it says? Did God lie?
Ps 23:6 (ESV) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...
- B. I know sometimes it doesn’t look good and merciful YET

- 1). That's only because you don't understand what God is doing in those circumstances
- 2). This promise tells you that you can look ahead and "Expect goodness and mercy"
 - a). That you will be pursued by these wonderful twins

II. DEFINING THE WORDS

"Goodness"

1. This can be defined in many ways

- A. It is seen in His provision – protection – in His restoration in bringing us back
Ps 31:19 (ESV) Oh, *how abundant is your goodness*, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, *in the sight of the children* of mankind!
 - 1). Those who follow Him – His sheep – they will experience His goodness in their life
 - 2). And Not only will they see it but others too – Why?
 - a). God wants to use your life to display how good He is
 - b). That's what He wanted to do with Israel
 So bless them that others would see how good it is be governed by Him
- B. This is not speaking primarily of materialistic things – possessions – bank accounts
 - 1). This goodness is more about those things that really matter – that give richness to life
 - a). His Joy, His peace, His presence – walking with His touch upon your life
 - b). Resting in His provision – I will always have what I *need!*
Psa 37:23-25 (NLT) The steps of the godly are directed by the LORD. He delights in every detail of their lives. (24) Though they stumble, they will not fall, for the LORD holds them by the hand. (25) Once I was young, and now I am old. Yet I have never seen the godly forsaken, nor seen their children begging for bread.
 - 2). Others see His goodness in your life – see how good it is to walk with Him

Question: Did you know that God wants to use your life as a billboard – to advertise His greatness

What this passage is all about: Phil 2:14-16 (NIV) Do everything without complaining or arguing, (15) so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe (16) as you hold out the word of life...

- A. A life of complaining is a lousy advertisement for God
 Shows you don't trust God – you don't think He really is in control of all things
 - 1). It testifies that you don't believe God is being good to you – that you can't trust Him

Thought: We can be like the Children of Israel in the wilderness

- A. They complained constantly to Moses about their circumstances – God got mad
 "They are not complaining about you Moses they are murmuring against me"
 - 1). Why? He's sovereign – He had arranged those circumstances
 - 2). Why? For their good – It was all out of love
- B. But to listen to them – you'd never get that impression God was good
 "Did He bring us out here just so we would die! How we long for those old ways of Egypt!"
- C. But when we live a life of thanksgiving – because we trust God does know what He's doing
 - 1). We shine in the midst of the darkness of a murmuring society
 - 2). Then when we hold out the Word of life they will listen
 - a). They see what God has done in our life – it validates our words

1 Pe 2:12 (ESV) Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, *they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

Question: What kind of billboard am I?

- A. Blazing forth the goodness of God – or bringing that into question
 - B. The great thing is we can re-write the advertising. How?
 - 1). By believing the scriptures
 - 2). Making the choice that they will dictate how we view everything rather than our emotions
 - C. To believe He is sovereign – in control of all things
 To believe the promises – He is controlling all things for my good
 And no matter how it looks right now I'm experiencing the goodness and mercy of God
- Transition:** So His goodness is seen in all the things He does in our lives
- A. We WILL see His goodness all the days of our life – what a promise!
 - 1). Every morning when I wake up I'm met by these beautiful twins – Goodness and Mercy
 - B. But I think there is another aspect here that just thrills me
 - 1). Provision – Protection – **Presence**

God's Goodness Seen in His Presence

1. Where do I get that from? Remember Moses in Ex. 33

- A. Moses had seen so much of God's glory – 10 plagues in Egypt. Red Sea. Manna.
 - 1). Ex. 33 – God has threatened not to go with the people of Israel after sin of Golden calf
 Moses says "If you don't go with us. I don't want to move from this place"
Exo 33:17 (NLT) And the LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend."
I love this: Exo 33:18 (NLT) Then Moses had one more request. *"Please let me see your glorious presence,"* he said.
 - a). He'd seen so much of God's glory – known His presence
 Now says - Show me more! What I've experienced just makes me hungry for more of you
 - 2). Now listen to the Lord's answer
Exo 33:19 (NLT) The LORD replied, "I will make all my **goodness** pass before you..."
 - a). I will show you my glorious presence by making all my **goodness** pass before you
 I will open your eyes to who I am – my majesty! My beauty
 I'm going to thrill you with me!

Thought: Doesn't your heart just cry out – "Yes Lord" – that's what I want

- A. I need your touch upon my life – I don't just want to be religious – I want to really experience you
- B. I think this is one of the things that concerns me about much of the church today
 - 1). The church is addicted to entertainment – whipping people up emotionally
 - a). But so many times there is so little God in it
 - b). Just a shallow adrenaline rush that is already dissipating by the time you reach your car
- C. We need more than that! More than an emotional rush – especially now – days of great deception
 - 1). We need a grand vision of God – we need to be thrilled by Him
 We need truth about God that brings stability into a world that is rocking and reeling
 - a). Into a church that is rocking and reeling because the Bible is no longer the authority
- D. I think this is one of the reasons so many kids fall away when they go to college
 - 1). They were going to a church they were excited about and loved – that's great
 - a). They had their friends – they loved the music – like a weekly rock concert
 - 2). But they never really fell in love with Jesus – never got excited about Him
 - a). When you hear them talk – it's all about how much they love the church or the pastor
 - 1a). But they never speak of how much they love Jesus! That's a problem

- b). So when they get away from that church they have nothing to hold them

Point: The greatest good that God can do is what He did with Moses – Show us Him!

- A. So that we get excited about who He is!
- 1). An excitement that goes with us into our day – into all of our circumstances
That goes with that young man or woman into college
- B. The church that is excited about Him will have something valuable to offer
Something to give to people that will sustain them through the difficulties of life
- 1). Why I always pray for this church – reduce us down to you Jesus
Take away any self-agendas – politicking – any exalting of man
 - a). Give us a vision of you! That is what we need today!
 - b). Have your goodness pass before us
- C. Make us people like Moses who said “I want to see more of you”
People like David in Ps 41 “Like a deer pants after streams of water so my heart pants after you”
- 1). Show us your glory more and more until we are awestruck by you!
Until you blaze so brightly – so gloriously here that we lose our appetite for the world
 - a). So that when the world looks in they don’t see mere religion
They see your glory blazing forth

Question: Does the Lord want to do this? Want to manifest Himself to us? Thrill us with Him

- A. Of course! He’s designed the whole universe to proclaim His glory

Ps 19:1 (ESV) The heavens declare the glory of God...

- 1). He wants to show Himself to us

Question: Then why don’t I experience this? Why don’t I ever sense the touch of God

- A. There are conditions

- 1). These blessings are for sheep who follow their shepherd
Remember first study – those who can say the **LORD** is my Shepherd
- 2). Jesus in John’s Gospel define who His sheep are – who those under His care look like
Jn 10:27 (ESV) My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.

- B. I want you to see what the promise is for those who do that

TURN: Jn 14:21 (ESV) Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, (**That would be the same as “hearing His voice and following Him**) he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, *and I will love him and manifest myself to him.*”

- 1). This is in a sense what He said to Moses

Exo 33:17-19 (NLT) And the LORD replied to Moses, "I will indeed do what you have asked, for you have found favor with me, and you are my friend." (18) Then Moses had one more request. "Please let me see your glorious presence," he said. (19) The LORD replied, *"I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, 'the LORD,' to you.*

- a). Moses because you live for me I will show you who I am. I will thrill you with me.

- 1a). The disobedient don’t enjoy this blessing do they?

Sin always breaks fellowship with God

- b). This blessing is only for those who follow

- 2). I can’t think of a greater motivation for obeying than this – I will see my God!

- a). He will come to me and show Himself to me – that is the promise!

- b). That is my greatest desire – but it will take obedience to get there!

- c). I like what one Pastor said

“Obedience gets you under the spout where the glory comes out”

- 1a). Disobedience turns the flow off

Listen to this promise: Ps 81:8–10 (ESV) Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, *if you would but listen to me!* ⁽⁹⁾ There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. ⁽¹⁰⁾ I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. *Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.*

- 2a). Put me first – follow me and I promise I will satisfy you
You will see my goodness! You will know my blessings

Thought: If you can't remember the last time you felt the touch of God on your life. I'd check here.

- A. Am I following Him or am I going my own way and still expecting blessing?
1). Am I expecting Him to bless me on my terms or am I living according to His?

Transition: We could go on and on and on with God's goodness – it is unbounding

- A. Got just a moment for mercy – won't take long

THE MERCY OF GOD

Ps 23:6 (ESV) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...

1. Mercy is not getting what you deserve

- A. Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Mercy not getting what you do

2. How necessary this is when we think about blessing in our life

- A. If I got what I deserved I'd get nothing but wrath – that's all I deserve
B. I get (Now listen. Here comes the Gospel) I get what Jesus deserves
1). Jesus went to the cross and was shown no mercy – so I could be
2). Now God looks at me through the performance of Christ = His righteousness
C. He got what I deserved at the cross – my sins poured out on Him = Wrath
I get what He deserves in my life – the blessings, acceptance His obedience earned

Point: Every day my life experiences His mercy – I don't deserve goodness but I get it

- A. I don't deserve being able to call Him Father but I do
B. I don't deserve to be able to look past the grave into a certain future – knowing I'll be with Him
1). But the grave no longer holds a threat to me – why?
a). His mercy in not giving me what I deserve = hell
b). His goodness in dying for me so I could be with Him in heaven instead

Depth of mercy! Can there be
Mercy still reserved for me?
Can my God His wrath forbear,
Me, the chief of sinners, spare?
I have long withstood His grace,
Long provoked Him to His face,
Would not hearken to His calls,
Grieved Him by a thousand falls.
I have spilt His precious blood,
Trampled on the Son of God,
Filled with pangs unspeakable,
I, who yet am not in hell!
I my Master have denied,
I afresh have crucified,
And profaned His hallowed Name,
Put Him to an open shame.
Jesus speaks, and pleads His blood!
He disarms the wrath of God;

Thought: Believers can complain about so much – but you’re NOT going to hell

A. You are a recipient of goodness and mercy – oh thank Him. Worship Him.

THE CALL

1. We have been recipients of goodness and mercy

A. These are the two twins that pursue the child of God relentlessly – Oh thank God!!!!

2. But can I say this – if you don’t know Him today **you are too! How?**

A. You haven’t gotten what your sin demands yet! Your guilt cries out for hell! Justice demands it

B. But God has been merciful – you haven’t gotten what you deserve

C. And God has been good – giving you another breath – another moment to come to your senses

1). Scripture says “Your every breath is in His hands. Each one a gift of grace”

2). Each one giving you more time to turn from your sins in repentance and to embrace Him by faith

D. Listen to what the Scripture says His goodness to you should do in you

Rom 2:4 (NKJV) Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not *knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?*

1). He’s been long suffering – He’s endured your excuses – your reasons not to believe

a). But He is not a God to be trifled with – His patience can wear out

b). He warns us “His Spirit will not always strive with a man”

1a). There is a line we can cross where God says “It’s over” your fate is sealed

2a). He will no longer be good to you – No longer give you time to repent

You will continue to live in rebellion with no resistance from Him

He will no longer come to you and you will end up in eternity in judgment

2). Right now if you feel any tug at all on your heart – that is Him being good to you

a). That is a gift – don’t trifle with it – *You never know when that NO is the last one*

3. God is good – I feel it every day

God is merciful – I have not gotten what I deserve – I get what Jesus deserves

A. I love being a Christian – what rest – what peace – what satisfaction

B. Do you know Him?