The Lord is My Provider

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang.! Thank you for joining us. ...ministry that partner and work together to build and pour into these students and to have students who are willing to serve, willing to give up of their spring break to go and serve.

And I know that there are some experiences on a trip like that where you're singing and the people are very responsive. They seem to be believers and they're affirming. And other times you sing in a trip like that and some of the venues are hard.
And you don't know how the Lord is using a song, using a testimony, using a moment to capture someone's heart and someone's life. But I'm so thankful for our students and for our students who weren't able to go on the trip or students who aren't a part of that group.
The Lord has blessed our church with many teenagers that serve in a number of ways. This is one of them. We are very, very blessed indeed.
If you would turn with me to Psalm 23. We're going to continue in our study. For those who may be new with us on Sunday nights, we have been walking through the familiar words of the 23rd Psalm the last few weeks.
[1:31] And they've come to verse 5. We've got verse 6 kind of hanging out there. Next week's Easter. We don't have evening service.

The next week is Family Matters. And my schedule on paper was good. We were going to finish tonight. But somewhere along the way, I didn't get the whole verse done.
And so we've got verse 6 hanging out there that we're going to have to come back and pick up in a couple of weeks. We're looking at just verse 5 tonight. It says, You are no doubt familiar with the words of Psalm 23.
And as we have been studying, he's been using this metaphor of a shepherd with his sheep. Which of course makes sense because this is what David knew.
His background was as a shepherd. I don't want to lose you in the sense of the flow of the psalm.
[2:41] I don't want to get too distracted in some of the nuances and details. I want just the overall theme of the psalm to be ever in front of us. But I do want to take you just a little bit behind the scenes here.

Because there is actually quite a bit of debate. Not so much into the application. But into what exactly was on David's mind in verse 5.
If you just go back to verse 1, you see that where the psalm begins, The Lord is my shepherd. And everything you see in verses 1 to 4 is all through the motif of a shepherd and a sheep.
The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures as a sheep would. He leads me beside still waters as a sheep would drink. He restores my soul and leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, which as we've looked at in detail, the sheep would be down in the valley for a reason, for a purpose. I fear no evil. And now he uses the instruments, the tools of the shepherd that we looked at last Sunday night to demonstrate how the Lord shepherds us.
[3:49] Your rod and your staff comfort me. And then verse 5. The question is, is verse 5 a continuation of the shepherd-sheep motif?

Or is he changing images from the shepherd, verses 1 to 4, and now in verse 5, looking more at it through the lens of a gracious host?
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil and my cup overflows. As you might imagine, the conclusions are not very different.

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Whether he is thinking of a shepherd providing food for the sheep, or whether he's thinking as a gracious host welcoming a guest to his home for a meal.
Either way, the applications, as we'll look at in a few minutes, the applications are the same. The question is, what is in David's mind?
[4:51] There are some, and good faithful scholars, who would tell you that verse 5 is a continuation of the exact same motif.

It's still strictly through the lens of a shepherd, and others who will say that he's breaking here in verse 5, and changing metaphors to simply that of someone welcoming a guest to their home.
I tend personally to take a middle-of-the-road approach here. I think what he's doing is I do think he is purposefully, in one sense, shifting metaphors to think about welcoming a guest to your home, but never by leaving the imagery of the shepherd behind.
And I'll show that to you as we go, that I think what's in his mind clearly here is he is, in some sense, I think, talking about how the Lord is our host, welcoming us at his table and the significance of that. But even as he does that, he cannot leave behind what he has already been thinking of, how the Lord is our gracious shepherd.
[6:03] The emphasis here in verse 5 is how the Lord shepherds us. So even if you take verse 5 as a change in metaphor, it still is just giving another picture of how the Lord shepherds his people.

So what does he tell us in verse 5? Well, the first thing he tells us is that our God is a gracious provider. He's a gracious provider.
He says, you prepare a table before me. Now, there are overtones here that would still relate to a shepherd and the sheep.
As the spring comes to an end and summer approaches, the shepherd would start to lead the sheep on the long journey as they would be going back up the mountain. They've come down, they've been in the valley, now they're going back up the mountain.
And what would happen is before that part of the journey, the shepherd has to go and survey the land. He would have to go and check out to make sure there was grass to eat.
[7:16] But one of the significant things the shepherd would have to do is to make sure that there were no poisonous weeds around. As the shepherd leads the sheep back up to the highlands, if the sheep encounter poisonous plants, they won't be able to distinguish between them.

And even just a small bite of a poisonous weed, that little sheep would stiffen up and very quickly die from the poison. Philip Keller, who, as I've mentioned before, was a shepherd before becoming a pastor, he is one who takes this as a continuation of the shepherd motif.
And he says it this way, though tedious and tiring with all of the bending, speaking of the shepherd bending over to pull out the poisonous plants, it was a case of preparing the table in the presence of the enemies.
Meaning that the shepherd is having to go and identify the things that would be a threat to the sheep and remove them to protect and defend the sheep.
Those things are true. And I think those things have to be in David's mind. Although I think in his heart, he also, though here, is thinking not just of a shepherd and a sheep, but I do believe here he's thinking about how the Lord shepherds us by welcoming us at his table.
[8:48] Because to share a meal with somebody wasn't just about sustenance, it was about relationship. It wasn't just about provision. It was about intimacy.

And one of the things I think in David's heart here in verse 5 is not only that you feed me, but that you welcome me to your table. And there is a bit of a distinction here.
One author uses an illustration, I think this is really helpful, of the difference between, perhaps you've been invited to a banquet with some significant event.
Maybe there is a keynote speaker that everybody came to see, or maybe you were a part of some award situation, or you were somewhere with a significant dinner, and somebody was providing a very special meal for you.
Well, it's one thing to go and have someone provide a meal for you. It's something very different if that guest of honor shares a table with you. It's not just about the meal.
[9:59] It's now about the conversation. It's about the friendship. If Marce and I have an anniversary and we're going out to eat dinner, the restaurant is fine, but if I say to her, I've made reservations for our anniversary, seven o'clock, here's the restaurant, and she shows up, and there's a table there, and I'm not there.

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And I say, I made reservations. I've provided a food, a meal for you. She's going to say, well, something's missing. Where were you? Because the dinner wasn't just about sustenance.
It's about relationship. And I think what David is saying here is not only that the Lord as our shepherd feeds us, He does, but it's a little deeper, even richer than that.
He not only feeds us, He welcomes us at His table. If you were invited to a dinner, and at the risk of, I don't want to lose, offend, or distract, so we'll just pretend this was, just don't get lost in the name of whoever it may be, but suppose you're invited to a president, the dinner with the president of the United States.
Pick your favorite president. It's not about politics. Whoever your favorite president is, you were invited to go to a dinner at the White House. It would be one thing to be welcomed into that dinner, and you're sitting in this place you've never been, and it's very nice and very fancy, and you're just amazed that you're here at this dinner, but it would be something else if once the food was served, the president came and sat down at your table, and said to you, is there anything you've ever wanted to know about being the president?
[12:00] And you spent an hour and a half just talking with the president of the United States.
Now, depending on your political persuasion, that may sound like a terrible evening, so if you need to adjust the metaphor, have at it, but it's the difference between eating a meal and building a relationship.

What David says here is you prepare a table before me. Who prepared it? The Lord did. He's not just arranging it. He's doing it.
He's not just giving you a gift card and saying, go enjoy a meal. He's saying, you're welcome at my house. You're welcome at my table. It is the Lord who is preparing the table.
It's the Lord who is anointing his head with oil. It's the Lord who is overflowing the cup. This is God as our gracious provider.
When he says he prepares a table, it's language here that means to set everything in its proper order. Overtones of this in John 14, 2, when Jesus says, I go to what?
[13:11] Prepare a place for you. See, the reality of heaven, the greatness of heaven, is not just that you have a place to go.

It's when Jesus says, that where I am, you will be also. That is what makes heaven heaven.
What makes heaven heaven is the presence of Christ. You talk to people who don't even believe the Bible, don't even know God at all, and you ask them, where are you going when you die?
They may tell you heaven, which is always ironic to me, how people who don't even believe the Bible seem so confident about a place called heaven. But if you ask them, what will heaven be like, they'll tell you all kinds of things.
What they won't talk about is the joy of Christ being there, because only a believer eagerly anticipates the blessing of being with Christ. But my friends, that's what makes heaven heaven.
[14:20] A Christless heaven is not heaven. It's not just that the shepherd provides a meal, it's that he welcomes you at his table.

So I take verse 5 as David, still with overtones of the shepherd and the sheep, but more specifically, just giving us another picture, another image of how the Lord is our shepherd.
not only that he feeds us, but he welcomes us at his table. He's a gracious provider. Verse 5 also shows us that our Lord is a strong defender.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. in the presence of my enemies.
Well, for the shepherd protecting the sheep, there were always enemies that were nearby.
And the most dangerous situation for a sheep is if it strayed from the group. We looked at last week that the sheep is unable to protect himself naturally, and a sheep that has strayed from the group is in particular danger and vulnerability here.
[15:40] You prepare a table in the presence of my enemies. What would David have in his mind?
A host who welcomes you at his table and not only provides a meal for you, but provides himself in a relationship with you.

helping David understand that the presence you have with the shepherd does not rule out the opposition you'll face from the world.
It's not as if having the Lord as your shepherd means now everything goes your way. For our teenagers who were just leading us tonight, you're taught so well in Sunday school, you're taught so faithfully on Wednesday nights by Joey.

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I know that you know these things. I just want to make sure we're very clear on these things that as a teenager living your life for Christ does not in any way mean you will be exempt or immune from the pain of this world.
It does not mean everything will work out for you. It does not mean that you're going to get the scholarship. It does not mean that you're going to get the job. It does not mean that you're going to have everything you ever dreamed of come true.
[17:05] Following Jesus is not some form of religious ceremony you do so that you can use Jesus to make everything you want come true. That's not the gospel.

The gospel is that even in the midst of a world who would hate you and persecute you and despise you, the Lord welcomes you at His table.
That's the gospel. It's not some kind of immunity card where everything's going to make life simple and easy. It is to say though that no matter what enemy you have threatening you, you always have the presence of the shepherd.
That's the gospel. And this is why so many people in our world today that the term is deconstructing. It's 1 John 2.
It's people who were never of us that went out from us to show they were never of us. If they had been of us they would have continued with us. 1 John 2.19 What's happening in the world today are people who are never converted walk away from Christianity and then want to go and make a lot of noise talking about why they walked away from Christianity.
[18:18] And the reason is always in some form or another because it didn't work out like they hoped it would. Well the gospel is you're a sinner bound for hell and in grace rescued from the wrath of God and Christ is yours and heaven is your home.

Where in the gospel did you think everything was going to work out the way you wanted it to? That's not the gospel. That is an abused twisted form of the gospel.
And so what David is saying is you prepare a table for me you provide for me and even though you provide for me it's not as if everything is easy I still have enemies yet in the very presence of those enemies in the very reality of a life that can still be difficult and still be treacherous I am welcomed at the table of my shepherd.
That's the hope that we have as believers. believers. And there are plenty of you in this room who could give testimony that following Jesus does not mean everything works out in a simple way.
And in the presence of your enemies the Lord is your shepherd. And because he is you'll have everything you need in any given moment.
[19:48] And he will lead you and even in the valley you're still on the path of righteousness with the nearness of the shepherd and he provides for you and he welcomes you and it does not mean that the world affirms you your enemies may be right outside the door.

but you're welcomed at his table. Third verse 5 shows us the Lord as our attentive healer our attentive healer you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies and you anoint my head with oil.
Again this statement in David's mind I just can't help but think he's thinking probably in terms of both pictures one the host that welcomes you to the meal and also the shepherd who provides for the sheep because in both senses the anointing with oil would be on his mind.
If you welcome a guest to your home you could anoint them with a kind of oil a kind of perfume to wash their head to wash their hands to wash their feet.
But again with the shepherd he would use oil in a very purposeful way for the good of the sheep. The shepherd would use oil to help prevent danger from the sheep.
[21:26] Those of you who have a hard time sleeping at night this won't help you but part of the reality is for the shepherd that he has to protect the sheep from nasal flies flies that would buzz around the head of the sheep trying to make their way into the membranes of the nasal passages of the sheep.

It gets worse they would try to deposit their eggs inside the nose of the sheep those eggs would hatch and there would be this worm-like larva that would then be inside the sheep's head.
You feeling good yet? What those sheep would have to do because of the pain is they just go bang their head into something.
They have no way to defend themselves. And so the shepherd would apply this oily substance and smear it all over the nose of the sheep as a protection against those flies.

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It would also be used to heal wounds because not only would nasal flies be a danger another concerns what's known as scab. Scab is a highly contagious irritating disease that's very common among the sheep.
[22:39] It's this microscopic parasite. It spreads among the sheep particularly in warm weather. And when infected sheep would rub their heads together as a sign of affection it would cause that scab to spread.

And so the shepherd would have to build a dip where he could take his flock and dip them into this oily substance to submerge their body to protect against this and have to submerge their head into this oily substance to protect them.
He had to anoint their head with oil to fight against disease. The shepherd also if he had animals in his care that were in conflict they may butt their heads together and so he could take oil and rub it on their heads because that way if two people are crashing into each other they could hurt each other.
If their heads are covered with oil they just glance off of each other and so there's no damage done. Well David's grown up with this.
Whatever David does, wherever David goes, he's still a shepherd by trade. That's what he's known, that's what he's learned. It may not be what he practices anymore at one point in his life but it's what he knew growing up.
[24:01] And as David thinks about the usage of oil, it would be used as a host welcoming a guest to the home but he also has to still have in his mind how he has seen this used in his past.

And the imagery of the Lord anointing our head with oil is in part to say I'm welcoming you to my home, I'm cleaning you, I'm providing for you, I'm helping you to enjoy this meal, but as a shepherd he's always thinking to himself.
I remember those sheep and if I didn't anoint their nose with oil, they would get nasal flies and they would just go crazy.
And they would get scab and pass it from one to the other and it was just a mess. And I remember when I had a couple of these that were just contentious and I had to put oil on their heads so that as they would ram their heads together, instead of killing each other they could just glance off of each other.
And he looks at the Lord as his shepherd, as his host, as his provider, and he says, his rod and his staff comfort me, he provides for me, he welcomes me at his table, and he even anoints my head with oil, which I just take to mean David's saying the Lord is always providing for my need.
[25:37] Today, whatever it is, the Lord is providing for my need. When my boys were little, I wasn't much help if they were hurt or sick.

The only thing I had to do was to get a cup of water. Dad, I got the flu. You need some water? Dad, I think I just cut my hand off with a tool.
Let me get you a cup of water. I don't know what to do for you. Water is all I got. If you take water away from me, I've got nothing to offer you.
But I can fix a mean cup of water. water. You know what you really need? You need someone in your life who whatever is wrong knows how to help you.
That's what you need. Somebody who whatever is happening knows how to help you. Who knows how to pray for you when you're struggling.
[26:47] Who knows how to hold you accountable. Who knows how to be encouraging when you need that. Who knows how to be strong when you need that. Who knows how to push you when you need that.

Who knows how to put their arm around you when you need that. And I think what David is saying here is the Lord shepherds his people not just by feeding them but by personal relationship with them.
And he anoints my head with oil. And I just take to mean that whatever the need is for the day, the Lord knows how to provide for me. He knows how to provide.
And I think church this is where we can really rest here. Is the Lord knows what we need and so we trust him providentially to bring to us whatever we need.
And then to give us in his word whatever we need for that day. He anoints our head with oil. Sometimes that oil is to refresh us.

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[27:52] Sometimes that oil is to protect us. Sometimes that oil is to help us resolve conflict. But the Lord knows exactly what we need.

And then he ends verse five that my cup overflows. This is just the picture of the Lord as the extravagant host. host. In the ancient east there was there were there just like in our culture there were some ways that you would let people know they were welcome at your house.
You have a glass of drink on the table and as long as that glass was full it wasn't just about your thirst it was the host saying let's keep talking.
And if you saw your glass getting lower and lower it's not because your host forgot that you were thirsty it was the host saying it's getting late. That's ancient east way of talking.
The host back in that culture is not going to say what time is it? No he's just going to let your glass get empty. And when it gets empty you know it's our time to go.
[29:09] Well what does David say? Look at the end of verse 5. My cup overflows. I think there are two things this means.

One is of course it's showing that we have provision made but it's more than that. The cup overflowing is a picture of the host saying to the guest you don't need to leave.
you're welcome here. David is not being served leftovers he's getting the very best and he's not just being satisfied he's befriended and he's not just welcome to come over he's told to stay.
this cup overflows. This is the host saying not merely that I want to make sure you have enough to drink for this meal.
This is the host saying you don't need to go anywhere else. you're welcome here.
[30:39] You know in real life some hosts just go to great lengths to make things special and as hospital as possible. people I need to be careful I say this lest I get overrun and get in trouble but I wish all of you could spend the night at my house.

Not at the same time and not even in real life more metaphorically but I wish you could experience what it's like to spend the night at our house.
I mean everybody provides you with a bed everybody provides you with a towel but when friends of ours come into town and spend that at our house the room where they stay Marcy gets a gift basket and puts food of their favorite snacks in there.
She has a little placard with the wifi password on the nightstand so you don't have to ask and wonder what it is. It's amazing. It's not just saying you've got a place to stay it's her way of saying to our friends who spend the night with us you are at home with us.
She goes the extra mile and then the extra mile to let people at our house know you're family to us. It's a beautiful thing.
[32:01] I'd like to be a guest in my own home. And I think that's the picture of verse five my cup overflows. This is the most extravagant way a host could say to his guest I want you here.

And he fills up the glass and the water is falling over and the water is dripping down the table and the guest is saying I'm not even thirsty anymore and the host pours more in there not because it's about the meal it's about what it's conveying.
you're welcome at my table. And this is what makes heaven heaven. It's not the size of your mansion. Get that out of your mind.
The picture of heaven is this you're welcome in the father's house. That's the amazing thing of heaven. You're welcome there. Christ is there.
He's prepared a place for you and where he is is the very place that you are forever welcome. that's the heart of the gospel. And as long as you're on this earth just know that as the Lord leads you and feeds you and restores you and guides you and protects you and welcomes you while all that's happening just know there will be enemies that abound.
[33:34] There will be the opposition of the world. David says he does this in the presence of my enemies.

There are still people who wish for his demise. For the sheep there are still coyotes and bears and cougars.
There are still animals out there that would love to devour them. It's not that everything on this earth is smooth. It's that wherever the sheep go the shepherd is near.
It's that wherever you're fed it's not just that you have food it's that you're welcome at the table of the great shepherd.

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this is overflowing grace and overflowing love. And one of these days when verse four the valley of the shadow of death is not just about trepidation or fear or hardship.
[34:48] One of these days when it is not just the shadow of death but it is the presence of death. One of these days when you are absent from the body and present with the Lord when the final storm has passed when you are safe in your father's house forever I can assure you of this you won't regret one thing that you never had but you will spend an eternity amazed at what you did receive.

The Lord is my shepherd. The Lord himself provides the table. The Lord himself not only serves the meal but sits down and welcomes me at his table.
And he didn't just fill my cup. my cup overflows. It's never time to leave. You've never outstayed your welcome because the whole point of the father's house, the whole point of the place Jesus prepares for you is that where he is, you will be also.
our host, our shepherd, our savior welcomes you and will forever be near you.
Lord, we thank you for the words of Psalm 23. I pray Lord that it would give comfort. I pray that it would provide for every need present this evening.
[36:53] you are a good shepherd to us. You are a gracious host to us. You are the one that we trust in and turn to.

even in the presence of our enemies. You, oh Lord, are a strong tower.
The righteous run to you and they are saved. We are thankful for your provision and your kindness and for the way that you care for us.
As the words of Psalm 46 declares for us, you are our refuge and our strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. And so we will be still and know that you are God, that you will be exalted among the nations, exalted in all the earth.
[38:35] to the glory of the name of your son, the Lord Jesus, we pray. Amen. God bless. Have a great week. God bless.

God bless. God bless.
God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless. God bless.oh. God bless.

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