The Lord is My Guide

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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. Tonight, let me encourage you to turn in your Bible to Psalm 23.

As we continue in this study that we began last week, from this very well-known chapter in the Bible, as Christians and non-Christians alike, are pretty familiar with these words.
Of course, it is the one who knows the Lord in the personal way who can claim the promises given to God's people. And so we looked last week at verse 1, just this first sentence, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
And we looked at it with two headings. One was the comfort of the shepherd, the other the confession of the sheep. The comfort of the shepherd is that he is our shepherd. And every word here in our English translation is helpful for us.
The Lord is my shepherd. It starts with the Lord. It starts with the covenantal name of God, Yahweh. That the God that has revealed himself and the God that we know, he is our shepherd.
[1:22] Our confidence, our comfort is singular. It's from the Lord. The reason why we have hope, the reason why we have security, is because of the Lord.

And there's a relationship here. The Lord is my shepherd. There's a relationship that you know the Lord. The relationship is both familial and familiar.
It's familial. There's a, you're in his family. It's familiar because you know him. And as the student choir just led us in, we walk with the Lord.
We speak to the Lord in prayer. He speaks to us through his word. There is a relationship. And there's a sense of protection because the metaphor David uses is that of shepherd and sheep. The Lord, it starts with him. The Lord is my shepherd. That's the comfort the shepherd gives us.
And then we looked secondly last week at the confession of the sheep.
[2:25] Our confession is, I shall not want. Meaning, I shall not lack. That because the Lord is my shepherd, there is no thing I need in the moment that I will not have.

He will give us the grace to live. He will give us the grace to endure suffering. He will give us the grace to endure trial. And even when the end of our earthly life comes, he will give us the grace to die in faith.
There is nothing in the moment that you need that you will not have. It is because the Lord is our shepherd that we can say that.
If you'll just remember the first words of Psalm 23, the rest falls into place. It's about the Lord. It's about who he is. It's about what he does for us. That's why we will not lack. That's why there is nothing we will be in want of.
[3:31] Because the Lord is our shepherd. We depend on him. We trust in him. And that brings security to us. So after this great statement of who the Lord is, David now is going to move to describe life under the great care and shepherd of the Lord as his shepherd.

Let me read to you the words of one author. He said this, Shepherds had to live with the sheep 24 hours a day, and the task of caring for them was unending. Day and night, summer and winter, in fair weather and foul, they labored to nourish, guide, and protect the sheep.
Who in his right mind would choose to be a shepherd? Yet, the Lord himself has chosen to be our shepherd.
The Lord is our shepherd, and because he is, we have all we need. Verse 2, He makes me lie down in green pastures, and he leads me beside still waters.
Let's make note of two things. First, the sheep lie down. The sheep lie down. And because the sheep lie down, let's make note of a couple of things.

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[4:56] One, it means that there is rest. There is rest. Sheep are fearful animals. They are instinctively skittish.

They are frightened. They are easily panicked. And when sheep are scared, they will not lie down to rest. Only the shepherd they know can provide the assurance they need to help them to rest.
So the shepherd has to do what is necessary for the sheep to be able to rest. He has to gently lead them. And he has to provide for them what they need, even if it's not in the moment what they may want.
It's kind of like being a parent, right? You've got to give to your kids what they need, even if in the moment it's not what they want. You see to it that your children are taught and educated and do their homework and study and prepare, even though in the moment if you just ask them, do you want to do this, most of them will say, can I watch TV instead?
If you indulge them, they never learn. Your children need to eat healthy. If they don't eat healthy, it's going to be to their detriment, even though on any one given meal if you said to them, eat whatever you want, very few would reach for something healthy.
[6:28] And children need to sleep. Even though in the moment on any given night if you said to your child, do you want to go to sleep or do you want to stay up all night watching TV, playing on your phone, they would likely choose the latter.

But as a faithful parent, what you say to your children is, I will give you what you need. I know better than you what you need.
I know better than you what's best for you. And so I will gently lead you and provide for you so that you have as my child all you need.
This is what the Lord does for us. He makes us lie down in green pastures. And for the Lord to allow us to lie down, for the shepherd to help the sheep lie down, there are some things that have to be done.
Philip Keller was a shepherd for eight years and became a pastor and author. And based on his experience of his time as a shepherd, he writes that there are four things that are requirements for sheep to be able to rest.
[7:44] One, they cannot be fearful. Two, they cannot have friction with other sheep. Three, they must be free from pests.

And four, they cannot be hungry. Now, on a side note, if you ever wondered, why does the Bible refer to us as sheep, now you know.
I just described you, right? You can't sleep if you're fearful. You can't sleep if you've got friction if you're mad at somebody. You can't sleep if you're not free from pests.
No one has ever said, did you get that spider in the bed killed? No, we'll find it tomorrow. No. You move, right? And lastly, the sheep can't sleep if they're hungry.
And that's why we're called sheep. But what we see from this is that the shepherd has a lot of work to do if those sheep are going to be able to lie down and rest.
[8:50] So understand the metaphor. When David says, he makes me lie down, what he's saying is that the Lord has done as my shepherd what the shepherd must do to have the sheep lie down.

This is the Lord providing for us everything that we need. A group of sheep that are restless, if they are discontented, if they are angry, if they are in friction, if they are disturbed, they don't do well.
And neither do we. When David says, the Lord is my shepherd, he's saying, I'm like a sheep. And to say he makes me lie down is David saying, the shepherd treating me like his sheep has done for me what I'm dependent upon him to do.
This is not a case simply of saying, when I'm sleepy, I go to sleep. This is David saying that a sheep going to rest is not a simple thing.
The shepherd must provide for that to happen. And David says, the Lord is my shepherd. And one of the ways he provides for me is he ensures that I'm able to rest.
[10:19] He makes me lie down in green pastures. That means he's been fed. He's had enough to drink by the still waters.

They lie down to rest because they have all they need. They are secure and safe in the shepherd. This is true for you as God's children.
You rest secure and safe in his hands. Now notice the verbs. Anytime you study the Bible, it's always helpful to notice the verbs.
Particularly who's doing the working. Verse 2, he makes me. He leads me. Verse 3, he restores me.

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He leads me. The shepherd is the one doing the work. The shepherd is the one making it possible. The sheep respond to the shepherd trusting in the work he has done.
[11:28] It's a good time for us to be reminded that as a Christian, our new life in Christ starts by resting in the finished work of Jesus.

Matthew 11, 28, come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you, say it with me, rest. I will give you rest.
Who's doing the verb here? Who's doing the action? The Lord. This is where our life in Christ starts. By finding rest in the work of Jesus.
But ultimately, the reason the sheep can lie down is because the shepherd is nearby. That's why the sheep can lie down. This is why verse 1 is so meaningful.
It is the Lord who is my shepherd. We can trust and rest because it is the Lord who is near. So tonight, when you lie down to rest, you're going to sleep.
[12:35] Two hours. Four hours. Ten hours. If you have a newborn, 45 minutes.

Yes. But you're going to sleep. And when you sleep, you can't do anything.
You're in control of nothing. When you sleep, if your team is still playing a game, you can't cheer for them, as if that matters anyway from your living room, but you can't support them.
You can't do anything about what's happening in the house or the world outside of you because you're asleep. You're gone. You're out.
You control nothing. You have no power. You have no authority. You have no control. You can't even see to it that you stay alive.
[13:35] The Lord is going to have to keep your heart beating. The Lord is going to have to give you the gift of waking up in the morning. The whole world's going to spin, and while you're asleep, much of the world is awake.

Decisions are being made. Things are happening. Transactions are taking place. People are buying and selling and making decisions and going to work and going to school all over the world.
All the while, you are completely out. Think about how much is happening in the world while you're asleep, and not just good things.
There's all kinds of atrocities happening while you sleep. You say, well, if I think about that, how can I ever rest? Here's how. Because the Lord, your shepherd, is near.
Your rest is not because circumstances have become favorable. It's because of the nearness of your shepherd.
[14:43] You take a young child when a bad storm rolls through. There's thunder, and there's lightning, and there's wind, and there's rain, and that young child is shaken. And the storm wakes him up, and instinctively, that little child goes down the hallway and says to his mom and dad, it's a storm, it's loud, I'm scared, can I get in bed with you?

And that child gets in bed with the parent. And the parent has just lost their sleep. They were awakened. And your comfortable spot in your bed has been replaced by feet that have kicked you and taken your covers.
And in about 30 seconds, while you think to yourself, I'll never go back to sleep, the next thing you hear is the sound of your child fast asleep. The storm didn't move.
The child was just near to his parent. And so the child can rest. Four-year-old child comes into bed with you scared and says, Daddy, there's a big storm outside.
I'm scared. He doesn't need a lecture on barometric pressure, and he doesn't need a flip chart on how storms happen and dry lines and cold fronts and warm fronts and tornadoes.
[16:06] All he wants to know is one thing. Can I be where you are? And if I can be where you are, that child will sleep just fine.

It's the comfort the shepherd brings that allows the sheep to rest.
He makes me lie down. This is a picture of contentment. This isn't simply a picture of sleep.
This is a picture of contentment. The New Testament speaks of this in 1 Timothy 6. Godliness with contentment is great gain.
This has been on my mind because one of the things I've been asked to teach on at Masters this coming week is to teach for a couple of hours on with a student.
[17:05] I'm going to teach on that topic is in California. You think it's expensive here. You ought to go to California. And so you've got all these students trying their best to be prepared but the question is how can they be content to really trust in the Lord for what is unknown about the future?

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So a mind in preparing for that has been in Philippians 4 where Paul says not that I'm speaking of being in need for I've learned in whatever situation how to be content.
And he follows that up by saying in verse 12 of Philippians 4 I know how to be brought low I know how to abound in any and every circumstance I've learned the secret of having plenty or facing hunger having abundance or being in need I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
See in Philippians 4 what Paul is saying is not some verse to memorize so that you always get a base hit when you're up to bat. What Paul is saying is not some verse to memorize I can do all things which means you're going to always make an A on the exam.
What he's saying is if you trust in the Lord if you know the Lord then no matter what you face in that moment though there may be things that you desire you can trust that you really will have everything you need in that moment because the Lord provides for His people.
[18:37] and the result of that is Paul says I've learned the secret to being content. The picture of the sheep lying down to rest is a picture of contentment.

There's also in this short phrase a picture of provision. He makes me lie down what does He make me lie down in? Green pastures.
Green pastures. They're not just going to a green place. It's a green pasture. And that pasture may be a place where the shepherd has had to work long and hard requiring much work for the land to be suitable.
It's also worth noting that if you're going to be lying down in green pastures that the shepherd is going to have to lead you where the pasture is and not everything that looks green is a green pasture.
Every once in a while someone will say in fact I've got a friend of mine who was out of state speaking at a conference and he knows that I'm a yard guy and so he said look at this house of this guy that I'm staying with.
[19:55] Look how green his lawn is and he sent me a picture of it and it just killed me because the lawn was green but there's a reason. Weeds are green. It was all weeds.

There was not a blade of grass and the man who was opening his home had great hospitality. Praise the Lord for that. He couldn't keep a lawn to save his life. It was green.
It was green but it was a disaster. So I was faced with this fork in the road. Do I say praise the Lord for his provision.
You've got a place to stay. Or do I give him a lecture on what a good lawn is. So I gave him the lecture. I felt I could serve him better that way.
Don't be deceived here. He leads them to green pastures. The world will offer you things that are green too but it won't feed your soul.
[20:58] the world will offer you cheap substitutes for what only the Lord can provide but it will not give you nourishment.

He makes me lie down in green pastures. Why green pastures? Because that's what's needed to eat. And sheep can't sleep if they're hungry.
So to lie down means they've been well fed and how were they well fed? Because the shepherd took them to green pastures.
No cheap substitute here. It's the real thing. Notice what David is saying. The Lord will feed his people.
How does the Lord feed his people? Through his word. Jeremiah says I ate of your word.
[22:03] I digested your word. I took it in. It fed me. It fulfilled me. And so one of the things that David is helping us to see here is that the Lord is helping him to rest but the rest comes because the sheep have been fed.

The sheep lie down. There's a second thing I want you to notice and that is the shepherd leads. The sheep lie down but it's because, number two, the shepherd leads.
It's come straight from the text in verse two. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me. me. This really is a sweet thought for God's people that he leads us.
In fact, the hymn writer, you know the hymn, he leadeth me, oh blessed thought. What an amazing thought to just think that the Lord leads his people.
Psalm 32 8 says, I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go. I will counsel you with my eye upon you. I know you. I see you.

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[23:18] I'm near you. I'm watching over you. I will instruct you. I will counsel you. And how does the Lord counsel his people? Through his word.

He leads us. He makes me lie down. That speaks of our rest. It's in green pastures. We're content because we've been fed.
He leads me. But it's not just that he leads us. David includes this beautiful description of metaphor. He leads me beside still waters. If you've got an ESV Bible, it may give you a note here on the text that a literal rendering here is that means waters of rest.
The Lord leads me to waters of rest. Why still waters? Well, because sheep are instinctively afraid of noisy water.
[24:25] Loud running water, rushing water frightens them. They won't drink it. So the shepherd has to do some work.

He may have to gather some large stones and dam up where the water is. He's got to do things to cause the water to be waters of rest. Waters that are still enough for them to drink and it provides rest because you can't sleep if you're thirsty.
But if you won't drink, if the waters are noisy, you need still waters that provide waters of rest. rest. This is not a promise.
Being led to still waters is not a promise that life will always be easy or calm or serene or absent of pain and stress. Rather, this is a promise that the Lord will provide for you to drink deeply from His Word whatever it is you face.
Another problem the sheep have is if they see still waters, quiet waters, waters, what if a bunch of animals have just trekked through it? What if the water is filthy?
[25:44] What if the water is filled with parasites? Well, the sheep can't know that, but the shepherd can. The shepherd has to lead them not just to water, but to still waters, to water that feeds them and waters that nourishes them.

I can't help but think of how many times in our lives have we thought we knew better than God did of what we need. Maybe God removes something from us and we think, why did you remove that from me?
Well, because He knows what you need. If the sheep were to drink unclean water, it would be to their detriment.
even though in the moment the sheep may say, but that water is exactly what I need, the shepherd knows better. So He leads them to water that's good for them.
And so the Lord does for us. The Lord provides. Sometimes the Lord gives, sometimes the Lord takes away. What did Job teach us to say?
[26:57] Blessed be the name of the Lord. He knows better than we do what we need. He leads me beside still waters.

In verse 2, it's green pasture so He's fed. It's still water so they have had plenty to drink, which reminds me in Matthew 5, 6, where the Lord says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be, what's the word?
satisfied. Satisfied. And even in the Sermon on the Mount, it's a term that you could use of an animal who's been led to a feeding trough and that animal has eaten all that he wants to eat so much so that animal has stepped away from the feeding trough because they've had all they need. To be satisfied is to have your needs met in full. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.
Hunger and thirst for God, you'll be satisfied because the shepherd feeds the sheep. You see it in John 4, the woman at the well in verse 13, Jesus said to her, everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again.
[28:26] The water that I will give him will become in him spring of water welling up to eternal life. And the woman said to him, sir, give me this water. Give me what you're talking about.

Now, she thinks he's talking about physical water. He's using it as a way to help her understand that what he really offers is something spiritually where she'll never thirst again.
It will meet her every spiritual need, but her request is, the kind of water you're talking about, I know nothing about. Give me that water. And what we want to say as God's people is wherever you lead me, whatever you know I need, help me just to say, I want that.
And the Lord leads you, you go. He's going to lead you, He's going to feed you, He's going to help you to lie down and find rest.

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And if He leads you to a place where the waters are raging, here's the promise of Psalm 23 verse 2, He will make that water a place of rest.
[29:42] Providing for you what you need. Not meaning there's no difficulty. Meaning in the midst of the difficulty, He will make sure you have what you need.

And part of the problem is that just like the world may offer things that are green that aren't real pastures, so the world will offer you things that look like water.
It just doesn't satisfy. In Jeremiah 2 verse 13, it says, For my people have committed two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and hewed out cisterns themselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water.
Beloved, the world will offer you things that are green. It just won't feed your soul. It will offer you something to drink.
it just won't be the water you need to be satisfied. But, if you know the Lord as your shepherd, you will be fed, you will drink, you will be content, you will find rest, and because of that, you can lie down.
[31:07] because the shepherd is near. If the Lord is not the shepherd, these promises have no merit.

Because anyone can promise these things, but they can't deliver them. The Lord must be our shepherd for these things to be true. And, not only that, but you must belong to the shepherd for these promises to be true.
Because, if you don't belong to the shepherd, if he's not your shepherd, then the promises aren't for you. But, if it is the Lord who is promising these things, and if you do know the Lord as your personal shepherd, then you can enjoy the provision he gives to his sheep.
He will feed, he will give you water, he will give you rest, he will give you protection, so much so that no matter what's happening around you, you can lie down and be content, no matter why, because the shepherd is near.
And, that's the promise of verse 2, that he makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters. others. I want you to understand tonight that the Lord promises to care for his people.
[32:41] The Lord promises that. But ultimately, as John reminded us in our morning service today, our greatest problem is sin.

So, if the Lord is going to provide for us, and our greatest problem is sin, then whatever or however he provides, it's going to have to include dealing with our sin, which of course is exactly what he does.
As he demonstrated his love this way, that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. That he who knew no sin became sin for us.
That we who were rebels could be forgiven through the work of Jesus. it is on the cross that you see the final fulfillment that the Lord provides for his people.
Because if he's promised to meet your need, and your greatest problem is your sin, we better have a shepherd who covers our sin.
[34:13] which is exactly what happens on the cross. Your needs perfectly met by the shepherd himself.

Which is why Jesus said of the false teachers and of the spiritual leaders who were disobedient, that they were nothing more than hired hands.
he said, but I lay down my life for who? The sheep. Because I know them and they know me.
At the cross, he dealt with our sin. And finally, completely, and forever, we find our rest in the work of Jesus on the cross.
And the symbol of that work and the symbol of that rest are the elements that we take at the Lord's Supper. So can I ask you just to join me in a time of preparing for that?
[35:33] If you would, bow your head and close your eyes with me as the deacons join me here at the front. The world is the way to the world and the world is the world and the world is themumbles can I the world

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