Fear Not - Part 5

# Surely Goodness and Love Will Follow Me

## (Psalm 23:1-6)

I’m so glad that you are here today because this is the conclusion, week number five of our series Fear Not. And I would have hated for you to miss the culmination of the past four weeks, because I believe this message is going to connect the dots for you, making this a nice package, sealing up this series with a bow tie, just like a cherry on top. God gave me this word to encourage you, because when you find yourself in a situation, or facing a challenge that is so much bigger than you, when you receive a word from God it makes all the difference in the world.

In your weakest and most vulnerable moments, when life becomes too much to handle, it’s the perfect set up for God because he wants to hear you pray about something that is bigger than you. He wants to see your faith in action, he wants to hear you praying for miracles, so that he can meet you there and you can experience the power of his presence. Unfortunately, I think that way too many times we become obsessed with trying to work things out on our own, too preoccupied with giving it our best shot, that we overlook the fact that God has promised that he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Now, on the other hand, he never promised that you wouldn’t have to struggle, that you wouldn’t have to fight for it, but he promised that he would be with you through it. His presence makes all the difference in the world and I don’t think there is anybody in the Old Testament who knew this better than David. As a young man, he was completely overlooked by his father, rejected and abandoned by his brothers, growing up anointed but not appointed, running for his life and yet not conquered. And so, if you would turn in your Bibles to Psalm chapter 23, now much later in his life, David gives us a glimpse or a snapshot, a summary of a life where he has experienced so much rejection, disappointments and difficulty, and yet remaining faithful to God he walked victoriously through life.

As we come to the 23rd Psalm, David reflects on the challenges, struggles, and battles that he has experienced in life. And it’s in that context that he says in verse one,

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want” (Psalm 23:1).

The Lord is, not can be, not ought to be, not I hope he is, but “The Lord is my shepherd.” And the personal connection here is unmistakable, there is a relationship, it’s not just that David belongs to him, but he says the same God who created the universe belongs to me, “the Lord is my shepherd.”

Here in the opening verse, we find David using this metaphor of a shepherd because of his own experience as a shepherd. He understood better than most of us what it is to deliver a lamb, to raise it from infancy, to care for it day and night, year after year, having a relationship with a lamb that has now become a sheep. He knew what it was like to protect the sheep, to care for the sheep, and he said, “the Lord is my shepherd,” the Lord is to me what I was to those animals. In other words, “I won’t be hungry, I won’t be thirsty, I shall not be in want.”

David says, “The Lord is my shepherd” and even though I am vulnerable, I won’t be intimidated, because I am able to rest in his presence. Verse two,

“He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters” (Psalms 23:2).

David says, not only does he make me lie down, but he’s leading the way, he’s not pushing me, but he’s up in front of me. And so, all David must do is follow the footsteps of the Shepherd because he leads him beside quiet waters. In other words, he doesn’t have to worry about getting caught in water that is too deep, currents that are moving to swiftly, because there is nothing to fear when the shepherd leads us. He’s going to lead you beside quiet waters, he’s going to take you where you can safely stand in it, where you can drink from it without fear because he’s watching over you.

I wonder if there are any of you that God has led you beside quiet waters, but even though he blessed you, even though he gave it to you, he had to teach you how to rest in his abundance? David said, “He makes me lie down in green pastures.” In other words, you were so worried, so anxious, so insecure that you couldn’t even sleep at night. You were so afraid that it might not last, that somebody might take it from you, that he had to make you lie down in what he gave you.

David said, “He makes me lie down in green pastures,” and even if I doubted, even if I worried, even if I stumbled and fell, even if I lost my peace and lost my joy. He said, I’ve still got to praise him because,

“He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his namesake” (Psalm 23:3).

I wonder if there’s anybody here that has ever been restored? You didn’t think you were going to make it, you would’ve quit, you would’ve walked away, but the Lord restored you. The prophet Isaiah said it this way,

“We all like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6).

And so, maybe you were wounded, somebody hurt you, and you were struggling to forgive, but the Lord restored you. Or maybe you procrastinated, and you didn’t spend time in prayer, you didn’t read your Bible, but God stepped in and restored your soul.

I am so thankful that God guides us in paths of righteousness, because I would’ve lost my way, I would’ve given up, but he guides me in paths of righteousness. I’m so thankful that he guides me because I wasn’t born righteous, I wasn’t naturally righteous, and I don’t even always want to be righteous. Have you ever felt that way? When you just wanted to say something or do something that was contrary to your holy and sanctified self. But if you’ve truly been saved, you know that righteousness is a path, and he guides you because your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. You can’t even do what you want to do when you want to do it, because Jesus purchased you with his blood, the Holy Spirit dwells in you, and he guides you in paths of righteousness for his namesake.

And so, David is laying this out before us line upon line, telling us who God is, telling us what God can do, telling us what God did, and then he makes a transition in verse four. He goes from talking about God to giving his testimony, he begins talking about himself, and he says,

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Psalm 23:4).

David said, “Even though I walk,” and I wonder if any of you can relate today, because we’ve all got places to go, people to see, and things to do, but there is that shadow. All of us have been terrorized by the shadow in one way or another. Some of you are worried about COVID, nervous about crowds, anxious about whether you should get the shot or not get the shot, but whatever you do you’re going to have to keep going, you’re going to have to walk through it.

David’s walking through the valley, he’s walking in the shadow, and he says,

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me…” (Psalm 23:4).

In other words, he’s not denying the shadow, he knows it’s a dark time right now, but he also knows the Shepherd has called him to walk through it, and that he guides him in paths of righteousness. And so, David says, “I will fear no evil, for you are with me,” and even though he’s walking through it, he knows it’s just a shadow, and the Lord is walking through it with him.

I think we would all have to admit that there are some things that shake you up, things that concern you, but there’s a big difference between being concerned and being paralyzed, being careful and being intimidated. The Lord tells us that in the last days,

"Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken” (Luke 21:26).

In other words, there will be those who are paralyzed by fear in such a way that they are left helpless to the enemy. Because that’s what fear will do, fear will restrain you, it will limit your freedom without anybody handcuffing you. Fear can stop you from doing what you want to do because you can’t think straight, you can’t talk right when you’re fearful, you can’t function correctly when you’re fearful, and yet we’re not unaware of the devil’s schemes. The Bible says,

“Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

Did you ever wonder why the Bible says that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion? Well, the reason why he’s roaring is so that he can intimidate you, terrorize you, and paralyze you, leaving you so helpless that you’re unable to run. But if you remember whose you are, saying the Lord is my shepherd, and not allowing yourself to be intimidated by the roaring, you will be able to think clearly and respond appropriately.

You see, much of life is predicated upon how we react to the roaring, because the devil wants to keep us locked-up in our house, afraid to read the paper or watch the news, but it’s just a shadow. And so, we’ve got to recognize the source, we’ve got to resist the spirit of fear, remembering that,

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

When we’re walking through the valley, walking through the shadow, whether the enemy is roaring in your house or on the job, his purpose is always to intimidate you. He wants you to be so consumed with fear, so overwhelmed with anxiety, just spending all of your time talking and thinking about the enemy, so that you fail to get on your knees and talk about the greatness of God. He’s given you a spirit of “power and of love and of a sound mind” and I hope that you can get that in your soul because you’re going to have to walk through that shadow.

We’re going to have to face that roaring lion every day, you’re going to have to face the shadow, face your enemy, and say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” You may need to write it on your hand, put it on the bathroom mirror, stick it on the dash of your car or on the refrigerator door so that you can see it every time the enemy roars and tries to intimidate you. But you don’t need to fear any evil because the Shepherd is with you and the good news is that he can fight. The good Shepherd is like a ninja warrior and that’s why David says in verse four,

“I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

He says, “I will fear no evil,” because the Shepherd can fight good, there is a reason why he has a rod and a staff, they are like nunchucks in the hands of God, and so you don’t have to worry. That is one of the privileges of being a sheep, because the Lord is my shepherd, “Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.” And the Bible says, in Romans chapter 8, verse 31,

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

And so, the enemy can’t win because if he’s going to fight us, he’s going to have to fight God.

We don’t even need to defend ourselves; in fact, if we even raise a fist, if we even start moving, the Shepherd says, “Be still” (Psalm 46:10).

“For the battle is not yours, but God's” (2 Chronicles 20:15).

And he’s going to fight for you, and he can fight cancer, he can fight diabetes, he can fight injustice, and when the church begins to pray the enemy needs to get out-of-the-way. When the church begins to call upon the Shepherd there isn’t any way that the enemy can win because the Bible says,

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21).

And that’s why demons tremble at the name of Jesus, that’s why they don’t want us to pray in public in the name of Jesus, there is power in the name of Jesus. I wish someone in here would elbow their neighbor and say, “You’d better call on Jesus.”

Yes, that is spiritual warfare, because if you call on the name of Jesus, let me tell you what the good Shepherd is going to do. David says in verse five,

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies…” (Psalm 23:5).

In other words, while your enemy is still talking about you and accusing you, the Shepherd is going to fix you some food and feed you. The haters are going to be hating, they may be cursing you, but he’s going to bless you. It may seem like there is no end to the valley, the shadow just continues, but God will bless you. They didn’t think you were going to make it, but God will bless you. And if he brought you through that, he can take you through this, because the Bible says,

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

And so, the Lord doesn’t always remove the trouble from our lives, but he will help us to overcome them because he cares for us. David says as the Shepherd brings the sheep into the fold, preparing a table before them, he says,

“You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows” (Psalm 23:5).

In other words, the Lord examines the sheep and those that are bruised, scraped, or wounded, he applies a soothing oil. He anoints the heads and the horns of the sheep to keep flies and other insects away. This expression indicates the care and gracious provision of the Shepherd, it’s not just the table or the oil, but David knew that his lot in life, his cup, was abundant blessings from the Lord and he says, “my cup overflows.”

I want to praise God for the anointing of the Holy Spirit, the oil of joy, because God has protected me and my cup overflows. In fact, the Bible says in first John chapter 2,

“You have an anointing from the Holy One...” (1 John 2:20).

And so, I want to thank God for what he brought me through, what he protected me from, and I can’t help but praise him. I know the enemy doesn’t expect you to praise God with all your going through, not with all you’re dealing with, but the Bible says,

“I will extol the Lord at all times; his praise will always be on my lips” (Psalms 34:1).

And I’m going to praise God, because the devil is a liar, I’m going to praise God even in the shadows, because I know there’s one verse left. David says in verse six,

“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6).

I know there are some of you sitting there, you’re walking through the shadows, and I wish you would look over your shoulder for a moment and give God some praise. I wish you would look back and see what’s about to overtake you, to see what’s following you, because behind every shadow there is a surely. If you can just hold on, if you can just hang in there, your blessing is about to overtake you.

“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life…” (Psalm 23:6).

God sent his word to heal, his word brings anointing, and even now his Word is driving out fear, worry, and distress. This is your moment, this is your time, receive the deliverance, receive their freedom, receive it in your life right now. God gave you a “surely” and so you’ve got to convert that fear into faith because the Bible says,

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7 NKJV).

And so, we can overcome fear with certainty, or as David said, “Surely,” because when you believe, when you know for sure that something is going to happen you don’t have any fear.

I want to encourage you to spend time with God because it will change your perspective. David was a shepherd who’d been out in the field, he’s been alone with God, and he knew the Shepherd. And so, if you want to overcome the fear in your life, spend more time with God, because you’ll see things differently, trusting that God can do,

“Immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us” (Ephesians 3:20).

You’ll have a different mindset, God will help you overcome, but we’ve got to walk it out. As believers we can’t say one thing on Sunday and then do something entirely different on Monday. We can’t just say that we have faith in God, we’ve actually got to walk in faith, and the Bible says we do that by being,

“Rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness” (Colossians 2:7).

And so, as you feed your faith, you will gain a new perspective, faith will change the way you look at every situation. David knew that as he put his trust in the Lord as his Shepherd, the shadow may not change, his situation may not radically change, but the promise of God’s presence in that situation would give him the strength to face it. He knew that no matter whether he was walking in the shadows, or eating in the presence of his enemies, that God was for him and God was with him.

In Romans chapter 8, the apostle Paul ask this question,

“What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

And David had faith that his Shepherd would be with him, that he would fight his battles for him, and so he could say with confidence, “I will fear no evil,” even when the enemy was coming against him.

And so, how do we get that kind of faith, how can you and I boldly walk through the valley of the shadow of death when we’re living in a culture of fear? Some people are afraid to live, some people are afraid of crowds and public places, some people are afraid to have relationships, their alone but afraid to let anybody in. Other people have gifts and talents, but there are afraid of rejection, so they don’t use them. How do we change our perspective, walking in the shadow, but fearing no evil?

I believe David gives us a hint in Psalm chapter 37 where he says in verse five,

“Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun” (Psalm 37:5-6).

This kind of change begins from the inside out as you began praying, seeking the Lord, and you stay connected to God. And so, you plant yourself in the church, you get connected in small groups, youth ministry, women’s ministry, men’s ministry, Bible study, always continuing in prayer. Jesus said you’ve got to stay connected, he said,

"I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

And so, “you commit your way to the Lord and trust in him” moving forward in faith. You serve, you give, and you express your faith in the context of ministry. You commit your way to the Lord and you walk with him through the valley of the shadow of death. You trust him when it feels like the shadow is bigger than your faith, knowing that the Shepherd inside of you is bigger than the enemy on the outside. You believe it and you say it,

“Surely, goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23:6).

Let’s go to God in prayer.

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