

“It’s a Sheep’s Life”
Psalm 23
Dr. Neil Steward
May 28, 2023 • Sunday Morning Sermon

Dr. Harry Reeder by any measure was a giant of a man. He was for us, the elder statesman, not just of the Presbyterian Church in America but the elder statesman of all of American, Presbyterianism and beyond. I've never met the like of him before, and I don't think I'll ever meet the like of him again. I want to assure you as a congregation that we're praying for you and we'll continue to lift you up. I would say more about him because there is a lot to say about him but I have this vision in my mind of Dr. Reeder behind me saying, “Son, stop talking about me and tell them about Jesus.” So I'm going to do that in honor of Dr. Reeder and for the glory of God.

Our text for this study is the 23rd Psalm 23 and although I have the ESV I think this is one of those Psalms that need to read in the King James version. Before we get into the study let's pray.

Prayer:

Our God and ever blessed Father in heaven, we thank You for Your Word – its power to convict us, but its power also O God to comfort us. As we come to this study O God, our hearts are desolate. Where else can we go? You alone have the words of everlasting life so we pray, Father, that You would draw near to us, wrap us round about and underneath in Your everlasting arms, but what we have not, grant us, where we cannot O, God, help us. Where we will not, O God have mercy and change us. In what we know not, we pray, Father, teach us. We offer these prayers today, O, Lord in the prevailing name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Psalm 23 comes after Psalm 22 and before Psalm 24, which is the kind of insight you have to go to seminary to get, but if you look at those Psalms, you'll see there's a purpose in their placement, I think at least serendipitously. Psalm 22 gives you the price tag of Psalm 23 – what it cost Christ to become our Shepherd. He's taken to the place where there is no light, where there is no mercy, and where there is no God, abandoned by God to the wrath of God, where He is no longer treated as Son and is treated only as sin to rescue us from what we deserve. Then Psalm 24 shows us where Christ will take us. Psalm 22 shows us where our sin brought Christ and Psalm 24 shows us where one day Christ will take us – that we will be taken to the battlements of the House of God, the Holy city of Jerusalem above. We will hear the voice of God cry out, ‘Open up you gates, you everlasting doors that the King of Glory might come in’ and the voice from the battlements will say, “Who is the King of Glory?” And the answer shall come ‘The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory.’ Now let them enter with His redeemed servant. Between Psalm 22 and 24, we have Psalm 23, the great blessing of being one of the shepherds - we lambs in this brief veil of tears.

Psalm 23:1-6 says [1] *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* [2] *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.* [3] *He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.* [4] *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.* [5] *Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.* [6] *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.*

The grass withers and the flower falls off but the Word of God endures forever.

Most of the time, in a fallen world, there is a comforting predictability about life. Right? Spring follows winter, day follows night, and most of the time success follows hard work. Now we know enough in this world, living east of Eden, where Adam and Eve were expelled from the garden and under the sun where the preacher says all is vanity, vanity of vanities. We knew enough to expect a few bumps in the road along the way; what you might call life's predictable unpredictability's. Perhaps you have been dieting seems like forever. You've been really dieting hard for 24 long hours and you get onto the scales, look down and not only has the number not gone down but you weigh a whole pound more than you did the day before. What's going on?? Maybe you're late for an important meeting, perhaps a job interview, and you run out to the car, you're flustered, you see you have a flat tire and you think, 'Well, it was late before, but now forget it' or you're studying for an exam, you have your pencils all sharpened, you're all ready and then suddenly all of the questions you just knew were going to be on the exam, none of them were. All of the questions you knew wouldn't be on the exam, well, all of them are and suddenly it's a disaster. You walk out and think 'life's predictable unpredictability's.'

Yet there are times when we're in the middle of just such a time when it seems as if the rug has been pulled right out from under us and we have both feet firmly planted in mid air. I think of two such times a pastor known to me who left a lucrative career went into ministry, his wife, and he had been burdened for some time with miscarriage after miscarriage. Eventually she was pregnant and nine months later, young Samuel comes forth and it's just wonderful as they are walking on air. Then the doctor comes in and says there's some problem with the brain stem auditory potentials, and 'I'm sorry to tell you, your little boy is deaf,' but they were wrong. A few weeks later, the doctors came back again and said, 'I'm sorry, your son's not deaf, but he is blind' and this time they were right and the bottom just falls out.

There was another time this girl I knew back in Savannah, beautiful girl, Christian girl, just weeks away from her wedding. Her whole life ahead of her. She goes outside to the back of her garden on the bluff, looking over the coastal waterways there in Savannah and sits down just to relax, shoot the breeze and little did she know that she was near a rotten palm tree that falls on the top of her head and shatters her cervical spine. The whole of her body is paralyzed from the neck down and things like that in a universe ruled by a just and a kind Providence, just aren't supposed to happen. They aren't supposed to happen to other people, and they certainly aren't supposed to happen to me or to us. We feel as if we have been gut punched by God Himself and everything seems unpredictable. We hear those stories and think, "if that can happen to them, it could happen to me and what would I do?" And the devil comes alongside ever the cynic in those moments and he says to us, "you know, it's all meaningless. There is no hope, there is no light. It's a dog's life you're living – a dog eat dog world, nature is red in tooth and claw. All is dark and all is bitter."

It's at such moments, my brothers and sisters, that we need to turn to the Psalms, the Psalms in general, but Psalm 23 in particular. David comes alongside you on your best day, but also on your worst day. He puts his arm around you and said, 'Listen, for the Christian, it's never a dog's life, it's always a sheep's life.' What's that like? What's it like to be a sheep, a lamb in the shepherd's fold? Maybe you knew someone years ago who worked in the Reagan White House. Maybe some of you worked in the Reagan White House years ago and people always ask you what was it like to be with the Gipper? What was it like being there? But here David is telling you, what's it like being a sheep in the shepherd's flock.

David says four things and you can wrap your soul around these four things for they'll never fail you nor forsake you. They're more solid than the ground beneath your feet. One day it

will pass away, be burned up with this universe. These four things you can take to the bank forever. What's it like to be a sheep in the shepherd's fold? David says, '(1)when you're hungry, He will feed you. (2)When you're lost, He will find you. (3)When you're scared, He'll be with you and (4)when you come to die, He'll bring you safely all the way home. Let's walk through those together in this study.

First of all, what's it like being a sheep in the shepherd's flock? It's where when you're hungry, He will feed you. Psalm 23:1-2 says [1] *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.* [2] *He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.* The shepherd has two primary responsibilities. He's supposed to feed the sheep when they're hungry and to protect and keep the sheep when they're in danger. That's the shepherd's job right there. In this Psalm, David is assuring you, Christian, and he's tempting you, unbeliever. If you're reading this and you don't yet share our faith, David is coming alongside. He's tempting you to taste and see that the Lord is good, that Jesus Christ makes the Christian. He makes your personal needs His personal responsibility. The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want.

Notice 'my' for He doesn't say our shepherd. He is our Shepherd, of course but our is a much more corporate word, isn't it? When we speak about our we can feel as if we're lost in the crowd and that never happened with one of Christ's sheep. We have six kids. We are forever, or maybe not forever, but to them it feels like forever, we are forever leaving one of them at church. Catherine thinks I have Sammy and I think she has Sammy but no one has Sammy and so Sammy is left thinking "What's going on?" In the flock of God, that will never happen to you. The Lord is my shepherd individuality, particularity. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and they follow Me (John 10:27). Luther says "the power of true religion lies in personal pronouns. God isn't just a Rock and a Redeemer and a Shepherd and a Savior. He is my Rock and He's my Redeemer and He's my Shepherd and He's my Savior." Can you say that today? If that's all you can say, you're saying a very great deal indeed. You've lost everything else, but you have that, you have everything to keep you safe through time and for eternity.

Professor Douglas MacMillan was the Professor of Systematic Theology at the Free Church College in Edinburgh. Before that, when he was a young lad, he and his brother looked after sheep in the highlands of Scotland. It's in his wonderful little book published by the Banner of Truth called The Lord Our Shepherd, and I commend it to you. In that book he talks about he and his brother and his brother and he were similar in age. They might have even been twins, I can't remember and their voices sounded almost identical. Not even their wives could tell them apart, but the sheep could. Douglas went away to university for a year and he came back the next year and walked out to the pasture and he called to the sheep and none of them came. He called again. None of them came. His brother came alongside him and said, "Watch this." His brother called the sheep and all the sheep came trotting up to him.

Jesus says, "My sheep hear My voice, I know them and they follow Me." If you're a shepherd in the flock of Christ today, the voice of God is coming to you from the Scriptures. Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). God has taken the one who He has entrusted to feed you with His Word. I want to assure you that Jesus remains the same yesterday, today and forever, and He will still feed you. His Word remains. Heaven and earth will pass away, but not one jot, not one tittle of all of the things that your pastor preached to you year in, year out, week in, week out, through all of the decades of his ministry are true and God's Word is stable and steadfast. You can turn to it and you must turn to it. It's the rock. Where else can we go? Lord Jesus, you alone have the words of everlasting life (John 6:68). When I'm hungry, He feeds me.

This Shepherd knows the sheep very well, for it says in Psalm 23:2, 'he make me to lie down in green pastures' and only a shepherd would say that because the sheep only lie down if they are all feeling completely safe. If there's one sheep kind of nervous or neurotic over in the corner, none of the them will sit down. They're kind of nervous creatures. They only lie down when all of them are at peace and at rest. When the shepherd comes down and walks amongst the lambs, the sheep all lie down because his presence is enough. Psalm 23:2 goes on to say 'he leads me beside still waters.' Sheep are not like dogs for dogs will drink of running water but sheep only drink from water that's perfectly still. The Shepherd knows His sheep and feed His sheep and we come to the first of the 'nots' in this Psalm – I will not..., I shall not...

Secondly, we see that when you are lost, he will find you. Psalm 23:2 says 'He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his namesake.' We think of sheep as kind of cuddly, cute beasties, the kind of cuddly toys we put in our children's beds. Right? Like Shaun the sheep, but the Bible doesn't look at sheep as cuddly and cute. The Bible looks at sheep as completely and irretrievably stupid. All we like sheep have gone astray, turned each one to his own way but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

One of my friends back in Northern Ireland whose name was Stuart. He was a senior police officer in the Northern Ireland Police Service during the years of the Troubles. He's retired now and one of his hobbies is shepherding sheep. He said they're the stupidest animals on all of God's green earth. They're the only animals that if you leave the gate open and they're in a meadow, lush, green, verdant, long, beautiful munchie grass, they will leave that and walk into a wilderness just because they can.

One of my elders back in Greensburg, he has a homestead and he has like, ten goats, three turkeys, 40 hens, a horse, and four sheep. Recently there was a horrendous storm coming through, one of the hurricanes blowing through Greensburg up from the coast and it was all hands on deck. He had the barn open, the lights on, the heaters were all there, all the animals seemed to know to get inside the barn except the sheep were the furthest end of the pasture, right under a tree, ripe to get struck by lightning or for the tree to fall upon them. We are all like sheep for we have wandering hearts. We go astray. It's the habit of every single human being for God's people are born with wandering hearts. We all wander. We don't wander the same way. All we like sheep have gone astray, turned *each one to his own way*. We have our own individual ways of rebellion, of committing cosmic treason and when you're lost, you can't find yourself.

I was talking to my wife, Catherine recently, about our oldest daughter, Hannah, who is now a senior paramedic in the Guilford County EMS system. When she was about two or three years of age, and I were in Belfast but Catherine joined me at Christmas time. We are shopping and there's people pushing everywhere buying and shopping and Hannah's there beside Catherine and Catherine is looking at Christmas presents. Then all of a sudden Hannah's gone and there's panic because there had been a couple of abductions recently in Belfast and Catherine is looking for help. Security came and they were going to close the doors of the mall and then Catherine looks across and there's wee Hannah standing in the middle of the crowd, just tears as she is crying her heart out. I can't see Mommy. Mommy couldn't see her and then Mommy could see her. Mommy runs and wraps her in her arms, kisses her and oh it's all wonderful. Sometimes it can feel like that as a Christian. We can feel as if we're being cast out – no one sees, nobody cares, nobody knows. And Jesus says to you today, "I know My sheep and you're never out of My sight, My mind and My heart. I've got you even when you're lost I will find you." Sheep can't find themselves but that's the Shepherd's job.

Psalms 23:3 says 'He restores my soul.' The Hebrew for restore means literally to cause someone to do a U-turn, to cause someone to repent. It is actually used to describe repentance in the Old Testament. We do repent, right? But the process of repentance doesn't begin with us. It actually begins with God. God is the One who repents us first before we ever turn round and go back toward Him again. You could translate that verse 'He repents my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His namesake.' He is a Master at saving lost sheep. Today, are you wandering from Christ? Have you backslid? Is the devil whispering to you in your ear that you're wasting your time coming to Briarwood or the church you're attending, for God's not going to hear you after all you've done this year?

There's a time in the ministry of Christ where tax collectors and sinners were drawing near to hear Jesus and the Pharisees and Scribes grumble saying "This Man receives sinners and eats with them (Luke 15:2)" and it's the only true thing they ever said. The passage continues in Luke 15:3-7; [3] *So He (Jesus) told them this parable:* [4] *"What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it?"* [5] *And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.* [6] *And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with Me, for I have found **My sheep** that was lost.'* [7] *Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.* That's the heart of God today. He leaves the 99 who are safe and goes after the one that is lost.

There's a wonderful story behind the hymn *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* which was written by Robert Robinson in 1758. He was a godly man, hymn writer but you may not know that he actually backslid and turned away from Christ. He became a Unitarian of all things, and slipped into a dark and deep depression. One day he was in a stagecoach in England, and he's being driven through the fields of England and he notices sitting across from him in the stagecoach this lady in one of those kind of big blue Jane Austen dresses with the hoops. As she is sitting there, she's humming a hymn. In the inscrutable providence of Almighty God she starts to hum *Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing* and the more she hums, the more miserable Robert Robinson looks. She stops humming and says, 'Are you okay sir, do you know that hymn?' He said, "Yes ma'am, do I know it? I wrote it and I would give 10,000 whirls to feeling now what I felt then when I put pen to paper." She said to him, 'I think you will find that grace is just as capable today to bind your heart as a fetter as ever it was. Robinson says, 'After all I've done, will He take me back?' She said, "I think you'll find that the good Shepherd, who very often meets sheep running from Him, will not reject you if you run to Him."

I'm telling today, whoever you are, whatever you've done, if you've wandered from Jesus, you feel lost in the dark place, lift your heart to Him and say, "Lord, take my heart and take Your grace, Your mercy and Your love like a fetter and bind my wandering heart to You" and He will restore your soul. Maybe you're here like Augustine saying, "Lord, give me after thee but not yet." You haven't even got the heart to repent. Christ is able to turn you around. His Word has power to create the universe out of nothing and He says to you, "Repent or you will all likewise perish" and that word from Christ has power to give you what you cannot do, even what you won't do like the man with the withered arm in church. Remember, he was only known as the man who could not stretch out his arm and then he met Jesus in church. And Jesus told him to stretch out his arm (Matthew 12:9-14). There was power in the Word of Christ and the man did what he couldn't do because of the power in Jesus Christ.

Christ is telling all of us today [28] *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. [29] Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. [30] For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light. Take My yoke upon you and learn from me from a meek and lowly of heart and you will find rest for yourselves* (Matthew 11:28-30). Jesus says in John 6:37, [37] *All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and whoever comes to Me I will never cast out.* So when we're hungry He feeds us and when we are lost He finds us.

Thirdly, I want you to see when we're scared, He'll be with us. Psalm 23:4-5 says [4] *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. [5] Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.* A valley sounds like a pleasant place – with green hills, almost like a Thomas Kinkade painting, where even the snow looks warm. The Hebrew word for *valley* here is actually more like a dark, dangerous ravine full of foreboding, full of danger. 'Yea, though I walk through death's dark gorge' would be a more accurate way to translate this.

'I will fear no evil' is the second of the 'nots' in this Psalm. I shall not want was the first 'not.' Now we have I shall not fear evil. Dr. Johnny Gibson from Westminster Seminary, a friend of mine from Northern Ireland, spoke on this and the Hebrew word for *shepherd* and the Hebrew word for *evil* are almost identical. They are pronounced differently but the Hebrew word for 'my shepherd' is *Ra'ah* and the Hebrew word for 'evil' is *ra'* and Dr. Gibson made the comment that 'David picked those two words that look so similar that we have a *Ra'ah*, a Shepherd for all of life's *ra'* – all of life's evils.' I shall not fear.

Then David goes on to say 'for thou art with me.' That's interesting, isn't it? Because up until now and Psalm 23:3, the sheep has always been speaking about the shepherd. The Lord is *my shepherd*. I shall not want. He makes me to lie down. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. But now he stops speaking about the Shepherd and he starts speaking to the shepherd. It's almost as if he's picturing in his mind – I couldn't go through death's gorge for I couldn't cope. Instinctively he starts talking in the second person – I will fear no evil, for thou will be with me – His presence, Emmanuel coming down, resting His hand upon the sheep. I love Richard Baxter's last words. He was a reformed pastor and as he was dying one of his elders said to him, 'How are you doing, Mr. Baxter?' And he said, 'Almost well,' nearly home was the Shepherd with him, 'for I will fear no evil for thou art with Me.'

Then the scene changes again from a shepherd and his sheep to a host and a guest, a harried guest hounded by enemies all around. Psalm 23:5a says 'For thou preparest for me, a table in the presence of mine enemies.' It seems as if the presence of the host is enough to restrain the enemy and to calm David's soul. You might have had that experience coming to the Lord's table in church where you come in and your hounded and harried by enemies. The devil loves to remind you of all the things you haven't done, all the things you have done. It's like that man I heard about once going to marriage counseling and he said to the counselor, "Whenever I get in an argument, my wife becomes historical." The counselor said 'Don't you mean hysterical?' "No historical because she reminds me of all the things I haven't done and did do."

Not to compare the devil to our wives, you understand? But the devil is historical for remind us of all of the things we haven't done, all the things we have done, our inadequacies and our insufficiencies as he says 'you're wrong, wrong, wrong, you've done it all wrong' and you come to the Table as he hounds you right up to point of taking the elements of the table. You just feel so small, so weak and so unworthy and you think 'how can I come, I'm so unworthy.' And

of course, no one is worthy to come to the Lord's Table. We are all unworthy. We come as unworthy sinners. We come in a worthy manner, embracing our unworthiness but you come to the table and all we hear is all that we've done as our sins are ever before us, then suddenly, Jesus is there, standing at the table with those two words – 'take' and 'eat.'

I remember hearing David Kidner say something that blew my mind. Kidner said 'Those words bookend the Bible – take and eat. Eve took and she ate. How simple the act, how hard the undoing, God will taste poverty and death before take and eat ever again become verbs of salvation.' This is My body which is broken for you. You take and you eat and suddenly Christ reminds you not of your doings – nay your daily doing die. He says, "Let Me tell you about My doings and My dying on your behalf. Of all of the things I have done that I am the Lord your righteousness, and you are in Me, Christian. You're safe."

You come out of a car wash and there's two water globules and as you drive away the water globules begin to move and they touch one another and they become one. You can no longer tell the one droplet from the other droplets. They become indistinguishable as they merge and their molecules merge. In a very similar sense, Christian, when you believe in Jesus, you become one with Him, before God's mind you become indistinguishable from Jesus. You become part of Him. The molecules merge and all of your sins become His legal responsibility and all of His righteousness becomes yours.

When Jesus was a little boy in Bethlehem and He was singing the Psalms right? He came to the part in the Psalms that said 'my sins are more in number than the hairs of my head,' did Jesus stop singing? Then His other brothers said 'That's why I hate Him so much. Too self-righteous, you know.' No, Jesus didn't stop singing then, because of you, your sins become really and truly His very own. Like no other Man who ever lived, He can say My sins or really My people's sins are more in number than the hairs of my head, by the same logic. When you get to those parts in the Psalms where they say, "I'm from you God, according to my righteousness" and you think 'I can't sing that!' Jesus comes alongside, puts His arm around you and says, "It's okay, I've got that. You can sing that in Me because by the same logic that your sins become, Mine, My righteousness becomes yours. You can sing that in Me. I'm not ashamed to call you my brother." Christ is here feeding, nourishing, and comforting. Christian, whatever you going through today, whatever you shall go through tomorrow, Jesus says to you, 'I swear to you by all that is holy, you will not go through it alone. I will be with you.' When you're hungry, He'll feed you. When you're lost, He'll find you and when you're scared. He'll be with you.

Lastly, I want you to see when you come to die, He will bring you safely all the way home. Psalm 23:6 says *[6] Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.* Douglas Macmillan speaks of the time the shepherds bring the sheep down from the mountains, the Highlands of Scotland, to the lowlands in the springtime for lambing season. He says, "We always lead the sheep down from the front and the sheep follow us but at the back come the two sheepdogs, Bessie and Blackie. These dogs follow the sheep wherever they go, and the sheep go to the left it then Bessie will go up and she'll bring them down. If the sheep stray to the right of the path, then, Blackie quick as a flash up to the right, brings them down. Bessie and Blackie, follow the flock wherever they go. God has two sheep dogs and they follow the flock wherever they go – He calls the one goodness and the other He calls mercy.

Look over your shoulder today, Christian. What do you see coming after you? What fears in the future tear at the fabric of your mental clarity and peace? What's making you nervous? I tell you, it's goodness and mercy. I'll follow you wherever you go. You stray to the left,

goodness will go bring you down. You stray to the right, it will be mercy that is quick as a flash to bring you back down again. None of us could ever have predicted what lay ahead for your senior pastor, Dr. Reeder, but we knew what was coming behind him – goodness and mercy. We know who was with him in the car – the Good Shepherd with hand on the knee. Don't be frightened. You're almost well, you're nearly home. Death was there, up ahead waiting but in this case, he was not there as the master, he was there as the servant. His only job that day was to open the door of heaven and let God's servant home. The angels were there and in my mind's eye, I see them in concentric circles, God's angels – chariots of fire as far as the eye can see, kneeling in hushed adoration as God readies the moment when He brings one of His servants home.

The Lord speaks, “I have qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in life. This day I will deliver you from the domain of darkness and bring you into the immediate presence of the Kingdom of the Son of My love. Be still and know that I am God.” And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, Dr. Reeder's soul burst free with all the gladness of a little boy running home from school for the holidays and the angels are there around him, thronging him, carrying him on their shoulders as they carried his feet past stones when he was a wee boy. They caught him when he fell out of that tree in Greensborough when he knew he shouldn't have been climbing the tree but they protected him from grievous danger.

They carry his soul from this world to the next, faster than light they fly past the moon, the sun, the stars, the planets, the nebula and the galaxies to the great beyond – beyond the created order of things. They're there in the darkness, speeding their way to glory and then in the distance I see a warm radiance on the horizon – the light of the heavenly city, New Jerusalem. Then I see him hearing the singing at the surging of 10,000 oceans and the happy comforting gurgling of a mountain stream – ‘worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power, wealth, wisdom, might, honor, glory and blessing.’ Then he is through the gates and the spirits of just men made perfect throng him. His sisters are there round about him, and they're carrying him with all the heroes of the faith, forward toward the inner sanctum, the holy of holies, and the doors open and as he enters in my mind's eye, I lose sight of him, but the King was there in all of His glory.

I Corinthians 2:9 says, [9] *But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him”*— I see the Lord Jesus wipe every tear from his eyes and quiet him with His love and rejoice over him with singing. All of heaven is saying “worthy is the Lamb who was slain.” Christian, that's your destiny too. Don't be frightened of death, the last enemy for he is not your master, he is your servant. He's a broken back weakling. He's a whipped cur. Christ has crushed him and when you come to die, he will be like one of those old butlers and the Jane Austen movies. He'll open the door and be recoiling from the glory of life, not death, as Jesus makes known to you the path of life that in His presence, there's fullness of joy. At His right hand there are pleasures forever more. Everyone will see death – maybe in a hospital somewhere or what looks like death, the appearance of death. It's only the shadow. Christian, you will not see death. You will see Jesus, the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God. And with Harry, you'll hear “well done, My good and faithful servant.”

If you're ready this today and you're not yet a Christian, I want you to think about this. I want a little word to echo about your mind – eternity. As long as God exists, you will exist. You have a never dying soul. Will it be with God in life or separate from God in the lake of fire and brimstone, which is the second death? You have two choices today. You can meet death with

Jesus or you can meet death all by yourself. Choose wisely. When those three things that you can call your own come to an end – your mind, your health, your earthly life – for it's appointed once for a man to die and after that, the judgment (Hebrews 9:27), where all is left behind and you go on a naked, unvarnished human being, you don't want to go alone. You will want to go with the Friend who sticks closer than a brother. You want to go to that place as the old spiritual put it 'where your debts are done, paid.' You don't want to go to the place where you pay them yourself.

Come to the Good Shepherd today and you'll discover that though your sins are many His mercy is more and He'll not cast you out. He'll welcome you in and wrap you round about underneath with His everlasting love, His everlasting arms and His everlasting life. Let's pray.

Prayer;

Oh, Lord, our God and our Father, we thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Jesus and to all that He means to us and all that He's done for us. All of Your promises are yes and amen in Him. When we are hungry, He feeds us. When we're lost, He finds us. When we're scared, He's with us and when we come to die, He will bring us safely all the way home. We pray O Lord, that we will all know that as ours and that we will not look at Jesus as rock, refuge and redeemer but we'll say He's my rock and He's my refuge and He's my redeemer. We offer these prayers in Jesus' Name, Amen.