



Message Transcript

Boasting About Our God

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This morning I want to start a new series called Summer in the Psalms. I think it's really important as we take a look at God's word, that we preach the whole council of God. And we spent a lot of time in the New Testament. I want to be faithful to both testaments. And the psalms are a great place to go because really what the psalms deal with is your heart.

The psalms deal with your heart. That's why nobody can get away from the psalms. I mean, even book publishers, when they publish New Testaments, many times it'll be New Testament with the psalms, because the psalms are great. Because if you're in a place where you find yourself rejoicing, the psalms are going to help you do it even better. If you find yourself in a place where you're discouraged, the psalms are going to help you articulate how you feel.

If you're in a place where you wonder where God is, hey, the psalms are going to help reveal where your heart is in that point too. I mean, it really reveals the heart. And what's really unique about the psalms is they're so poetic that what they do for us is in a few short verses they can give us a lot of revelation and a lot of wisdom. So that's why we can read the psalms over and over again, meditate on them over and over again, and receive a fresh word from the Lord as we continue to worship him. And

so as we begin this series today and as we go through the psalms, I think it's going to be a great opportunity for us to have our hearts and our souls refreshed in Christ Jesus.

As we began this series, I began thinking about, hey, where do we want to start? You know, do we start in psalm one, do we start in psalm 150 and talk about praising the Lord? And I went all through and I kept coming back to this psalm, psalm 23. Psalm 23 is probably the most recited, often the most known, certainly one of the most memorable psalms in the entire Bible. It was one of the first verses that I ever had to read and to memorize when I went to a grade school where we memorized scripture.

And I still love the psalm to this day and it continues to reveal more and more. So I invite you this morning, open your bibles to psalm chapter 23. And as we look in these six short verses this morning, I'm going to read these verses to you. And then we'll take a look at three specific things that I believe David is trying to make known to us. And I believe that there's a lot for each one of us here this morning, here's what David writes.

The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. My cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Now, as we take a look at this this morning, I want to highlight three specific things that we can look at. But before we get into those three things, I want to point out something. David starts this psalm by saying, the Lord is my shepherd. A couple things that are really interesting to point out.

If anybody could be an authority on being a shepherd, it's David. Do you know why? Because being a shepherd was his occupation. That's what he grew up being. He was a shepherd.

He tended sheep. That's what he did for a living. And even as he was elevated to king, what was his role? To shepherd the people of God. You know what a shepherd does?

A shepherd is only as successful as the sheep that he or she is leading. And David knew what it meant to lead sheep. And this is why he's talking very personally about his God. Notice what he says. He doesn't say, the Lord is my dad's shepherd.

Doesn't say, the Lord is my mom's shepherd. Doesn't say, the Lord is my grandma or grandpa's shepherd. The Lord is my kid's shepherd. He doesn't talk about his faith for somebody else. He says, the Lord is what?

It's my shepherd. I'm telling you about the God that I serve. I'm telling you about what my God is like. Now, why is that so important? Because at some point in our life, what God wants us to do is to make our relationship with him personal, where it's not just somebody else's faith or it's not just facts about who God is, but we personally

come into intimate relationship with God.

That's what he desires. Remember Thomas? One of Jesus disciples spent three years with Jesus. He believed Jesus was the messiah. He had been told on numerous occasions that Jesus was going to go to Jerusalem and be crucified and be raised from the dead.

He, even after Jesus was raised, was told by ten of the disciples that were still alive. Hey, we saw him. The Lord is alive. You know what Thomas said, unless I see it for myself, I'm not going to believe that. And about a week later, we see Jesus standing in front of him with his arms outstretched saying, peace be with you.

Look at my hands. Stretch out your hand and put it at my side. Stop doubting and believe. Remember what Thomas response was at that time? My lord and my God.

It was personal. God wants us all to have personal acquaintance with him. David personally knew the Lord. He said, the Lord is my shepherd. Now, just a few things on

a shepherd.

We've talked about it many times before, but a shepherd tends sheep, right?

Sheep are the only animal that need a shepherd. No alligators. They don't need a shepherd. You don't shepherd alligators, you don't shepherd lions, you don't shepherd dogs.

You certainly can't shepherd a cat. Okay? Sheep need a shepherd. Why?

Because without a shepherd, sheep don't know what to do.

They don't know when to speed up, and they don't know when to slow down. And they need to be told when to eat, and they need to be told which way to go. And they will listen to the shepherd, where he leads them. David says this, the Lord's my shepherd. I mean, in his vernacular, he was saying, the Lord's my leader.

He was saying, the Lord's my CEO, the Lord's my boss. Whatever he says is

what I do. If he would have been a football player, he would have said, the Lord is my coach. And he's a good shepherd, isn't he? Notice what David says.

He says, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

The first thing he begins to talk about is God's personal provision. His personal provision. The Lord is my shepherd. He's not just talking about God's quality, that God's a provider. There's a lot of people that would believe theologically God's a provider.

David's saying, the Lord is my shepherd. He's my provision. He's my provider. Why? He makes me lie down in green pastures and he leads me beside still waters.

How important are green pastures and still waters for sheep? It's what they need to survive. He's saying, the Lord is my guide. The Lord is my leader. The Lord is my

shepherd.

And guess where he takes me? He takes me right where I need to go to have everything I need to nourish myself. That's the kind of God that I serve. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He doesn't take me to dusty, barren places.

He leads me beside the still waters, the ones that are refreshing and cool to drink. He gives me everything I need for my sustenance. Let me tell you about my God. My God gives me everything that I need. That's who he is.

That's what David's doing. What David's really doing throughout this whole psalm is he's boasting, he's bragging about his God. Now, we like to think sometimes in church that bragging is wrong, but it's really not wrong. It depends on how you brag. Cause then we see in Jeremiah.

Jeremiah tells us in Jeremiah nine, let not the wise man boast about his wisdom.

Let not the strong man boast about his strength. Let not the rich man boast about his riches. But let him who boasts boast in this that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight.

Declare the Lord. The Lord says, when you brag about my steadfast love, when you brag about the fact I am just, when you brag about my righteousness, I love that. I take pleasure in that. What's David doing? He's bragging.

God's my provision. He gives me everything I need. He's a good shepherd. Remember when Jesus was on planet earth? Remember how he referred to himself?

What did he say? I'm the good shepherd. Peter refers to him as the chief shepherd and the overseer of our souls. Hebrews refers to him as the great shepherd. There is no other shepherd but Jesus.

Even pastors that are called to shepherd a congregation, they're under

shepherds of the Lord Jesus Christ. They're not true shepherds. Jesus is the shepherd. David is bragging on the Lord. He's bragging on who he is.

He's saying, God's my provision. He gives me everything I need. Why does he do this? Because we know. According to the Bible, James 1:17 tells us, every good and perfect gift is from above.

Everything good in our life comes from God. Now here's the truth. God is a blessing God. He's a prospering God. And I want to talk to you about something this morning, because without knowing it, sometimes you can do this consciously, sometimes you can do this unconsciously.

But even as believers, there's two different groups of people. There's a group that I that fall into a category, sometimes consciously, but sometimes even unconsciously, that I call the victim mentality kind of people. These are people that hear about God's provision, but when they hear it, they say like this, well, he doesn't provide for me like that. God hasn't provided this for me yet. God hasn't provided that for me yet.

They're the kind of people like, how come God provided this for them? And how come God provided this for them? They become critical of people that God provides for knowingly, sometimes, sometimes unknowingly. They feel like they've been left out. They feel like God's only got so much good to give out and they're on the short end of the stick.

But then there's people like David that know who God is and they know how generous and lavish God is. And they're kind of the victor mentality. And they're like, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. I have everything I need. When we took a look at the gospel series, we looked at two Peter one, three.

It says, he's given us everything we need for life and godliness. Every spiritual thing you need is on the inside. God has already given you the Holy Spirit. You have it all. Now, for those of you here today that live out of the victim poverty mentality, knowingly or unknowingly, here's an exercise to do.

Start thinking of the things that God has already done and is currently doing in your life, and you will find that that list continues to go on and on and on and on and on. Start this way. Start just writing down the sins that you're aware of that God's forgiven since you've been born. Then start talking about the fact that if you believe in him, that he secured your eternity forever and ever, think about the fact that he's going to present you blameless before your father, who's in heaven. Think about the fact that no matter what you do from here on out, you can't lose God's love and salvation in your life.

Not to mention the fact that you had enough health to get here today. Not to mention the fact that most of you have vision and can hear. I mean, you start thanking God for everything. You start thanking God for the relationships in your life. You're going to realize there's a lot more God has given you than what he's withheld from you.

Why? Because he's good. He's given you everything that you need. David's bragging about this. He's like, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.

And let me tell you why. Cause he takes me to the greenest pastures. He takes me to the stillest waters. And notice what he says next. He restores my soul.

You know what he's saying? He's doing something for me no one else can do. Did you know that only the Lord can restore your soul? Listen to me, believer. Listen to me.

Because a lot of people will say, I know that. I know that. But while you say you know that, you hope that your spouse can restore your soul, and he or she can. And you'll hope that your best friend can restore your soul, but he or she can't. And you'll hope that your coach or your boss or your employee or your kids, they can't.

There's no human being that can restore the depth of your soul. Only Jesus Christ can restore your soul. He's the only one that knows how to get to the deep places of who you are. He's the only one that can help you in the areas that you need. David says, I know this.

I have friends. I have people in my life. But it's the Lord that can restore me. It's the Lord that can redeem me. Did you know even well meaning pastors and people like me that would love to see you walk with Jesus?

I can't restore your soul. Only Jesus Christ can. And I'm not just talking about for non believers, if you don't believe in Christ, I want to tell you this. He wants to restore your soul. And when he does, even as believers, we go through difficult times.

There's still pain and there's still hurt, and there's still anguish. And guess what God wants to do? He wants to come in and still restore your soul. He's the lover of your soul. He cares for you.

David's bragging on him. He's like, I have everything I need. When I'm down, he's the one I go to, and he restores my soul. And notice what he does. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

You know something about a shepherd? Shepherd's lead. You know what makes a good flock of sheep? They follow. I mean, all throughout the Bible.

What we see in Jesus is he's a phenomenal leader. As sheep, sometimes we're just not good followers. Jesus always knows where he wants to take us. Jesus always knows where he wants us to go. It's just a question of will we follow him?

And if we do, where does he take us? Green pastures still waters, restoration of our soul. Only Jesus can do that. Now, I don't know how many of you have a GpS device. Most of us have smartphones now that have GpS turn by turn directions on them.

I was just on vacation this last week, right? And so when I'm going to an unfamiliar place, I type in where I want to go and then the phone tells me what I need to do. Then it's up to me whether I want to believe the voice that's coming out of the phone. Make a u turn in a half mile. I'm not making a u turn.

You go past the half mile, make another u turn in a half mile. I'm not going to do that. This phone doesn't know where it's going. Make another u turn. Okay, I better turn around and go where I need to go, right?

But Jesus is different than GPs because in GPS, I program where I want to go. I dictate to the phone where I want to go and it tells me how to get there. Not so with a shepherd. The shepherd leads me where he wants me to go and he starts giving me instructions. And as a sheep, sometimes I want to know, well, why are we going there?

And how come I have to go down this trail? And why can't we go this way? And why do I have to go that way? Jesus doesn't always tell us. And oftentimes he doesn't.

He just tells you, hey, this is the way. Go my way. Trust me. I got this. I got you.

Do you believe me? That's what a shepherd does. And Jesus is this. He's the

good shepherd. He leads his sheep to the right place.

He's the one who designed you. He knows what's best for you. He's the one who is your leader. There's a lot of people in our world that will say, I'm a Christian. There's a lot of people in the world say, oh, yeah, I follow Jesus, but they don't really follow him.

Are you a follower of Jesus? I mean, would there be enough evidence in your life if, if you were put on trial to say, man, this person definitely listens to the Lord and follows them? I mean, when I listen to David, I love this because he says, he's the one who leads me. Now, here's what I love about God. I love that he gave us his revealed word.

Now, as a pastor, I got to tell you, I believe all 66 books of the Bible, from the first book in Genesis all the way through the end of revelation. I believe every word in its original context and its original language was inspired by God. It's without error. It's inerrant. It's true.

Even the parts I don't understand, I just believe it's true. And I believe it by faith. Okay, that would have been enough if God would have given us his word. But you know what else he does? He gives us his holy spirit.

He gives us more than just a map. He gives us a sherpa. He gives us a trail guide. He gives us one that goes with us. Isn't that awesome?

That's God's provision in our life. He reveals the word to us. That's why sometimes when we're reading the words, we get that feeling kind of deep down in here. I need to do this. I need to forgive.

I need to extend forgiveness. Hey, I need to go show love to that person. Hey. I need to be more generous in this way. I need to do that.

Where's that coming from? It's coming from the Holy Spirit of God as the word of

God is reading me right. And it's really interesting because God wants to do great things in our lives. I mean, just in these first verses, we see that God is personal, that he's good, that he's lavish, that he's refreshing, that he's righteous, that he's filled with grace, and that he's glorious. Because every time God takes a wayward sheep, which, by the way, is every single one of us, because all of us have turned and fallen away from the Lord, and every time he takes somebody who claims his name and gets them on the right road and makes them walk the right way, you know what he's doing?

He's getting more glory for himself. I mean, when he takes the apostle Paul, who's totally wayward and against him and saves him, and the apostle Paul starts walking with him, it's not for Paul's glory. Whose glory is, whose glory is it? Jesus is saying, I'm awesome, aren't I? I can take a guy like Paul and do that.

Hey, I can take a guy like Jeff Schwarzentraub and do that. Hey, I can take a person like you and do that. It's to my glory that I get this stuff done. I'm leading you in paths of righteousness for my reputation, for my name's sake. I'm looking to get glory out of you.

Will you follow me? Now, it's really interesting because when Jesus called his disciples, he just gave them two words. Follow me. When Paul was exhorting people to go after Jesus, what did he say, follow me as I follow Christ? What should our call be?

Hey? Follow me in the way you see me following after Jesus. He's my shepherd. See, God's personal provision is that he meets all of our spiritual needs and he meets all of our needs for our calling. Do you know that every one of you is created in a unique way?

I mean, every single one of you. It's why you see the world differently. It's why you have different gifts and talents and abilities. It's why you have different lenses for how you see the world. And God's put you on planet earth to do something through you that only he can do through you.

And he says in first Thessalonians 5:24, he who calls you is faithful. He will surely what? He'll surely do it. And when God begins to call us to something here, it's very easy to go to the victim mentality. Well, I'm not smart enough, I'm not wealthy enough, I don't have enough friends.

Nobody's going to follow me. But when you live out of the victorious mindset of no, he's my shepherd. He's going to resource me. He's going to give me everything I need. If God's leading me down this path, he's going to lead me in the way that he wants me to go.

He's going to do the things he wants me to do. I can just trust him and follow with him. And God's going to do all the work. It's a great adventure. That's what God wants for all of us.

And then not just in our spiritual life and not just in our calling, but just in our everyday needs. Philippians 4:19 Paul pens this word. He goes, and I believe that my God will meet all of my needs accordingly, according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. God is so wealthy, God is so rich, God is so generous, and God is so abundant that when God pours out grace on an individual, he doesn't lose any of the grace he has. So if you have the attitude, like, how come they got so much?

He's got that much more times infinity to give to you. He's a good shepherd. He doesn't run out of goodness. He's a great shepherd. He's the chief shepherd.

He's a good God. David's bragging on him. He's like, this is my God. This is who I serve. And when David brags, you know what he's really bragging?

I mean, in this whole first three verses, if you'd sum it up. About God's personal provision. Here's what he's bragging. I lack nothing. As a servant of the Lord, I lack nothing.

Now, some of you came in here today and you're like, oh, it's not true of me. I lack a spouse. I lack a boyfriend. I lack a girlfriend. I lack some health, I lack some finances.

No, no, no, that's not what you should boast as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me tell you what you lack. You lack nothing. You lack nothing. Can we say I

lack nothing and mean it today?

Can we say it really loud together? One, two, three. I lack nothing. Can you say it this time like you mean it? I lack nothing.

When you're tempted to say, how come it's nothing for me, just remind yourself of these three verses. I lack nothing. God's willing to provide everything that I need for his name's sake. But it gets even better. Notice the second personal provision God gives.

He gives us his personal presence. He says, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. Why? For you are with me. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Now, if you read through the Old Testament, you'll see five words all the time about the people that God had favor on. And here's what you'll read. The Lord was with him. You'll hear people in the Old Testament say, lord, unless you go with me, I'm

not going. Why?

Because they wanted the Lord to be with him. Isn't it interesting? After Jesus gave the great commission, the final words of the great commission are, and lo, I'll be with you always to the very end of the age. Isn't it interesting? Before he left planet Earth in John 16, he tells his disciples, it's good for you that I'm going away.

Because if I go away, I'll send you another, the Holy Spirit who will be with you forever. And isn't it cool? In the book of Hebrews, never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. See, the cool thing about this is many of us, if I said, hey, where's God?

We'd start pointing. He's up there. He's out there. He's over here. Can I tell you where God is?

He's right here with us. He's Emmanuel. He's God with us. And if you're a believer, he's God in us. Now, a lot of people like to quote that verse in Matthew.

It says, where two or three people gather in my name, there I am. Okay, that's not what it means. I mean, that's really a scripture about church discipline and making decisions. Here's where God is. Psalm 139 says, if I go out to the farthest stretch of the dawn, there he is.

If I make my bed in heaven or in hell, there he is. I mean, where can I go to escape him? It means this everywhere I go, because I'm a Christian, there God is. And he's not just up in heaven looking down on me, he's walking right with me. Where is he in our worship service?

He's right with me. Where is he in my marriage? He's right with me. Where is he when I go to work? He's right with me.

That's what David's bragging about. And he says this even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Now, you might wonder, well, what's the valley of the shadow of death? If you don't know the answer to that yet? Hang on.

You're going to know someday. Because sometimes the shepherd leads us on a path that we would never go. And can I just say this about knowing Jesus? Sometimes we think knowing Jesus just means blessing, blessing, blessing, blessing. And we'll get to that because he's a prospering God.

But sometimes because you follow Jesus, sometimes because you claim the name of Jesus, God leads you on a path that you would otherwise never want to go. He'll take you in front of people that you would never want to spend time with. He'll take you in a position or a place that you would have said, I'll never go that way. But if you live with Jesus and you follow him, he will take your life on an adventure. And let's just be real careful, Americans, because we like to plan, we like to strategize, we like to think about things.

We'll ask questions like this in a business meeting. Hey, where are you going to be in the next ten years? Right. And I don't have a problem with that. I think it's important to set goals.

I think it's important to have strategy. It just needs to stay really flexible. Because let me ask you this. How many of you, ten years ago, knew you were going to be sitting here this morning? I mean, this church didn't even exist.

You don't know what's coming. What you do know is no matter what comes, the good shepherd is going to be right with you. No matter where he leads you. David says I'm not going to fear any evil. Why?

Because the Lord's my protector. I can trust him. He's my rock. He's my shield. He's my strength.

He's my song. He's my everything. What's it mean? It means he runs to Jesus. He runs to him for everything he needs.

Now, my littlest child, I have a nine, seven and three year old. My littlest child's three. You know what she does when she needs something from me? She runs. And you know how she comes and approaches me full speed, arms held high.

She's being chased by her brother or sister. This is how she comes. And what do I do? I don't look down at her like, what are you talking about? I'm not picking you up?

No, I grab her, right? Sometimes she doesn't run and want to get picked up. Sometimes she likes to run behind my legs and grab onto them so she can be protected about whatever evil force is in front of her, thinking that her daddy's big enough to handle it. And most of the time for her trouble. I am right.

We think the more we grow with God, the less dependent we are on him. And the truth is, the more we grow with God, the more dependent we are on him. And we should be pursuing Jesus like that because power is perfected and weakness. That's why Paul says I'll boast all the more on my weakness. What was he saying?

I need Jesus more. I reach out to him. When I go through the valley of the shadow of death, I'm like, lord, hold me, Lord, I'm behind you. Why? Because Jesus walks right with him.

So I don't fear anything. A lot of christians worry about a lot. Did you know that? You know what makes me worry about a lot? If I watch the news.

That's why I don't watch the news, because you know in three minutes, you can pick up everything that you need to know in the news, and then it cycles for the next 24 hours with the same stories, and none of them are all that good. And if my hope was in politics, can I just tell you? I would worry a lot. And can I tell you? If my hope was in education, I would worry a lot.

And if the hope was in our morality of a culture, I would worry a lot. But my hope's in none of those things. My hope is in the Lord. And even though he might guide me down a pathway, I don't need, here's what I know. No matter what happens to the economy, no matter what happens politically, no matter what happens to our culture, it

doesn't change the fact that Jesus is still my provider.

And he's right there with me. That's why I have hope. I don't have hope in earthly circumstances. I have hope in my shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, the overseer of my soul, the one who promises to get me into heaven and walk with me every day until I get there. I mean, isn't that awesome?

And David says, this, here's why I fear no evil. You're with me. And then he says, this. Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. Now, think about this.

The staff was the walking stick, right? Staff could not only be used as a walking stick, but as a guide to sheep to make sure they got where they needed to go. What was the rod? It's what fended off all the enemies. Okay?

Do you know why? Because sheep can't fend for themselves if a wolf comes into a sheepfold, okay? They can't fight. I mean, you're never going to watch a discovery channel called Sheep Gone wild or something like that where you see sheep grow

fangs and attack somebody. Sheep don't know how to do that.

All sheep can do. I mean, their greatest line of defense is going, baa, right?

That's all they can do. Some of us think we need to be our own protector. You ever been treated wrong by somebody?

You ever had people say something bad about you? You ever got the short end of the stick at work? You ever had family members treat you bad? You ever had friends that abandoned you? You ever have all that stuff and you feel like you need to go into protection mode?

You feel like you had to go into fight mode? You feel like you had to go into defense mode? David's saying you don't need to do that. Why? Because the Lord walks with you, and he'll fend off everything he needs to fend off and you won't get hurt.

The Lord is your protector. The Lord is your guard. The Lord is your security.
The Lord is your fighter. Let him fight the battle for you.

Let him do the hard work. You don't need to fight it. David says my shepherd will fight for me. The reason I'm comfortable, even in evil situations, is because my God's with me, and he'll fend off everything that needs to be fended off. So I don't fear anything, right?

And it gets even better. Notice what he says next? He says, you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. Now, what's this table? A table is a place where you serve the finest meal.

It's lavish, giving. It's really interesting. That David says, you prepare a table before me. Where does he prepare the table before him? In the presence of his enemies.

Did David have enemies? I mean, even King Saul was his enemy. What did God do to show King Saul that David was the anointed king? I mean, he had people in the city chanting, Saul's killed his thousands. David's has killed his ten thousands.

I mean, right in front of Saul, he's preparing this lavish banquet to show David's my man. Right. Right in the middle of all the people that are naysayers. Right in the middle of all the people that are saying, there's no way. I don't believe this.

Right in the middle of all the people saying, I hate that guy. I can't stand that gal. Right in the middle of all them, God's like, but I love you, and I'm going to be lavish to you in front of. That's who I am. That's why David says, I don't worry about what other people say.

God fights all my battles. And let me tell you something about my shepherd. He provides for me, and he's going to do it so lavishly that even my enemies will see how lavish he is to me. He's a protector. But make no mistake about it, God's a prosperity God.

He said, you anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Anointing our head with oil would be refreshment. He's like, God, you refresh me, and my cup overflows. You know what an overflowing cup is?

It means I not only have, like, half a cup, I not only have a full cup, I have so much that it's running over. Why? Because God's an abundant God. And can I just say this especially in a Bible church? Because when the word prosperity gets spoken of in a Bible church, like, defenses start coming up like, okay, where is he gonna go with this?

Is he gonna be prosperity gospel guy? Cause I've heard prosperity gospel's totally wrong. Here's what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that every day you wake up, God's going to give you all the money and all the health and all the wealth that you can get. I'm not saying that.

We just got done reading that you might walk through the valley of the shadow of

death today, and even when you do, God's with you. But let me just tell you this. We're talking about the most generous, loving, kind, lavishing, being on the planet. And to speak of God in a miserly way is to not speak about the God of the Bible. God is a lavish God.

My cup over flows. I not only have what I need, I have more than what I need. You ever heard this said in christian circles? God promises to meet all your needs. He just won't meet all your wants.

Did you ever hear that? Let me give you an example of what that looks like. I was on vacation this week. And when we go on vacation, we do a lot of swimming, we do a lot of hanging out. And my kids all the time are like, dad, let's go get ice cream.

And you know what I say? You know what, son? That's more of a want than a need. What you really need are vegetables. So there's no ice cream this week for you?

Is that what I do? Heck no. We eat more ice cream on our trip than we have a right to. Cause I want to be a lavish dad, right? God's just like that.

We have this view of God that's very miserly and weak and we're supposed to just accept what he gave us. Let me tell you something. Think about what God's already given you. How much would it cost if we were to put a price tag on our salvation and be presented blameless before the father and having all our eternity paid for, and God loving us? I mean, how much would that cost?

All the money in the world, we couldn't pay for that. And yet we're afraid to ask God for our wants. Are you kidding me? God loves us. Those that we love, we want to be generous to.

God lavishes his love on his children. No good thing will he withhold from those who walk uprightly. Psalm 37 four says, delight in the Lord. He'll give you the desires of your heart. It doesn't mean God, this is what I want.

This is what I want. This is what I want. And if you give it to me, I will delight in you. It means this. If I delight in Jesus, and I love Jesus and I love who he is, God's going to overflow my heart, not only with my needs, but with my wants.

That's what he does. He's a lavish, generous God. Now, if you have what I call provisional envy, where you look around at other people with your victim mentality, how come they got that? How come they live there? How can they drive that?

How can they live like that? How can they wear those kind of clothes? How can they. That's called provisional envy. It means you can't celebrate with people.

God is blessing. Can I tell you something? I can always celebrate with people, God's blessing. Because every time I see God bless somebody, it reminds me of how generous and awesome my God is. So when I see somebody that's been praying for their spouse for years and has gone through broken relationships and all this stuff, and finally they come and they're like, pastor, I'm getting engaged.

I rejoice because I'm like, that's what my God does. He blesses. And when I see guys that are in the business world and they're doing multimillion dollar deals and they're asking me to pray for it, and God comes through and they're generous with what God gives them, I get excited because I'm like, that's what my God does. And when I see the person that's making 26 grand grand a year, that takes a step of faith and says, you know what? I'm going to try to tithe.

I'm going to start tithing and trust the Lord. And God blesses them in all sorts of new ways, and they come tell me how God has done a work in their life, and they have tears in their eyes, I rejoice. Why? Because that's what my God does. He's a generous God that you can't out give.

Now, I could stand up here literally, literally, for the rest of the day and tell you stories about God's favor in my life. And favor is like a vapor. You don't hang on to favor. It just kind of comes and you enjoy it, and then it goes on. Okay, but favor is God's favor.

There's some stories that are so good, I couldn't even tell them because it's almost embarrassing how good God's been to me. As a matter of fact, when I went into ministry, before I went into ministry, I was in a position that was very lucrative. All my friends that are still in the business that I was in are multimillionaires. And when I quit to go into ministry, my number one fear of going into ministry was I would never have anything, and I never get to do anything I want. I'd be some hermit living in a cave, you know, wearing the same pair of jeans every single day and be miserable.

But I'd do it for the Lord. And God has blown me away so many times over and over, saying, not only am I generous to you, but let me do some things in your life which would just show you, Jeff, that I know what your heart's about, so that you can do it. Can I give you a couple examples? Okay. Two of you want to hear an example, listen up.

So I was at a church back in Illinois, and my pastor talked about a time he had heard. He knew his pastor, and he grew up in Ohio, and that pastor would give chapels for the Cleveland Browns. And he said he remember when he was talking to his pastor, and he would talk about going to the Cleveland Browns. My friend, my pastor, he would get really jealous, like, how come he gets to do that? How come I don't get to

do that?

How come I don't get to go help with chapels in the NFL? But then he realized this, that God loved him, so he just began to pray. He's like, lord, if you'd ever let me do a chapel for the NFL, he goes, I'd love to do that. And by God's grace, I mean, the guy's a Green Bay packers fan, so he's not totally sanctified or anything, but he had the opportunity to do chapel for the Green Bay packers. Several times.

We'd come to our church and talk about what he did, and I remember thinking, that's so cool. And I remember in that service praying, lord, I'd love to do that someday. I mean, if you'd ever let me lead a chapel for an NFL team, I'd love to do that. And it wasn't like a daily prayer. It's not like I thought about it again.

It's just something I prayed. So about a year ago, I got a call from the Denver Broncos asking me to come to a chapel, and I got to walk in there, and if I named all the names, you would know all the names of the people that I got to preach romans 623 to and share the gospel with. And I remember walking out of that room with all these guys, like, high fiving me before the Broncos game. I'm like, lord, that was really,

really cool. And he said, jeff, that's my favor.

And just a month ago, I was told by a friend of mine, he's like, hey, cubs are coming in town to play the Rockies. He goes, you want to do devotions for the Cubs? When they hear? I said, absolutely. They need all the spiritual help that they can possibly, possibly get.

What's that called? It's just favor. Do I deserve it? No. Does it change my view of God if I don't get to do it?

No. Is it a sign that God's saying, Jeff, I know what your heart is, and I love you and I care about you? Absolutely it is. That's who God is. He blesses us with things that we enjoy and I'm gonna tell you this.

If you'll take the time to write down the things that God's doing in your life, you'll be overwhelmed with how good he wants to be to you. God wants to do great things in your life. God wants to give you his provision. God wants to give you his presence, his

protection, his prosperity. He wants you to walk in his ways and see.

One of the reasons I find that Christians have a hard time going and seeking the face of God is because they view God as this miserly God that's holding back from them, or this mean God that just wants to point out all your sin and tell you how awful you are. And we miss the whole understanding of what the gospel is, which is David's final point, because it really culminates in this final verse, verse six, where David says this. Surely it means truly. It means without exception, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. What's he saying?

He's talked about God's personal presence. He's talked about God's personal provision. And now look what he's talking about, God's personal pursuit of you. God's personal pursuit of him. He says, surely goodness and mercy shall follow me.

Now, these words follow don't mean like God follows at a distance behind. These words literally translate as chase me down or pursue rigorously. Pursue vigorously. That's what he does. And what does he chase me down with?

He chases me down with goodness and mercy. This word mercy could also be loving kindness or hesed love, the covenantal love of God. Why is God chasing us down? He's chasing us down because he loves us so much. That's the story of the gospel.

Did you know that? That Christ Jesus came into the world to chase down sinners and provide a way for them. See, some people think Jesus came into the world to judge the world. No, the Bible says the world was judged already. Jesus did not come into the world, condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Why did Jesus come? The whole picture of God in the Bible is his pursuit of wayward people. To demonstrate what his love. Even before you knew him, while you were still a sinner, Christ had already pursued you and died. He had already rose and had spent every waking moment pursuing you.

The Bible says in psalm 139 that his thoughts for you outnumber the grains of sand. That means every thought God has is to pursue you, to show you this. I'm good, and I'm loving, and I want to show you new ways in which I'm good and loving. Now, if that's your view of the Lord and that's your view of who he is, you'll pursue him differently. You'll think of him differently, and how you view God will determine everything in your life.

If God's some miserly mean up in heaven, distant God that I have to pray to, you'll approach him that way. But if God is a present, provisional God who is pursuing us to lavish us with his grace, it will change your relationship to him. God's always pursuing you. If you don't know Jesus, the reason God's pursuing you and showing you things in your life is he wants you to know him as your lord and savior. He wants you to personally experience just how awesome he is.

And if you do know God, the reason God's tapping you on the shoulder and leading you in different ways that he wants you to go is because he's trying to show you I'm incredible. I'm awesome. I'm good. God pursues us because of his love. A couple days ago, we were at the swimming pool, and my three year old, my nine and seven year old, they swim pretty well.

But my three year old, she can't swim very well, so we always put her in a life jacket. Well, we were getting ready to leave, so the life jacket came off, and I was walking to our car. And while I was walking to the car, I noticed my wife was gathering things and she was closer to the pool. And I noticed that my three year old had gone to the edge of the. The pool.

I'm like, she can't swim. She can't even float. This is not good. So I alerted my wife and I said, get her. And Kim looked over, and she was just a short distance away.

And so she immediately ran over to my daughter. Well, when my daughter saw her coming, my daughter's like, I don't want to see mom. So she steps in the pool, right? And then she steps in another step and she goes down. And as soon as she did, Kim was there to grab her arm and pull her out, right?

That's the love that God has for us. I want to tell you something. My three year old was ticked at my wife. She didn't like the fact that she got pulled out of the pool.

She didn't realize my wife was saving her from a near death experience.

And a lot of us as sheep are the same way. Why is God pulling me out of that? Why is he taking this person away. Why do I have to deal with this? Because God loves you and he's leading you in a way and you can't see the future and you don't know what's coming.

But if you trust in his presence and his provision and his pursuit, pursuit of you and allow him to lead and you follow, he'll always lead you in the right way. Did you know God's pursuing every single one of you today? Every single one of you. God pursues. See, sometimes when we think God's distant, he's way out there.

It's my job to pursue him and I'll never get to know him and he's way out there and church is so hard and work is so, it's not who he is. He's presently with you. He's tapping you on the shoulder, letting you know, hey, I love you today. I want to provide for you today. I want to walk with you today and I want you to let you know something.

I'm pursuing you today just to show you how awesome and loving I am in your life. I'm an awesome God. I'm a good, good shepherd. That's how Jesus talked about himself. I'm not making this stuff up.

And here's the things that Christians need to understand too, because a lot of times when things are going well in your life, and I've heard Christians say stuff like this, well, it's going well now, but I'm just kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop. I know it's going to get bad soon enough. No way. Not with the good shepherd, not with the God that's chasing you down with mercy and love. It means no matter where you go, God is, see, here's the great thing about our God.

Even when God leads us in a way, have you ever had that experience where God starts leading you in a way, you start walking this way and you feel that voice on the inside. Some of us would call it our conscience. It's not our conscience. It's the Holy Spirit that's like revved up inside of you saying, don't do that, don't go that way, don't make that decision. And the Bible says it because all of us are sinners.

We're like, nah, I'm not listening to that. I'm going to do it anyway. And we've all had that experience where we go this way and then we're mad at God because our life didn't work out the way we wanted to when he told us all along, don't do that right. But God's so loving that in his pursuit of us, he moves us back to the path that we need to go. This is exactly what you see in Luke, chapter 15.

It's why it's one of the most preached on passages. When the younger son comes home, what do you see? The pursuit of the father for the wayward son, the one who squandered his wealth, went the wrong way, did everything immoral, did everything he wasn't supposed to do. And what's his dad do? He makes a beeline to sprint towards him.

For what purpose? To tell him how awful he was, how rotten he was, how wasteful he was, how stupid he was? No, he made a beeline for him to hug him in the middle of all of his shame and all of his guilt and say, man, so glad you're home. I've been waiting for this day. Do you know it's true of every single believer?

Do you know that's true of every single non believer that God is pursuing you in

such a way that he can't wait till you respond to his embrace? God brought you here today because he wanted to remind you he was pursuing you. And he wanted to remind you that he's a good God. And he wanted to remind you that he will lavish you with his provision. And he wanted to remind you that God will walk with you everywhere you want to go.

Do you have friends like that in your life that can encourage that God in you? I have a good friend named Duane. He lives in Texas, and he does a lot of missions in India. And we have this statement we make to each other all the time. Like, he'll call me, and usually he'll start the call like this, Jeff, it is good to be me.

And then he'll go on and tell me about some things that God has done in his life. And then you know what I do? I start celebrating with him. I'm like, dude, that's totally awesome. Awesome.

I remember we bought our building. I called Duane. I said, duane, I just want to tell you something. It's good to be me. Our church just raised almost \$2 million in six days.

I sent him a picture of me and my wife at the Super bowl with a quote, it's good to be me. I mean, do you have people in your life that will celebrate you? Because a lot of times when God starts providing and a lot of times when you walk with God, people will be almost critical of God's goodness to you, like you're doing something wrong. No way. You don't need to apologize for God's favor in your life.

You don't need to apologize for what God's done in your life. And you don't need to be jealous of other people that have good things in your life. Because I want to tell you something. No matter who you are, God wants to lavish you in the same way with the specific things that he has for you because he loves you. And he's a good shepherd.

He's a really, really good shepherd. But you know what we need to do sometimes? We need to ask. Remember when Jesus was coming out of Jericho and he met this blind guy named Bartimaeus? And Bartimaeus had been barking for.

For a while, like, Jesus, come have mercy. Jesus, come have mercy. And finally, his disciples are like, okay, calm down. The master's coming. And Jesus walks up to this blind man who's been calling to him for some time now, and he makes a statement.

It's actually in the form of a question. It almost sounds rude. Here's this blind guy that's been begging for a long period of time, who wants Jesus to come help him. And Jesus looks at him, and Jesus first comment to him is this, what do you want me to do? Hello, I'm blind.

Can't see. Why did Jesus ask him such a question? Because even though the father knows what we need before we ask him, he invites us to ask. He wants us to know, are you really dependent upon me to do this? So what's the guy say?

I want to see. He's like, all right, then, see, you can see. Now, if Jesus were hearing all of his splendor, for those of you that are kind of in the victim's side, and he said, well, what do you want me to do? Maybe he wouldn't ask it like that. Maybe he'd ask it like this.

What do you want me to do? What would you tell him? Well, I don't want to bother you with anything. You've already given me enough. Do you know that?

Anything you could ask for is already less than what he's already given you? He's already paid the price tag for your holy eternity. Anything you ask for is less than what he has already given you. He's that generous. So why not ask?

You know why I ask? Because I can handle him saying no. Because if he says no, here's why he's saying no, Jeff, that's not for your best. Because I know you're good God. And if you don't want me to have that, there's a reason I may not even know about.

So I'm good with that as long as you lead me. But I'm going to ask anyway. How tragic would it be to end up in heaven knowing that God was willing to pour out more and more blessing on your life, but you never experienced it because you never asked. In James, it says you have not because you ask not. Jesus is a good shepherd.

He's a good God. He's your provision. He goes with you with his presence, and he pursues you. And when he does, you know what? We scream, I dread nothing.

There's a lot of Christians that live with dread like, oh, my gosh, what's going to happen today? What's going to happen tomorrow? I dread nothing because I serve the good, good shepherd who's leading me. Can we just real loud, in a loud voice say, I dread nothing, and mean it. I dread nothing.

Say it again. I dread nothing. Yeah, but I don't have the right kind of job yet, but, yeah, but my family's not put together yet. But I dread nothing. Yeah, but my child's wayward, but I dread nothing.

Why? Because I'm following the good shepherd who provides for all that I need. But I have to ask him. I have to ask him. God wants you to know that's who you serve.

God wants you to know. If you've never trusted Jesus Christ and his death for your sins and his resurrection from the grave, make today your day. Invite Jesus to be the lord of your life. And if you have, ask him for what you want. Ask him for what you need.

He's a good shepherd. Amen. Could you stand? And we pray today. I'm going to invite our prayer team forward at this time as we get ready to sing this last chorus.

But, Lord, we just come before you right now. And, Lord, we just ask you to minister to our hearts in this place. And, Lord, to show us those things that are deep that we've wanted to ask you but we feel embarrassed to. And, Lord, we just come before you now to ask and to say, Lord, we trust you because we believe you're good and we believe you provide and we believe you pursue. And, Lord, we want you, Lord, and more than anything else, we want to bask in the assurance we have that we belong to you.

Let that be our story. In Jesus name, amen.

