

## My cup overflows

Bible reference for sermon Psalm 23

*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

I'm indebted to Pastor Sue for this sermon. Most of it is a homily she gave at a service of Prayer and Healing during Lent. I've adapted it for Good Shepherd Sunday.



Today we turn to one of the most beloved passages in all of Scripture—Psalm 23. Its words are familiar to many of us.

They have been whispered at hospital bedsides, spoken at gravesides, Sung at funerals and this beautiful psalm and the sure promises of the Good Shepherd in John 10 were proclaimed and sung at both of the funeral services beloved members of this flock this past week. When Pastor Sue wrote this homily, she had no idea that her dear Peter and our other beloved Peter Leslie would no longer be on this earth this Good Shepherd Sunday.

I know that grieving people are praying the words quietly in the depths of the night. Yet this psalm is not only for moments of loss.

It is a song of trust spoken by someone who has discovered that God's care is real, even in the midst of life's deepest valleys.

It is a song of faith and life spoken by someone whose faith overflows into a life of loving, serving, witnessing, sharing despite grief and despite the hardest edges of life. And we shall begin to explore as people of faith, people of the resurrection, people of promise and grace, what it is for us to consider how our hope and our faith in Christ overflows to people who don't know Jesus and don't know him as their loving Good Shepherd Saviour.

The psalm begins with a simple confession:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”

This image of God as shepherd is both intimate and powerful.

A shepherd lives among the flock,  
watching, guiding, protecting.

The shepherd knows the terrain and walks with the sheep through it.

In the same way, God is not distant from our lives. God knows our needs, our fears, and the places where we feel most vulnerable. To say that the Lord is our shepherd is to trust that we are not abandoned in the journey of life.

The psalm continues with images of rest and nourishment:

green pastures and still waters.

These are pictures of deep provision.

God does not merely give us enough to survive; God leads us into places where our spirits can breathe again.

In a world that often feels hurried and anxious and this may be caused by what is going on around us or what is going on within us, God invites us into spaces of stillness where our souls can be restored.



The shepherd does not drive the sheep forward relentlessly but leads them to places where they may lie down and be renewed.

This restoration touches the deepest part of who we are.

“He restores my soul.”

God’s care reaches beyond our outward circumstances and into our inner life.

The God who guides us also heals us.

In the quiet presence of the shepherd, what is weary can be revived, what is broken can be mended, and what feels lost can be found again.



Yet the psalm is honest about the reality of life.

It does not promise that the path will always remain in green pastures.

Instead, it acknowledges the valley —the shadowed places where fear and uncertainty dwell.

We know these valleys.

They appear in illness, grief, anxiety, loneliness, or the burdens we carry within ourselves.

But the psalm does not say we remain in the valley, does it?

It’s important to hear this very clearly, I think. For I believe it is key to understanding the Good Shepherd’s promise of abundant life for the flock he loves.

The Psalm says we walk through the valley. Last week I spoke of disciples stuck in the miry mud of grief. And I know how deep grief can be and is. I don't downplay it. But the



psalmist confesses and knows this is not their dwelling place. In the journey through the valley of the shadow, we hear the central promise of the psalm:

**“You are with me.”**

The shepherd does not remove every darkness from our lives, but the shepherd enters it with us. The presence of God becomes our comfort, our courage, and our strength.

Then the image of the psalm shifts. The shepherd becomes a gracious host who prepares a table for us. Even in the presence of what threatens us—fear, pain, uncertainty—God sets a place for us. Our heads are anointed with oil, a sign of blessing and welcome. Our cup overflows with grace. What God gives is never scarce. **It is abundant.**



Our cup overflows with grace from our hearts restored to others. Our lives which in Christ are lived to the full overflow to others.

**To whom might the Good Shepherd be calling you to be courageous to share your faith and hope in the Good Shepherd?**

Beginning on May 17 I will be conducting an in-person Gospel Fluency workshop using the LCA Gospel Fluency workshop resource developed by our own Pastor Nathan Hedt. This in person workshop will be a small one primarily to help the people who are volunteering on weekdays to welcome people who come to the St Paul's centre from the community around us.

The video is found at <https://www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency/>

 Dwelling in the Word guide	 Session 1 study guide	 Session 2 study guide
<b>website</b> <a href="https://www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency">https://www.lca.org.au/gospel-fluency</a>		
 Session 3 study guide	 Session 4 study guide	 Session 5 study guide

I want to conduct more and larger Gospel Fluency workshops in the future so that all of us can be equipped and encouraged to naturally let our cups overflow to others telling them of this amazing Shepherd for them too and for the joy of life together as community in his flock.

You can also find the video series and study guides for the workshop at the LCA

I commend this to us, to you all. Small groups this could be a fantastic study opportunity for you.

In a few minutes as we come as a community, as the flock of the Good Shepherd to receive communion, we step into this scene of the psalm.

We come to the table the Lord has prepared.

Here Christ meets us not because we are strong, but because we are in need.

Here the Good Shepherd becomes our host, offering nourishment for our bodies and healing for our souls.

Here we join with every member of the flock that the Shepherd says “nothing and no one will snatch out of my hand”. Every member of the flock who has gone before us we join in this heavenly banquet on earth. Who do you remember today?

And the psalm ends with a promise that stretches across all our days: “Surely goodness and mercy shall pursue me all the days of my life.” Even when we wander, even when we lose our way,

Even when our hearts break and we wonder where our Shepherd is, God’s love does not stop seeking us.

It follows us, surrounds us, and gently leads us home.

In the presence of the Shepherd and the host, we discover that we are never alone.

Our souls are restored, our fears are quieted, and our lives are held in the goodness of God.

And so, we come forward with open hearts, trusting that the One who walks with us will also heal us and make us whole.

And God’s resurrection life flows into our hearts and overflows to the people of our hearts.

The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.

Amen.

*Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>*