

Paths of Righteousness

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[0:00] To you who are new or visiting today, thank you for spending your time with us. I recognize that it can be a scary thing to come to a new church. And you might feel like you have better things to do than come to a church on Sunday morning.

There's mountains to go to, Labor Day weekend, all of these things. So we're really grateful that you're here. I'm grateful that you're here. I work for the college ministry that is the wing of this church, the Presbyterian Church in America.

It's called Reformed University Fellowship. We are a ministry that works on your behalf as a ministry of the Presbyterian Church. And so in many ways, I am sent out by you through the giving, through the prayers to minister to college students.

And so it is a real treat to come and always see you all, report to you all the work. The fall season is a really busy time for college ministry. It's the time where we're relaunching and meeting freshmen, meeting new students.

And I thought I'd give a real quick report. The goal of RUF is to reach students for Christ and equip them to serve. So there's two parts in that. There's reaching, there's finding students and exposing them, welcoming them into the gospel of Jesus Christ, the saving news of his death and resurrection.

[1:14] And then there's discipling them, equipping them to walk with Jesus in the church for the rest of their lives or until Christ comes. And we've had a really great start.

It's hard. Campus ministry is challenging these days, but it's also really, really fun. We have a student who this summer, she first, well, she first started coming to RUF last year and grew up nominally Catholic.

And then a couple of, mid-June, she sits down with me over coffee and says, I don't think I've understood the Christian faith before, but I think I'm in. How do I do it? And so right then and there, I said, well, do you want to ask Jesus to be your Savior and your Lord and your King?

And she said, yes, how? And so we sat down and we prayed. And she says, yes, I'm in. Jesus saved me. And then she said, how can I do more? And can I come and serve RUF more?

And how do I come to church and all these things? And so right now I'm working with her this semester to sort of train her a little bit more, but then she's going to come on to our servant team. But already she's been meeting new students who've been coming in and welcoming them.

[2:19] On the other side of things, on Friday, this is wild, I had a conversation with a witch, a druid pagan, and that's what she calls herself. And I was very curious about her spirituality.

And I said, I'd like to talk with you more about it. How can we set up a standing coffee? And she said, I'd love that. And so please pray for me. As I get to know, well, paganism is the fastest growing religion in the U.S. right now.

And there's lots of students who would say that they are pagans. At the end of the day, it's very legalistic. There's a bunch of things that she has to do so that spiritual forces will be kind to her. So it's very much earn and deserve and prove. Obviously, there's a lot of spiritual forces at play in that. So please pray for me. On the other side of equipping, we've added 12 new students to our servant leadership team, including a student from this church who are, and they are killing it. They are meeting students, getting phone numbers, texting them, inviting them to our Labor Day picnic tomorrow, asking them to join small group Bible studies. I find myself either doing less ministry, which is a good thing, or being able to reach more broadly because the students are being equipped to do ministry.

[3:34] And so it's a fun time. It's a really exciting thing. If you're curious about my work, I'd love to get you on my email thread. If you're interested in helping me through prayer or through giving of

resources financially or otherwise, please come talk to me.

Turn in your Bibles now, if you would, to Psalm 23. Psalm 23, probably one of the most famous passages in all of literature, certainly in the Bible.

Maybe only second to John 3.16, which we see on football signs through the end zone. Other than that, this might be the top.

It's the passage that I first learned growing up in the church. The Lord is my shepherd. And there's good reason for that. This passage has been comfort to billions of Christians across thousands of years.

It has strengthened so many people. And it seems like it's always appropriate, from deathbeds to morning devotionals to evening prayer to Sunday worship.

[4:39] It does it all. It does it all. And today, we're only going to look at half of one verse. Half of one verse and see how it cares for us today. We're just going to look at verse 3, part B.

But before we do that, let me read us the first three verses and pray, and then we will dive in. So this is God's word, Psalm 23, verse 1. 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.

This is God's word. Would you pray with me? Father in heaven, we are grateful to come into your presence, to be around other Christians, to be in the presence of your Holy Spirit, to join with thousands of millions of Christians around time and this earth, to worship you.

We know that our hearts are pulled to adore many other things, and so we need this course correction this day. We need your Holy Spirit to rightly comfort those who are afflicted and afflict those who are comforted.

[5:49] We need you to send your Spirit to show us Jesus. So we pray now that as we look at your words, as we prepare to take the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, that you would be with us, and it's in Jesus' name that we pray.

Amen. I'm reading the Chronicles of Narnia with my seven-year-old daughter right now, and we just finished the second, well, I think it's the second book.

There's debate about whether or not Prince Caspian, what order it's in. I think it's the second one. But we're reading the story of Prince Caspian. In book one, The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe, probably the most famous of the Narnia stories, four children, the Pevensie children, are pulled away magically into an alternative world, Narnia, and they have an incredible adventure.

You're probably familiar with this story. And they grow up, and they become the great kings and queens of Narnia, and then at the end of their reign, they're pulled back to their homeland in England.

And they spend a year reminiscing and sort of recovering to being children again and to their story. And a year has passed. But in that one year, hundreds of years pass in Narnia, and Narnia comes to need them again.

[7:03] And so you remember, if you've read the story, they're at a train station, and they hear a horn blow, and they think it's the train, but then they're whisked back to Narnia. And they find themselves in what they once, they thought, is this Narnia?

It looks completely different. It's a completely different landscape. They no longer know their way around. A river has cut a new canyon where there was once a small creek bed. And they're trying to navigate their way through Narnia, and they know that they're called to rescue or assist King, well, Prince Caspian to becoming the king.

And so they need to find Caspian. And they're trying to find their way to Caspian's camp. And they find themselves hopelessly lost, if you remember the story. And Peter and Edmund, the two brothers, think they can figure out their way, navigate their way, particularly through a very rough canyon.

And so they try to go through the canyon on their own, and it leads them straight into King Miraz's camp, the bad king, who has taken over Narnia. And they have a very close encounter with death, and they retreat back up into the canyon.

And they're at their wit's end. And if you remember the story, they're eating boiled apples again, and they're hungry, and they're tired, and they don't know what to do. And then Lucy, who's the most faithful of the children, falls asleep, and she starts awake in the middle of the night.

[8:30] And she sees Aslan, who is the guardian lion, the divine figure, telling her to follow him. And he leads them. She wakes up their siblings and says, I've seen Aslan, and they can't see him. They say, he's not there. And she says, trust me, would you follow me down? And they look, and they start to see, actually, there might be a hidden path through the canyon that they had not noticed.

And they follow the path, and slowly as they go through, they see the path become more and more clear, and they begin to see Aslan more and more clearly. And at the end, they reach the place that they were trying to reach safely, the place they'd been trying to get to the whole time, and they realize that Aslan had been leading them the entire time.

Even when they weren't aware of it, even when they hadn't seen him, even when they had strong trust or weak trust, doubts. And that part of the story is a picture of what our text tells us.

In fact, I've often, I've thought, as I've thought through this passage, if C.S. Lewis had this in mind as he wrote that part of the story, that Psalm 23 tells us what that story was, which is this.

[9:42] God guides our lives, guides the lives of Christians for their good, and his glory all their lives. That is the simple truth that this passage shows us today.

The one thing that I would ask you to try and remember as you walk away from church today and seek to follow Jesus this coming week is that God guides Christians for their good and his glory all their lives.

And the way that I want us to consider this simple truth is to look at it in three ways. And the first thing I want to do is almost do a word-by-word study through this short phrase, sentence. Look at what each word means. And then second is to make some pastoral applications or reflections on it. And third, to see how it applies to our lives. So let's, shall we, if you would, come along with me.

Let's dig in to this verse and see what it says. It says here, verse three, part B, he leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

[10:40] Now the first three verses of Psalm 23 are a metaphor of God's care for Christian lives. And it uses the image of a shepherd caring for his sheep. And it's a shepherd who is walking his sheep on, in this last phrase, paths of righteousness.

But let's look at the first word. It says, he leads me in paths of righteousness. Who is this he that is referring here? Well, it's very clear. You can go up to the very first sentence and it says, the Lord is my shepherd.

But it's more than that. Notice here that in your translation, it has the word Lord in all capitalizations. That word is capitalized and it says, the Lord is my shepherd.

And whenever we see that, we need to be cued off to a whole new, our minds need to telescope and expand to a whole rich story that the Christian faith teaches. And it's this, that that word Lord is God's personal name.

It's his personal name. And it's the name that God reveals to Moses all the way back in Exodus 3. And it's God's personal name, Yahweh.

[11:49] I will be what I will be. And if you remember, in Exodus 3, God comes to Moses out of the blue, who is not exactly walking with the Lord, who had grown up a pagan in the middle of Egypt.

And he says, I am the God of your fathers and I am going to rescue the children of your fathers. And Moses says, who are you? Who should I say is this God that's going to, and he says, I will tell you who I am.

And it's very famous. You know it. He says, I am what I am, Yahweh. And that name, God's personal name, means something. Just like your name, if you've probably done a little bit of Googling, means it's something.

Well, what does God's name mean? God's name means this. I will be what I will be, or I am what I am. Or I will be what I am, or I am what I will be.

What it means is that God's name is consistency, continuity. Really what it means is that he is, at the very core of his being, a promise keeper.

[12:52] He will do what he says, and what he says he will do. God's name, baked into the very character of him, is stability, reliability, trustworthiness.

Perhaps you're here today, and you're curious about the Christian faith. For whatever reason, maybe you've been here your whole life, and you're curious about the Christian faith. Maybe you stumbled in here, and you don't know why you're here.

What do Christians believe? Let me tell you this. At the very core, the center of the Christian faith is the belief that a personal God reveals himself to human beings, and that he is consistent.

He is a promise-keeping God, that his character is reliable. He is a personality who is able to be trusted, and it is this he who leads us.

This is the next word. He leads me. What does this mean? That this character, this personality, this God, guides, directs, plans the trajectory of our lives.

[14 : 01] Now, this might feel a little obvious, but I want to pause and say, what are the counter stories that our world tells us about our lives? One of the stories that you can hear regularly is that our lives are just the products of cosmic blind evolutionary forces.

You are the product of blind biological forces that somehow led you to be in this place. You are just the product of biology.

It's blind, it's random, it's even chaotic. That's one story. Another story, which is frankly at the source of paganism, the resurgence of paganism that we see in our world today, the fastest growing religion, which says this, our lives are the pawns of greater spiritual forces.

Gods, spirits, whatever, are using us as pawns, and we are just their playthings. Often when we think about the trajectory of our lives, we're faced with two different stories, and actually both of them appear in the movie The Odyssey.

How many of y'all saw The Odyssey this summer? Great movie, really enjoyed it. Both of them are in this movie, so you know the story of The Odyssey, even if you didn't see it. The Odyssey is about a great hero of the Trojan War named Odysseus, and he's trying to get home, and he gets to Poseidon's son, who's a cyclops, and he gouges his eye out, and just as he gouges his eye out, Poseidon's son, the cyclops, and he calls down a curse from his father Poseidon and says, would you have struggles getting home?

[15 : 38] Would you not get home? Poseidon hears this and swears that he will buffet and afflict Odysseus all his way home. On the other side is Athena, who is Odysseus' patron goddess, and she says, I will help you get home.

And so the rest of the story of The Odyssey, what makes the story so exciting, is that Odysseus and his men are essentially thrown about by two warring gods, Poseidon and Athena, and they're just getting tossed about.

They are thrown around by spiritual forces greater than themselves. At the same time, there's another narrative in the movie, The Odyssey, that's this, that Odysseus is a strong man.

He's a pivotal man, and at one point in the story, he says, and you remember, if you saw the movie, he growls, someone says, it's fated by the gods, and what does he growl? He says, then I defy the gods.

Right? And in fact, that line, defy the gods, that was the banner line for the whole movie. It was defy the gods. It was the tagline of the promotional trailers. And so this is the conflicting stories that we hear in our world today.

[16 : 48] One, on one side, is that our lives are our own to lead. Defy the gods. Whatever forces are out there, whatever's trying to tell you to do or be or act in some way, defy it.

Be your own person. Challenge the status quo. We set the trajectory of our lives, large and small. Here's what it is. We decide where we live. We get to decide where we work.

We get to decide what our hobbies are. We get to decide who our friends or our spouses are. And even if there is some greater force, spiritual or otherwise, that seeks to manipulate or control, we rebel, defy the gods.

But on the other side, we have another story that we often hear and are told, which is this, that we are pawns tossed about by impersonal forces or personal forces greater than ourselves. Fate is inevitable, unavoidable.

You're poor because you were born poor. You're kept down because of your race. In the Odyssey, the whole crew of Odysseus is fated to die and as try as he can, try as hard as he can, Odysseus can't stop his men from dying.

[17 : 57] Sometimes this story takes the form of social science, our class, our family, our upbringing. Either way, the stories we tell say that either I'm on my own or there's nothing I can do.

Do you see that? Now, contrast that, dear friends, with what Psalm 29 says, the Lord is my shepherd. He guides me on paths of righteousness.

We are neither the captains of our own destiny nor mere manipulated pawns of impersonal forces. Here, a consistent promise-keeping God who's in control of everything.

This is what we said in our confession of faith, providentially working all things out for our good, leads us. A divine shepherd cares for us, directs our lives.

your life is neither up to you to control on your own nor are you a victim of fate. A heavenly shepherd who has affection and even love leads you.

[19 : 12] but how does he lead us? How does he lead us? Well, the next phrase, he leads me in paths of righteousness. In paths of righteousness.

When God, our shepherd, leads us in righteousness, he takes us, and this is what it means, he takes us in life directions that will shape us to be more like him.

Paths of righteousness are directions, events, parts of our lives that will shape us to be more like him. And all of this is captured in the word righteousness.

It's a very, it's a very Christian word, right? We hear this word tossed around a lot. What does it mean? In this context, it does not necessarily mean what Paul, how Paul uses the word when he talks about Christ's perfection given or imputed to us by faith.

That's a beautiful truth in the Christian faith and I would love to talk with you about it if you're curious about it, but that's not what is, what's being referred to here. In Psalm 23, the paths that lead us, that God leads us on, the righteous paths are marked by two characteristics, two things.

[20 : 20] First, holiness. Second, purity. Paths of righteousness are marked by holiness and purity. First thing is they write that righteous paths are holy, another common Christian word.

What is a holy path? Well, when something is holy, we mean that is separate, it's distinct, it's set apart from the rest.

It has its special purpose. Think of it this way. In my house, we have a lot of brushes. Yesterday was cleaning day in my house and so I was scrubbing my whole house.

I scrubbed the floors, I scrubbed the stairs, I vacuumed the carpet with this special brush, I scrubbed the toilets. because there's lots of brushes for cleaning in my house.

But there's one brush that has a very special purpose. My toothbrush. And my toothbrush is set apart for a very special task. And as soon as my toothbrush scrubs anything other than my teeth, it is no longer my toothbrush.

[21 : 25] It then suddenly has a whole new task. It is a holy brush. It is set apart for a very special task.

God sets us apart in a holy way for a special path. The second characteristic of righteousness and it's connected is purity. Righteous paths are purity and these mean that they are marked by a special cleanliness that aligns with God's character and with his law.

When something is holy, it's clean. It's not spoiled. It's pure. It's the difference between a clear mountain creek that you can dip a cup into and drink and a river that's full of industrial toxic dump sludge.

It's a clean, there's a cleanliness to holiness. And it's a cleanliness that is not something that we get to decide, but it's something that is aligned with God, with who he is, the very center of holy purity. So when God takes us on paths of righteousness, it means that the paths that he takes us on may not be easy, may not always be fun, but they will be marked by purity and holiness.

[22 : 42] And that makes them righteous. David Calhoun is an old, was, he's now with the Lord, an old seminary professor who writes what I think is the best meditation on Psalm 23.

I haven't read them all. There's thousands. But the best one I've read, it's called A Sheep Remembers. I highly recommend the book. David Calhoun is an old professor. He taught at Covenant Seminary where Matthew and I went to seminary.

He's dying of cancer as he writes A Sheep Remembers. He's 84 years old and he's meditating on this line, he leads me on paths of righteousness. Listen to what he says.

He says this, I went to Bible college at Columbia Bible College where there was only one major, Bible. Sometimes I wish that I had gone to the University of South Carolina and studied English. After Bible college, I went to Covenant Seminary and I learned all about the Bible from Genesis to Revelation. And I learned that all the Bible is about one thing, Jesus. After seminary, I went to Labrie in Switzerland and I talked about the Bible with many wounded souls.

[23 : 47] Bible college taught me Bible. Covenant Seminary deepened my understanding of the Bible. Labrie widened my view of God's world. Then I taught Bible at Jamaica Bible College where I

learned to follow Jesus with Jamaican Christians who were utterly unlike me.

Then I went to Princeton Seminary and got a PhD in history. Then I taught theology at Galilee Baptist Church, a black church in inner city St. Louis.

And now I find myself in my last years in Chicago. And my wife and I ask ourselves, what would you have done differently? What choices other than what we did would we have made?

Pay attention to what he says. Listen to what David Calhoun says. Looking back over our lives, we see that the Lord has led us in the right paths. And though at times one or both of us hesitated to turn aside, he always brought us to the paths of righteousness.

They were not the paths we would have chosen, but they were the right paths for us. What is he saying? This man looks back over his whole life, a full life, traveling the world, full of education, full of places where he could have done something different.

[25:04] Studied English instead of theology, taught, not gotten a PhD, taught it in a different place, and he says, through it all, like Aslan, leading the Pevensie children, he discerns someone was leading him on paths that made him more like Jesus, on paths that made him know Jesus more.

This was the right path that God took us on. Here's the point. Here's the point, friends. When you follow God, when you follow the God of the Bible, he will lead you, not always on easy paths, but paths that are like him, paths that are righteous, holy, and pure, and they will make us like him, holy and pure.

Paths of righteousness are life directions that will make you trust God more, make you see God more, make you more like him, more like Jesus.

Now, to what end? Why does he do this for us? Well, it tells us, he leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. For his name's sake.

Why does God do this? Why does he shepherd us on green pastures or quiet streams or paths of righteousness? Well, it's not for our good. It's not for our pleasure.

[26:31] It's not so that we have nice experiences in life. It's for his name's sake. Namely, so that his name, a name of consistency, a name of trustworthiness, a name of I will be what I will be, is made what the Christian, what the old Christians have called glorified, what I call the college students big and beautiful.

It's so that God is made big and beautiful in our lives. God shepherds us so that God is the main character in our lives. Everything that God does in this world, everything that God does in this world is so that he will receive more attention, more adoration, more affection.

Isaiah 48 says, God says, I don't act for my people's sake. Here's Israel who has wandered far astray in the book of Isaiah and they deserve to be wiped out and yet God says, I will save a remnant but not for their sake.

But for his fame, for his character to be shown into the universe. And there's a challenge built into this, one that frankly chastens my heart.

And it's this, that our lives are not about us. Our lives, this church, your family, your marriage is not fundamentally, your work, your hobbies are not about us.

[27:53] They are about his fame, about God being glorified, about his fatherly care and his tender compassion being displayed. If there's anything that's about us, it's so that we are made more like him.

And this is hard because as a college minister, I want to grow a campus ministry that might get written about someday in 50 years. you as a parent might want to have a child who appears on dean's lists in school one day.

You as a married person might want to have the younger couples come and consult you on marriage one day. You as a worker might want to be nominated for employee of the month or for the big bonus.

And those things are all well and good and true and beautiful but those are not why God leads us on paths of righteousness. It's for his reputation and his honor.

Where are the places in your heart where you are in this Christian thing for the perks? For the things that you think would get out of it? Where are the places where you can maybe need to repent and say, Lord, I've done this for my sake.

[29:10] Okay, let's summarize. What does this verse mean? This verse means, this half a line means that a personal God of the universe directs our lives personally and powerfully in directions

that are good for us to make us more like him and to bring him glory.

Now, let me give us some pastoral reflections on this. First, and I've hinted at this already, a personal God leads our lives not impersonal forces. Think about karma. It's a very popular idea today.

I promise you that your neighbors, if not you, have some either implicit or explicit sense of karma. Karma says that something, a personal force or an impersonal force, balances all things out and that what comes around goes around.

That's not here. That's not what this is saying. A personal God has a plan for our lives and he is disposed towards his people as a shepherd. Stu on this for a minute.

Imagine if we viewed hiking the way karma would say. If we viewed hiking that way, we would just say, I'm going to walk that way and hope I reach a mountaintop. No, that's not how we live our lives. [30:18] We study a map. We gather information from people who have gone before us. We pick a place that says this is going to be beautiful. We do not just start walking.

No, a guide who wants to lead you, shepherd you, care for you, take you to see the best sites that this state has to offer on the best routes. That is what our shepherd does.

You are not tossed around, your friends are not tossed around by blind forces, but by a shepherding God. Second application is this.

The Christian life is not a choose your own adventure. The Christian life is not choose your own adventure. One of the greatest lies that we believe is that we get to follow God the way we want. This is what the Pevensie children wanted. They wanted to go down the canyon on their own terms and it went very poorly for them. And all of us have places and ways in our lives where we want to do what we want to do.

[31:16] Perhaps it's with our money. We get to set how we use our finances. Perhaps it's with our career. I will force myself to work in this job. Perhaps it's in our romantic relationships or in our habits.

We will assume what Odysseus says when he says defy the gods. I'll do what I want. Being a sheep is not being scattered in any way we want but we follow a shepherd who directs us through his word.

The paths of righteousness are not choose your own adventure. You do not frankly get to follow God any way that you want but as he has revealed to us in his word.

And if you find yourself living some way in your life that is contrary to this then with all the love in the world that is not the path of righteousness. Third, the paths of righteousness are not always easy. The next line even though I what walk through the valley of the shadow of death the paths of righteousness are not easy. It's not always lucrative.

[32:24] Late in the book of Acts Paul very clearly tells I mean God very clearly tells Paul go back to Jerusalem. Go back to Jerusalem and preach the gospel.

And Paul says okay I'll go. And immediately all of his friends start saying all of the apostles say you know what's going to happen if you go back there. They're going to arrest you. And then another prophet comes and binds Paul's wrists and says the man who owns this belt will be arrested in Jerusalem.

and they say please Paul don't do this. You're our best player. You've planted dozens of churches all around the Mediterranean. Please don't. And he says I have to go. And so what does he do? He goes and immediately is arrested. Immediately gets the snot beat out of him three to four times. Gets shipped all the way to Rome in a very unpleasant series of crashes and shipwrecks and getting bit by a snake.

And then he's killed. That's God's path of righteousness for Paul. We would look at that and say not the win not what we would have had in mind. Following a shepherd at work can be costly.

[33:32] It will cost you as Jesus says everything. Take up your cross and follow me. And this means the death of something in your life. Probably multiple things.

For some of you it's your view of money. For some of you it's your view of relationships or what you can do with your body or your sexuality. Something will have to die on the path of righteousness and that will be unpleasant.

It will hurt. But we trust that it is a good shepherdly righteous path. Third application righteous paths are God's direction and our cooperation.

Righteous paths are God's direction and our cooperation. The New Testament picks up on this theme of paths of righteousness with the word walk. Walk. And Paul uses this all the time in his epistles in his letters when he says walk in a manner worthy of your calling.

Walk by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. Or 1 John where he tells little children walk in the light. We have to trust that God will direct us but then we also have to make choices wisely under the counsel of God's word and of his church in a way that cooperates obeys our good shepherd.

[34 : 49] God directs and yet we obey. Very practically what does this mean? What does this mean? It means that you must be a person who is putting yourself in places where you will receive the counsel and the care of the shepherd.

Put yourself in places where you will be shepherded. Namely this place. Come back next week. find yourself friends who have been walking with Jesus for a long time and ask them would you help me?

Join the men's group. Join the women's group. Join a home group. Find places where you can and will be shepherded. Ask yourself which of the two stories are you tempted to believe that either defy the gods I'm the master of my own fate I can do whatever I want or it is fated.

Which of those two do you incline to be? For me it depends on the day. Some days I'm like I'm going to do whatever I want with my life. I'm going to be what's really bad about me is I'll baptize it with ministry.

I'll say I'm going to be this kind of a pastor. There's other days where I'll say there's nothing I can do. It's too big. It's too big of a I can't I can't do anything. Which one are you tempted to believe?

[36 : 05] And I would invite you to repent. I would invite you to see that there's a better story that Psalm 23 verse 3 says.

And I would invite you to imitate Psalm 1. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of what?

Yahweh. A personal God. God leads us but we follow. And so how do we do this? I've already hinted at it but we listen to the shepherd and we stay in the flock.

Very practically we listen to the shepherd and we stay in the flock. Our New Testament reading was from John 10 where Jesus comes and says what does he say? I am the good shepherd.

And immediately he is relating his attribute goodness to the character of God keeping promises steadfast trustworthy I am the good shepherd.

[37 : 07] I know my sheep and my sheep know me and they will listen to my voice. The application for this is to listen to the good shepherd.

Put yourself in places where you can be led in paths of righteousness. Stay in the word. This is an invitation not to have to read your Bible but to get to read your Bible.

An invitation not to have to come to church but to get to come to church. Not to have to fill your schedule with one more small group that you have to do one more errand that you have to take your kids to but to get to do it because we have a fatherly shepherd who is guiding us.

And then the second application is to stay in the flock. To stay in the flock. The temptation always is to well John tells us scatter. Scatter.

John 10 the wolf and the thief come to scatter the sheep. The world the flesh and the devil want to isolate you from the visible body of believers in any and every distraction.

[38 : 18] Colorado Springs is particularly prone to this. I'm learning this from my wife. She grew up in a place where she says people don't scatter in other places like they do here. We scatter with mountains.

We scatter with sports activities. We scatter with all of our hobbies. And I would invite you I would encourage you to don't buy it. Stay in the flock when you move and I know this church has a lot of people who move.

Matthew always tells me it's a church that receives and sends. Find a new church. Make it a top priority. If you're not a member of this church consider joining it. Matthew just says it's not too late to join the new members class.

Talk to him about it. Lastly as you go out this week as you go out tomorrow take great assurance that this is so beautiful but so simple.

Everything's going to turn out all right. Everything's going to turn out all right. Tim Keller always said famously if the Christian faith is true three things are certain.

[39:21] A. The bad things in your life cannot last. B. The good things cannot be taken away. And see the best is yet to come. The bad things cannot last. The good things can't be taken away and the best is yet to come.

Why? Because the Lord is your shepherd. Take comfort in that. Listen to the shepherd and stay in the flock. And he will lead you as the very end of Psalm 23 says he will lead you to the house of the Lord forever.

Let me pray for us. Lord we pray that you would indeed shepherd us. You've promised that you will. You've sent your son to show us your great love for us on the cross.

You've committed that you will not one will fall away. Help us to trust that. Help us to repent of the places where we want to set our own path where we either defy the gods or despair.

Help us to be help this to be a church that is marked by obedience and listening to the shepherd in all of it. And we will give you the glory because it is all for your name's sake.

[40:27] It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.