

TRUSTING THE GOOD SHEPHERD PSALM 23:1

Good morning! We're continuing our series on "Truth and Consequence". We're looking at certain indisputable truths that God teaches us in the Bible and what the consequences are for you when you believe these truths. Mind you, these are beneficial consequences. These are consequences that will help you to live a life that is more fulfilling and more satisfying. We're all looking for that kind of life, aren't we?

Today, I've entitled this message, "Trusting the Good Shepherd". And I'm going to unpack to you the very first verse of Psalm 23. We're going to read it together but before we do that, I want to just give you three facts about the goodness of God. These are just three fundamental truths you can base your life on.

Number one,

- **God is the source of everything I need to live.**

You don't have to look anywhere else. You don't have to look to Wall Street. You don't have to look to the government. You don't have to look to your spouse or your individual retirement account or your social security or your job. God is the source of everything I need to live. Now, the point I want to make here is that if you're going to put your security in something, you need to put it in something that can never be taken from you. Because if you have put your security in something that can be taken from you, you're not secure. You can lose your health. You can lose your job. You can lose your good looks. Some of you already have. But there's Facebook and you can fix it. You can lose your family. You can lose your mind. You can lose all of those things. Don't put your security in anyone or

anything. You put your security in something that cannot be taken from you and that is your relationship to God. Nobody can take that away from you.

Ok, now, let's read together **Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing"**. That's the place where God says, "I will be your security in every area." Now, obviously, the first question is: What's a shepherd? A shepherd is someone who cares for sheep. Now, you probably don't know a lot about sheep but sheep are incredibly defenseless animals. They have a lot of natural predators. They're not fast. They can't run. They don't have claws. They don't have teeth with sharp incisors that can bite. On top of that, they're not very smart animals. They're not very intelligent. They fall off cliffs and they get lost and all kinds of things but they really need a defender. They need a shepherd. Left on its own, a sheep's probably going to get eaten.

What does a shepherd do? Well, you might want to write this down because this is what God wants to do for you. **A shepherd feeds, leads, and meets needs.** That's what a shepherd does. A shepherd leads, feeds, and meets needs. God says, "I will be your shepherd throughout. I will feed you, I will lead you, and I will meet your needs."

Now, your needs are various. Sometimes you need protection. Sometimes you need comfort. Sometimes you need encouragement. Sometimes you need a little discipline. Sometimes you need direction. We're going to look at all the different needs that God has promised to meet in your life.

By the way, do you know what the Greek word for shepherd is? Poimen. Translated to English, it is pastor. That is my job. It is my job to feed you through God's Word. It is my job to lead you. It is my job to meet your needs. That's what shepherds do.

The second truth that I want you to write down is this.

- **There is nothing I need that God can't supply.**

There is nothing that I need, that you need, that God cannot supply. We're going to look at this in depth, but in Philippians chapter 4:19, it says this: *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."* You see, God's goodness is not based on your goodness. It's based on his goodness. You don't have to be good for God to be good to you. God is good to you because of what Jesus did on the cross.

Number three, the third thing I want you to write down is this.

- **God doesn't want me worrying about anything.**

Nothing, nada, zip, zero, zilch, wala, awan. In fact, worry may be the most common sin on the planet. God says you don't need to worry. I don't want you worrying. Philippians 4:6a (NLT), *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything."* I've talked about this many times. You can pray or you can panic. If you're not praying, you're panicking. You can worry or you can worship. If you're not worshipping, you're worrying. Invite worship in the front door, worry goes out the back door. Invite worry in the front door, worship goes out the back door.

God says, "I don't want you worrying about anything." Why? **Why does God not want me worrying about anything?** There are at least two reasons.

First, **worry is unnecessary.** The Bible says there's no need to worry because God has promised to take care of you. The Lord is your shepherd. He feeds, he leads, and he meets your needs. He says there's no need to worry because your Heavenly Father will take care of you.

You know, when I was a kid, if I had any need in my life, I didn't worry about it. I just went to my dad or mom. I said, "Dad, I need this. Mom, I need this." If I needed money to buy something, I'd say, "Dad, I need some money to buy this." I never once worried about where he was going to get the money. That was his worry.

You see, you're worrying about a lot of things that are God's responsibility. Worry is assuming responsibility that God never intended for you to have. Every time you worry, it's a warning like, "I'm playing God. I'm acting like God. I'm thinking that it all depends on me, that I don't have a Heavenly Father, that I don't have a shepherd who will feed and lead and meet my need." You never worry if you understand that God is your Heavenly Father and you understand the goodness of God.

Matthew 6:30 says this. *"If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith?"* See, what he's saying here is that God has assumed responsibility for the needs in your life. He cares for you because he says you are valuable. You have value. You want to know how much your value is? Look at the cross. Jesus died for you on the cross. That shows how much value you have to God. You're not junk. You're not worthless. No, no. You're valuable to God because you're his child. My children are valuable to me. I love them more than anything in the world. And my wife, too, of course. You are a child of God and you're valuable to God. He says, "I'm going to take care of your needs. I'm your loving Heavenly Father. I am your shepherd. Like the shepherd takes care of the defenseless sheep, when you need it, I'm there."

You see, there is no need that God will not meet if you trust him. Now, if you don't trust him, you're out there on your own. But if you trust him, he says, "I will meet every need in your life." Worry means I've forgotten that the goodness of God comes from misunderstanding what God is really like. You know what? We always get into trouble every time whenever we start doubting God's goodness.

When Jesus died on the cross for you, he solved your biggest worry. You don't have any bigger worry than eternal salvation. If that's your biggest worry, why do you doubt his taking care of the smaller things in your life? What's the logic of

saying, "I'm going to trust God to get me to heaven but I'm not going to trust him to help me make my car payment." What's the logic in that? It makes no sense. Why would you trust God with something so big, eternal salvation, but not trust him with your schooling or your career? What school should I go to? Am I going to get a job? And all the other major questions in life, why don't you trust him with those things too? It doesn't make sense to say, "I don't doubt him for my salvation but I do doubt that he's going to care for my health. I do doubt that he's going to care for my career." It doesn't make sense at all. If God can be trusted for salvation, he'll carry everything else.

The Bible says, *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* (Rom. 8:32)

If I were walking down a street out here, say Rolling Road, and you come by in a car, I've got a backpack on my back and you say, "Hey, Rolly, do you want a ride?" I'd say, "Yeah, I'd appreciate that." I get in the car with you and about five minutes later, you look over and you see I'm still wearing the backpack on my back. You say, "Rolly, you can just toss that in the back seat." I say, "Oh, no. It's enough for you to carry me. I'll carry the backpack." That's the kind of stupid logic we use with our lives. Oh yes, God. You can save my life, but I'll worry about my money and my social life and my career life and all the other things, my friendships, my relationships. No, no. You don't need to carry the backpack either. If he's going to carry you to heaven, he'll carry everything else while you're here on earth. He's saying worry is unnecessary.

Worry is unnecessary and here's a biggie.

2. Worry is unbelief.

Worry is doubting God. God has promised to take care of every need in your life if you trust him over and over and over. When you doubt that, you are an

unbeliever at that moment. Every time you worry, you act like an unbeliever. Jesus said to his disciples, “*So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*” (Matt. 6:31-32) You’re like a pagan, an unbeliever, if you constantly worry. And anything that doesn’t come out of faith is sin.

Now, let me be honest with you. If you haven't stepped across the line, if you're not a believer in Christ, if you haven't made Jesus the Good Shepherd of your life, you ought to worry. You're out there on your own. You're not depending on your heavenly Father. You're not depending on God's goodness and grace and love. There's a lot of reasons to worry if you don't have God in your life because you’ve got to face all those battles on your own.

You know, there's a beautiful phrase we just read. He said, “*...your heavenly Father knows that you need them.*” (Matt. 6:32b) He knows what you need. Do you have material needs? God knows that. Do you have emotional needs? God knows that? Do you have school needs? God knows that. Do you have career needs. God knows that. God knows exactly what your needs are. Don’t worry.

By the way, you know what the worst kind of worry is? When you say, "You know, things are going too good. I'm just waiting for the other shoe to drop because things are just too good." That's the worst kind of worry you could possibly have. I don't really believe God is a good God because things are going too good. Something is bound to happen.

That's what Job does. There's a whole book of the Bible about that kind of worry. It's called the book of Job. Job was enormously successful. He was wealthy. He was well-known. He was beloved. He was popular. He was famous. He would be a billionaire today. He kept going, "Things are going too good." When everything fell apart, he goes, "That which I have feared has happened." It was a

self-fulfilling prophecy. When we get to heaven, you're going to see how many times you set yourself up for failure by worrying instead of trusting.

Do you think God's ever worried? No, and God made you in his image, he doesn't want you to worry. John chapter 14:1 (CEV), Jesus says this: *"Don't be worried!"* What do I do instead of worrying? He says, *"Have faith in God and have faith in me!"* Now, how do you do that? How do you trust God to meet your needs? Well, it's not rocket science, friends. It's just three things and God makes it very clear in the Bible that if you'll do these three things, worry is going to drain out of your life. I don't want you worrying anymore. Every time you worry is a wasted second of your life. How do I trust God for my needs instead of worrying about my needs?

Well, the Bible says you do **three things to not worry**. Write these down. Number one, you do this every day. It's not a one-time thing.

1. I give Jesus first place in every area of my life.

This is extremely important that I give Jesus first place in every area of my life. Now, if you're a believer, you've given him first place in your life, say, "I want you to be number one," but there's different parts of your life that are not under his control. When you say, "Jesus, come into my house," you need to say, "Have the whole house. You've got access to the bedroom. You've got access to the bathroom. You've got access to the kitchen in my life. You've got access to that closet over there where I've got all kinds of stuff hidden. You've got access to the garage, to the living room, to the dining room. It's all yours. Jesus, take over the whole house." Have you ever said that?

Let me just tell you something. Anytime you worry, that is a warning light that that particular area of your life you have not given him first place. Every time you worry, you go, "Oh, that's an area where God's not number one." Any area of your life where God is not number one, you're going to worry about it. Any area of your

life where God's not number one, that's going to be a source of insecurity in your life, your job or anything else. Any area of your life that is not under the lordship of Christ, is not given first place to God, that's going to be a constant source of worry and insecurity your entire life. If God is first place in no area of your life, you've got everything to be worried about. You might hold on to a couple areas. "God, you can have the whole house but don't have the bedroom." Then you're going to worry about that area. "God, you can have every area of the house except the kitchen." Then you're going to worry about that area. It's a sign that he's not number one. It's an indication that you've got mixed up values.

When you make Jesus Christ number one in every single area of your life, it really simplifies your priorities and it also gives you a whole lot less to worry about. See, when it's given to God, then you don't have to worry about it. Too often we worry about things. We worry about physical possessions. It's just like if you have fewer possessions, you have less. You know, I never, never, never, never, never worry about getting barnacles on my yacht because I don't have a yacht so I've never, never worried about, "How am I going to get those barnacles off that yacht?" I don't have to worry about it because my life is simplified and the things that are in my life, I've given them to God.

You know, one of the things that we worry about most of course is money. What I've discovered is that no matter how much or how little you've got of it, you still worry about it. Rich and poor, they both worry about money. If you've got it, you worry about keeping it, saving it, spending it, investing it, protecting it, and making some more. If you don't have it, you worry about getting it. God says, "I don't want you worrying about that. I'll take care of all your needs."

The second thing is this

2. Relax and give him my worries in prayer.

God wants you to relax. He wants you to give him your worries in prayer. You say, "Jesus, just take these things I'm worried about," and you just hand them over to him.

We all know the hymn, "Count Your Blessings, Name them One by One." What you can do when you're alone at home is you make a list of all the good things God has done for you and when you start getting down, pull out that list and read, "Wow, God really has been good to me, the freedom I have. I can breathe. I can see. I can hear." All of the many things that you take for granted.

You make a list of blessings. But you know what else you need to do? You need to make a list of worries. You know, sometimes you have this sense of, "I just feel anxious. I have this general anxiety. I feel a little uptight, a little nervous. I don't really know what's causing it." Well, you can just say, "God, I give you my generalized worry," but it's even better to stop and go, "What is it that's really bugging me? Am I worried that somebody's going to disapprove of me?" You write that down. "Am I worried that I'm going to be rejected?" Write that down. "Am I worried that I'm going to be insecure and not have enough?" You write that down. "Am I worried that I'm going to be lonely the rest of my life?" You write that down. You write them all down and then you give God your worries. You say, "Here's the list, Lord. Here's some stuff that's on my mind. I'm not going to keep them. I'm going to give them to you."

Notice this next verse, 1 Peter 5:7. "*Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.*" Just give them to him. You're not made to worry so you shouldn't swallow your worries. When you swallow your worries, your stomach keeps score. If you try to push down the worries in your life, you're going to get sick. It's like taking a can of coke, shaking it all up real violently and then putting it in the freezer. What's going to happen to that can of coke? It's going to explode. Same with worry. It will come out sideways in your life. In a broken relationship, an

explosion at work, in all these other areas, when we take so much worry onto ourselves and eventually it comes out.

You relax and you give him your worries. You just say, "God, here are the things I'm worried about." Prayer is the antidote to worry. The moment you worry, you give it to God in prayer. "Lord, you're my good Shepherd. Please take care of my worry. Please give me your peace that passes understanding."

Now, the third thing is this. Very important. Trust him, trust God, trust Jesus, for one day at a time.

3. Trust Him for one day at a time.

Don't try to steal the whole future into the day and bring it back here, have worries about all kind of stuff that's coming up. Trust him for one day at a time.

In Matthew chapter 6:34, Jesus says, "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*"

Anybody agree with that verse? Yeah. You don't need to borrow trouble. He's saying don't borrow trouble for tomorrow. I'm going to give you enough grace for today. I'm not going to give you the grace for tomorrow until you get to tomorrow. You don't need it today. He's saying don't open your umbrella until it starts to rain. That stuff hasn't happened yet. Can't change the future. Can't change the past. Just work on today.

There are two days of every week you should never worry about, yesterday and tomorrow, because you can't do anything about them. You don't worry about the future until you successfully learn to manage today. Some of you aren't doing that good a job on that one. Why are you borrowing trouble and worrying about something that's happening in two weeks? You see, when you think about it, today is the tomorrow that you worried about yesterday. Yesterday, you messed up yesterday because you were worrying about today. Today you're messing up today because you're worrying about tomorrow. Don't do that. Take one day at a time

through your life. Why? Why does God say that you should only live your life one day at a time? Well, because it's true. It's the only thing you can do. You can't live in the past. You can't live in the future. You can only live today.

There's a couple reasons why you should only live one day at a time. First, when you worry about tomorrow's problems, you miss all the blessings of today. Some of you, you got something coming up in two weeks or a week or a month and it's scaring you to death and you're making it worse because you're ruining every day between now and then by worrying about it. What is that worrying doing? It's unhelpful. It's unuseful, all those different things. You're missing today's blessing. Some of you are so worried about retirement, you're not enjoying today. You're missing the blessing of today. He says I don't want you doing that. Take it one day at a time.

The other reason is you cannot solve tomorrow's problems with today's power. When you get there, tomorrow, God will give you the power and the perspective and the grace and the wisdom. He'll give you what you need when you need to get there. He's not going to give you the power and promise and purpose and all those things for tomorrow today. The Bible does not say, "Give us this day our weekly bread." No, you're to pray, "Give me today my daily bread. Give me just enough strength to make it through the day." He wants you to depend on him one day at a time.

Now let me be clear as your pastor, because I love you, it's okay to plan for tomorrow. It's okay to plan for the future, just don't worry about the future. Planning is good. Worrying is bad. Jesus highly recommends planning. There's a whole book in the Bible about planning. It's called the book of Proverbs. God says it's foolish not to plan. Only a fool would go all the way through life unprepared for something you know is inevitable called death. You don't know when it's going to happen. To go through life unplanned for death, you're not ready to live until

you're ready to die so you ought to plan. Planning is good. Worrying is bad. You can plan for tomorrow but you can't live in tomorrow. You can only live today.

To conclude, I want us to recite Psalm 23 together. But before we recite, I want you all to bow your heads and give to the Lord your worries. Be specific. Just say in your mind, "Lord, I worry about my finances, I worry about my health, my spouse, my children, my job, my not having a job, my rent payment, my ministry, my upcoming trip. Whatever it is you're worried about, give it to the Lord.

Now, let us recite Psalm 23 together. Please bow your heads and close your eyes again as I pray.