

I Shall Not Want For Provision

Psalms 23:5

Pastor John Miller

We're going to read it together again. We've only got one more week after today, and I hope that you've actually come to memorize this 23rd Psalm. Let's read it out loud together, verses 1 to 6.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

When the Lord is your shepherd, you can say what David says in verse 1, that "We have everything that we need" or "We shall not want." I believe that is the theme of this marvelous psalm of David: "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." The Living Bible says, "I have everything that I need." So the Lord meets our needs. And for the last several weeks we've been looking at that. As the Lord is our shepherd, He provides rest, verse 2—"He makes me to lie down in green pastures" and "He leads me beside the still waters." In verse 3, He provides restoration—"He restores my soul." And also in verse 3, He provides righteous or right paths—"He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." Then in verse 4, we saw that we don't need to be afraid or lack for courage. Even when I'm walking through the valley of deepest darkness, the Lord is with me, so I don't need to fear, "for Thou art with me" and He protects me. "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

Now we move to verse 5 today and we learn that we shall not want for provision. Notice it in verse 5. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over." Notice the reference to "preparest." This is what God is doing: He prepares this table, He anoints my head with oil and He fills my cup so that it overflows.

The first question we need to ask here is: "Does David change the metaphor from 'The Lord is our Shepherd' to now 'The Lord is our host'?" You say, "Well, what are you talking about, Pastor John? I don't understand." I happen to believe—and I could be wrong—that he goes from the metaphor of "the Lord our shepherd" to "the Lord our host." Now He's opening His home, He's inviting us in, He's spreading a table, He's anointed our head and He fills our cup till it overflows. Like I said, I could be wrong. Some people don't think that David abandons the metaphor of the shepherd. They think rather it is the sheep going to the table lands or the mesas, which are the high lands where the shepherd goes for the grass. He protects them there and feeds them there. And he anoints their heads by pouring oil on the sheep. They try to explain the cup as being the cup in which the shepherd gives the sheep something to drink.

But most of the scholars in the Old Testament agree that it is possible that David was actually changing the metaphor.

When we get to verse 6 where it says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever," we're going to be talking about dying and going to heaven. The point is that when David gets to verse 6, he abandons all the metaphors. It's not "the Lord my shepherd," and it's not "the Lord my host." It's just the fact that all my life, goodness and mercy are going to follow me. One day when I die, I will "dwell in the house of the Lord..."—a reference to heaven—"...forever." So I happen to believe that David moves from the picture of the cared-for sheep to that of being an invited guest.

In Song of Solomon 2:4, Solomon wrote, "He brings me to the banqueting table, and His banner over me is love," or "He brings me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me is love." That beautiful Song of Solomon speaks of our relationship to God as He brings us into the house, and He gives us the feast at this banqueting table.

Now there are three pictures of God's goodness of provision as seen in verse 5. The challenge in preaching this text is that I believe we have Hebrew poetry. So when David says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cups run over," in Hebrew poetry, he is saying the same thing in three different ways. You say, "Well, what's the same thing that he's saying?" He's saying, "God, You're good. God, You've blessed me. God, You're amazing. You've provided all that I need. You've provided my food and my clothes and my shelter and life and health, and Lord, You also save me." It could be that the prepared table symbolizes salvation. The head anointed with oil symbolizes sanctification. And the cup that is overflowing symbolizes our service; the blessings of God spill over onto others. So He saves us, He sanctifies us and He lets us serve Him. He provides in every one of these categories lavishly and abundantly.

Of those three metaphors—the table prepared, the head anointed and the cup overflowing—we want to look at them there in the fifth verse. First of all, look at the table that is prepared. Look at verse 5. "Thou prepares a table before me." I think the emphasis in David's mind is the preparation. "Lord, look at all that You have provided." This is not something that we can do or that we can accomplish or we can make happen. God is the One Who provides. It's so wonderful to realize that God provides everything that we need: life and health and salvation. "So, God, You provide a table before me in the presence of my enemies." The world is looking on.

Picture the scene here. It is the idea of inviting guests over to a meal. We have guests over, and it's kind of a special dinner. We put the extra leaf in the dining room table, and my wife will put a tablecloth on, set the table and put the china out. She tells me not to touch anything. I make my suggestions, and she says, "No; this is the way I want it," and I get out of the room. And we are all set for the guests to arrive; everything is prepared. The food is ready, and all they need to do is to come and dine. That's what the picture is.

God is now our host. Think about it: we are His invited guests! God invites me to come to dine! Even Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock, and if you hear My voice and open the door, I will come in and have supper with you." Isn't that cool? He invites Himself over to dinner at your house. By the way, that's Biblical; find someone and invite yourself over for dinner tonight. "Behold I stand at the door and knock. Will you please let me in," you know, "I'm hungry."

Jesus gave a parable of a great supper that had been prepared. They invited guests, but they were too busy. "I just bought a piece of property. I just bought an oxen." One guy said, "I just got married. Ain't no way I'm coming. I can't come; my wife just won't let me." So then Jesus said—the word went out—"Then go out to the highways and byways and invite people. The lame, the whole, the blind, those who are poor. Bring them in, for my supper has been prepared." And I can't help but see the provision has been made in the person and work of Jesus Christ; that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him would never perish but have everlasting life." So God set the table in the person and work of Jesus Christ. God takes care of us. God provides for us.

First of all, He provides for our physical and material needs. Jesus, in the Lord's Prayer, said, "Give us this day our daily bread." Not "caviar" but "bread." "Give us the necessities of life. May we come to You dependently and daily." In Matthew 6:25-33, Jesus said, "Therefore I say unto you, 'Do not worry about your life; what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is life not more than food and the body more than clothes?'" Then He says, "Look at the birds; your Father feeds them. Look at the flowers; your Father clothes them. You're more valuable than birds and flowers. The grass today springs up, but tomorrow is cast into the oven. You are more valuable than these. So seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things..."—what we're going to eat, what we're going to drink, what we're going to wear—"...shall be added unto you." God will provide.

In Philippians 4:19, Paul said, "But my God shall provide all your needs..."—not "greeds." Remember it's "bread" that we pray for. It's the "daily bread," the basics of life. God has promised to provide our needs, and we need to trust Him on a daily basis. Notice He does this, in verse 5, in "the presence of my enemies." I believe it's a witness to the world when they see us trusting God, resting in His provision, and they see how God takes care of us and how God provides for us. Beyond my wildest imagination, God has blessed my life and taken care of me and my wife and my family and my children. God has always been faithful. He's always taken care of us. We belong to Him, and He takes care of His children.

And the Lord my host also provides for my spiritual needs. In Ephesians 1, Paul gives us some of the blessings we have spiritually. Notice in verse 3. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That is a very important verse. This is a doxology. This is a word of praise. "Praise unto God, Who has..."—past tense—"...blessed us with all the blessings of the Spirit in the realm of the heavenlies..."—key phrase—"...in Christ." So every Christian, is "in Christ," and "in Christ," we have all these blessings that are, indeed, ours. I want you to notice them in verse 4. "According

as He has chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, without blame, before Him in love.”

Blessing number one, that is spread on this table, is that God actually chose you. I would not have chosen me, but God chose me. God has chosen the foolish things, the weak things, the base things, the despised things. So to think for a moment that God has spread this table, and it involves God's elective purposes, His sovereign elective plan. To choose me to be His child.

My second point, in verse 5, is that “God predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” So blessing number two is that He has chosen us to be adopted as children.” Now predestination and election are not the same. In simple terms, election is God choosing you. Predestination is God predetermining what to do with you. It's kind of like, “What do I do with them now that I've chosen them?” And the text here says that God has chosen us in order to adopt us; to choose us to be His own. Now we are children of God by rebirth or born again or regenerated into the family of God. We're also adopted into the family of God.

Here's the significance. We're regenerated or born into God's family so we become partakers of the divine nature. So we are God's spiritual children. But we are adopted in that we are placed as full, adult sons and daughters. The idea conveyed in adoption is that we are not babies or infants; we don't have to wait to mature before we can enjoy our spiritual inheritance or blessings. We are placed as adult children, and we are able to draw our inheritance, our spiritual blessings and benefits as adopted sons and daughters.

Adoption is an amazing thing. You get to pick who you want to have as your child. Some of you parents wished you had that option; right? “I don't know if I'd have picked this one.” Sometimes the children want to pick a different parent. They're not happy with you. But God actually chooses you and adopts you into His family and immediately—you don't have to wait to grow as a Christian—all the blessings, all the benefits, all the spiritual inheritance belong to you.

And all this, Ephesians 1:6, is “to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.” That's blessing number three: He has accepted us in Christ. So we are chosen in Christ, we are adopted as the children of God and we are made acceptable in the beloved.

Then blessing numbers four and five in Ephesians 1:7: “In Whom...”—that is, Jesus Christ—“... we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.” So blessing number four is redemption—He's purchased us and set us free—and blessing number five is forgiveness—He's forgiven us all of our sins. Verses 8-9 say, “Wherein He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of His will...”—His blessing number six: He made known His will to us. Then in verse 11, “In Whom also we have obtained an inheritance...”—that's blessing number seven: you have an inheritance. Some translations have you've “become His inheritance.” But the idea is that we inherit eternal life, we have an eternal destiny and we are His inheritance, as well.

Then notice, again, the repeated phrase in verse 12, “That we should be to the praise of His glory...”—or “the praise of His glorious grace”—“...who first trusted in Christ. Verse 13, “In Whom you also trusted, after that you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation; in Whom also after that you believed, you were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” The eighth blessing is in verse 13: you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This speaks of ownership and security. The seal is God’s stamp of ownership. God owns you; you belong to God. And you are secure and being kept unto the day of redemption. Notice verse 14, “Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession...”—and here’s the phrase again—“...unto the praise of His glory,” or “unto the praise of His glorious grace,” mentioned in verse 6, mentioned in verse 12 and mentioned again in verse 14.

I know I gave you a lot of information, but the blessings are that He has chosen us, He’s adopted us, He’s made us accepted in the beloved, He’s redeemed us, He’s forgiven us, He’s made known His will to us, He has made us an inheritance and we are also sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. This list could go on and on and on.

Something a lot of Christians fail to understand is that the moment you were born again—it wasn’t a process; it happened instantaneously the moment you became a child of God—you’re rich. I’m not talking about diamond rings and Rolex watches and fancy cars and money. I’m talking about spiritually. Remember Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with all the blessings of the Spirit in heavenly places.”

When He spreads that table—that table of salvation that includes all the blessings of being in Christ: I’m chosen, I’m adopted, I’m redeemed, I’m forgiven, I’m sealed by the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption—you are rich. And God has spread the table and He says, “Come and dine.” Feast from this table that He’s set up.

You might add the blessing of prayer. You might add the blessing of His Word. And you might add the blessing of the church. You know, it’s a blessing that God has given us the access of prayer and that He’s given us His Word. You ought to cherish His Word and hide His Word in your heart. You ought to read and study and meditate on His Word. It’s a lifelong pursuit. The number one thing you should be doing as a Christian is learning about God through His Word and drawing near to God through His Word. The goal of Bible study is not just an enlightened intellect but is to transform character, and the way to get there is through His Word. God sanctifies us through His Word. So the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to bring us salvation and sanctification and it equips us for service. The Bible is one of our greatest blessings. And it’s on the table, and He says, “Come and dine.”

How often do you get up and feed on God’s Word? It’s more important than your food. “Man shall not live by bread alone...”—or “donuts alone.” Some of you know I love donuts. I have a lot of people coming up to me lately and asking, “What’s the best donut shop you’ve ever found in this town?” “If you want to know where the greatest donut shops are, ask Pastor Miller. He knows where they are.” More important than a donut is the Word of God.

You know that we are really blessed here at Revival Christian Fellowship? We have an amazing church. Not because I'm the pastor, but because Jesus Christ is the head of this church. The Lord is here. And God has brought so many wonderful people to this church. We get the privilege of worshipping together and breaking bread and having communion together. Some actually see "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of my enemy" as a reference to the Lord's Supper or communion. And we get to gather with the saints. I'm thankful to be a part of this church. I'm thankful that I'm not only the undershepherd, but I'm one of the sheep and we're brothers and sisters in Christ. I love you and you love me and we pray for each other and we need each other and we need to provoke one another to love and good works. Not just to provoke one another but to provoke ourselves to love and to good works.

In Isaiah 55:1-2 it says, "Ho, everyone that thirsts, come to the waters...come, buy and eat... without money and without price....Let your soul delight itself in fatness." I found a book on Psalm 23 that amazes me. It was written many, many years ago by John Stevenson entitled The Lord Our Shepherd. He says this about the table. It says,

"The table is a comprehensive term and is used to denote all manner of provision which it may be unusual or needful or desirable to set thereon. But by this expression 'Thou preparest,' the psalmist would signify the active and gracious agency of God in providing whatever is necessary for man's salvation. He Himself furnishes that table. Therefore, the supplies are always abundant, always suited to our wants, always ready for our use. All manner of blessings are set before us on that table. Not one particular kind, but every specie of spiritual provision is here presented for our enjoyment. As invited guests, we bring nothing with us but a humble sense of our own utter unworthiness and a grateful sense of His marvelous lovingkindness. Nothing remains but that each guest sit down and partake."

We come with a sense of unworthiness, but God has lavishly provided on this table, all that we need for life and godliness.

There is a second image that I want to point out in verse Psalm 23:5, and that is that He anoints my head with oil. We have the oil for anointing. "Thou anointest my head with oil." The custom was when somebody came over to your house, and you were the host and they were your guests, one of the first things you did was anoint their head with oil. You'd greet them and bring them in, you'd give them a kiss, you'd anoint their head, you'd wash their feet, you'd give them something to drink. So this was a common occurrence at that time.

When Jesus was the guest at the home of Simon the Pharisee in Luke 7, Simon the Pharisee didn't provide these things. Simon didn't wash Jesus' feet, he didn't give Jesus a kiss, he didn't anoint His head with oil. This was the custom of receiving a guest. But the sinful woman came in and wept and with her tears, she washed His feet and wiped them with her hair. Jesus said, "Simon, you didn't give Me those normal kinds of greetings."

So in this psalm, David is again saying, "Lord, You welcomed me. You've honored me by

anointing my head.” It was something done to an honored guest. The oil brings healing; it’s soothing. The oil often was scented and brought a sweet smell or odor. It was a soothing ointment. In that time and in that culture, you’d go days without a bath. You’d walk the hot desert and the dusty roads, so when you showed up at somebody’s house, you needed a little perfume put on you. So they’d anoint your head, and in that oil would be some spices, some sweet smell also mixed in. Now he could come in because he would smell a lot better.

The oil in the Bible is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, “The Spirit has anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor.” It’s a picture of that anointing, the work of the Holy Spirit. The ten virgins: five wise and five foolish. I believe the oil in their lamps represents the Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins had no oil. They weren’t born again. They weren’t ready for the Lord’s return. The wise virgins had oil in their lamps, and they were ready for the coming of the Lord. So it’s the oil of God’s Spirit and the provision that God makes for His people through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit’s at work in our salvation—this is a blessing that God has provided when it says “He anoints my head with oil”—in convicting us. John 16:8 says, “He’s come to convict the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment.” Do you know that you can’t become a Christian unless the Holy Spirit comes and convinces you that you’re a sinner and you need a Savior? You don’t just try Jesus willy-nilly. You come under conviction. And that’s the work of the Holy Spirit saying, “You are a sinner. You need a Savior.” He drives you to Jesus Christ.

And when you trust in Jesus, you are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Titus 3:5 says, “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.” So the Word of God and the Spirit of God are working together to bring you to salvation, giving you new life. The word “regenerate” means to give new life. And then the Holy Spirit indwells you. Every Christian has the Holy Spirit; every Christian has the Holy Spirit living in them. 1 Corinthians 6:19 says, “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?”

Then the Holy Spirit baptizes you by taking you out of Adam—and all the condemnation that is part of that—and then taking you and placing you in Christ. Remember in Ephesians 1:3 we read about the blessings that are ours in the Spirit in Christ? Every Christian is taken out of Adam and placed in Christ. And I believe once in Christ, always in Christ. You don’t put yourself in Christ; you can’t take yourself out of Christ. You’re done. You’re placed there by the work of the Holy Spirit. What a marvelous truth that is. 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body....We’ve all been made to drink by that one Spirit.”

Then you are sealed with the Holy Spirit unto the day of redemption, Ephesians 4:30. You are sealed unto the day of redemption. That’s the day that you go to heaven and are with the Lord.

And then in the life of the believer, the Holy Spirit fills you—Ephesians 5:18—gives you gifts—1 Corinthians 12:11—teaches you—John 16:13—He will guide you and teach you and show you all things. So He guides us—Romans 8:14—and He gives us assurance—Romans 8:16, which

says, "God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." How do I know I'm really a Christian? God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I am His child.

So how wonderful to say in the context of this psalm, "God, you anoint my head with oil. You convict me. You regenerate me. You indwell me. You seal me. You baptize me. You lead me, teach me, guide me, fill me." And the list could go on even further of all the blessings that are yours.

Did you know that you are that blessed? Did you realize how blessed you are? You just think you're not going to hell. "I'm a Christian; I'm not going to hell. I'm not going to have fun. It's boring. Christians don't do anything cool, but at least I'm not going to hell when I die; praise God." Hey, you have eternal life! You can talk to God. You can walk with God. You can be led by God. You have His Word. You have the people of God. How blessed are we! God has spread this table. God has anointed our heads.

Here is the third image in verse 5: "My cup runs over." The cup overflows. Someone said that "The surest sign that you're carrying a full bucket is wet feet." I love that. I want to know; are your feet wet? Do you overflow, or do you kind of trickle out once in a while? Are you always trying to suck from other people? "Oh, I need..." rather than "My life overflows." If you're a child of God, you have a table spread, you have a head anointed and you have a cup that's overflowing. It's not half full. It's overflowing. It's the overflowing cup. The Christian life is described as "my cup overflows."

The cup symbolizes the joy of the Lord. This concept of the cup is used quite often in Scripture about our life's circumstances. We have the cup of sorrow, the cup of pain, but we have the cup of joy or the cup of blessing. As a Christian, if God has handed you a cup, He says, "Stand back. I want to fill your cup." Then He pours it in, it reaches the brim and it starts to overflow. God says, "I want your cup to overflow." What a blessing that is.

Do you count your blessings and name them one by one? Do you count your blessings and see what God has done? Do you remember that song Count Your Blessings? Someone came up to me after first service and she said, "Sing it with me, Pastor," and we sang it together.

"Count your blessings.

Name them one by one.

Count your many blessings.

See what God has done."

We change the song today to:

"Count your bummers.

Count your bummers.

Name them one by one.

Count your many bummers.

See what God hasn't done."

I tend to do that. And as I read this psalm this week, God spoke to my heart and said, "John, your cup overflows. The table is set. I've anointed your head with oil. So you have everything you need for life and godliness." How good God has been. Again, He's saying to us, saints of God, that our blessings overflow. In John 10:10, Jesus said, "The thief comes not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. I am come that you might have life and life more abundantly." Isn't that awesome? "I've come that you might have life..."—that's salvation—"...and life more abundantly"—that's sanctification. And a cup that overflows reminds me of the concept of service. Actually, the image of a cup is the image of servanthood. So we go around blessing people; we have a cup that is full, and we bring blessing to other people. You bless your wife. You bless your husband.

Are you a blessing to your spouse? Are you a blessing to your children? Or do you give blessing to your parents? Are you a blessing to your friends? Are you a blessing to your coworkers? Does your life overflow and touch others? When Joseph was being blessed by his father, Jacob, he said, "Joseph, you're a fruitful vine, and your branches go over the wall." That means that others can partake. If you have a fruit tree on the border of your property, its branches go over the wall, people are walking on the outside of the fence and the fruit is right there, they can partake of that. If they are taking your fruit, don't get so upset. Just keep the branches on your side of the fence. But the imagery of the branches going over the wall means you bring blessing to others. I've always loved that. Joseph sustained his own family. His own brothers rejected him and sold him as a slave. But He was used by God to sustain them and to save them and to preserve them alive.

Don't you want a life like that? Don't you want a life with branches that go over the wall and others can eat of the fruit? Don't you want a cup that overflows? That you can bless other people? Does your life overflow as you reach out to others? I love what Haddon Robinson said. He said, "This is the God we serve. This is the blessing He brings. With Him, the calf is always the fatted calf. The robe is always the best robe. The joy is always unspeakable. And the peace is always passing understanding. There is no grudging in God's goodness. He does not measure His goodness by drops like a druggist filling a prescription. It comes to us in floods. If we only recognize the lavish abundance of His gifts, what a difference it would make in our lives." You would begin to thank God and say, "You overflow my cup." So the table is set, the head is anointed, the cup overflows and God is our provider.

It was Annie Johnson Flint who wrote these words: "His love has no limit. His grace has no measure. His power, no boundary known unto men. For out of His infinite riches in Jesus, He

giveth and giveth and giveth again.” Amen.