

Psalm 23

Following the Shepherd: process, presence, and promise in Psalm 23

SPEAKER	Jayson Knox
DATE	Sunday, July 12, 2026
PASSAGES	Psalm 23; John 15; Colossians 1; Romans 8
MESSAGE	Begins at 1:08:14 in the service

THE BIG IDEA

Psalm 23 isn't just comfort for funerals—it is a map for spiritual formation. It shows how life with God means being led, rescued, fed, and transformed by the Good Shepherd. Our journey with Christ is less about chasing outcomes and more about trusting the process, even when that path leads through shadows and suffering. Following Jesus reshapes our identity and leaves a legacy of blessing for others.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ◆ Spiritual formation is a process, not an instant outcome—God leads us through seasons of rest, challenge, and growth.
- ◆ Our identity as children of God is foundational; being in his “house” means belonging to his family, not just a destination after death.
- ◆ The Shepherd knows what we need, when we need it—even rest and restoration we would not ask for ourselves.
- ◆ Valleys and suffering are not detours but essential parts of the journey; “even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”
- ◆ The psalm shows a shift from God as a distant “he” to a present “you”—from knowing about God to knowing him personally.

- ◆ God prepares blessing in the midst of conflict; being anointed and having a cup that overflows are realities even in the presence of enemies.
- ◆ The legacy of following Jesus is that goodness and mercy follow us, leaving real impact on those around us.
- ◆ The journey of spiritual formation includes cycles—rest, correction, suffering, and abundance—not just a linear path.

► 1:08:14

Jayson Knox opened with a story about Barbara, an ordinary woman whose life was transformed when she came to Christ at age eleven. Her testimony was not only about her own dramatic experiences—including a near-death encounter and a long legacy of prayer for her family—but about the invisible, generational impact her faith had on others. For Jayson, her life illustrated how Jesus changes the trajectory of one life, and then many lives, when we let him lead.

Psalm 23 as a window into spiritual formation

► 1:11:56

Barbara, Jayson said, made it her practice to require those close to her to learn two things: the Lord's Prayer and Psalm 23. Jayson invited the congregation to stand and recite [Psalm 23](#) aloud together, in any translation. He called it “an anchor of scripture.”

“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. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

PSALM 23 ↗

1. The end in mind: dwelling in the house of the Lord

► 1:14:13

Jayson began at the end: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” He corrected the common image of “house” as a mansion or a distant place after death. In scripture, “house” means family—a belonging to the household of God, the family of faith that stretches across history. Being in God’s house is being part of his people, adopted as children, transferred from darkness into the kingdom of his beloved Son ([Colossians 1:12–14](#)).

He emphasized that this identity is not earned, but received: “when you become a child of God, you get a new identity.” The process of spiritual formation begins with this reality—being chosen, holy, and beloved. “That shift into this family at age 11 changed everything,” he said of Barbara, and the same is true for every believer.

2. Spiritual formation as process, not outcome

▶ 1:14:58

Jayson confessed he prefers outcomes—but spiritual formation, he argued, is a process. “Becoming like Christ is not only instantaneous; it’s also ongoing.” He contrasted our cultural obsession with outcomes to the biblical emphasis on journey, pilgrimage, and process. Coaches and business leaders talk about “the process,” but for Christians, the process is God’s work of transformation over time.

3. The Shepherd’s leading: trust and dependence

▶ 1:15:58

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

PSALM 23:1 ↗

To say “the Lord is my shepherd” is to confess our need for guidance. Jayson joked about his own farm upbringing and the real intelligence (or lack thereof) of sheep: “Sheep are dumb. We need help. We need a shepherd.” The statement “I shall not want” is not a promise of getting everything we desire, but a declaration of faith that God will give us what we truly need, when we need it.

The Shepherd knows when we need rest: “He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.” Jayson noted that Sabbath is “hard baked into the system”—God’s way of restoring our souls and inviting us to worship, recalibrate, and detox from the demands and distractions of life.

“He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

PSALM 23:3 ↗

The restoration of the soul, Jayson said, is not just for our comfort but so we can get “on the path with him, the right path, and stay on it with him.” The “paths of righteousness” are about learning God’s ways—his culture, his economy, his language. And the reason is not just our benefit: “It’s for his name’s sake, not ours.”

► 1:16:55

Jayson used the image of following closely—like keeping your eye on the leader’s tire while biking through a narrow path in a cactus-filled desert. “Keep your eyes on the one leading you,” he said, “and you’ll stay out of trouble.” The path is narrow, and keeping focus on Christ keeps us from wandering.

4. The valley of the shadow: suffering and presence

► 1:20:40

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.”

PSALM 23:4 ↗

Jayson highlighted a subtle but powerful shift in this verse: “Not knowing good grammar will not condemn you to hell. However, not paying attention to grammar could keep you further from heaven.” He pointed out, “there’s a change in pronouns—he leads me, he restores my soul—for you are with me. We go from third person to second person. In some languages, we call this the familiar. It gets very family-like. You are with me. We are in communion. You’re not in front of me. You’re with me.”

He connected this to Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21: “They are in me as I’m in you and you are in them. Weird, but we’ve become one with Christ in this journey.” Suffering, he said, is not a detour but part of the process of trusting him: “If you follow him long enough, he’ll entrust you to the valley of the shadow of death.” The promise is not absence of suffering, but presence: “You are with me.” The rod and staff—tools of discipline and protection—are sources of comfort, not resentment. “If when he whacks you for something you know you did, you go, ‘Oh, thank you’—that repentance becomes joy.”

5. Table in the presence of enemies: anointed and overflowing

► 1:21:23

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

PSALM 23:5 ↗

Jayson reflected, “I always pictured this verse as a picnic blanket in the middle of a battlefield with arrows and guns and stuff and we’re just sitting there and not worried about it, which is a pretty good picture. That’s the protection part, but it actually says a table.” He emphasized: “You prepare the table. He’s already planned this. He’s prepared it. It’s sitting there in the right place at the right time. It has what you need on it.” This is not accidental: “You didn’t end up here accidentally out of the shadow of death into a battlefield or whatever this is that he’s got you into. This was no accident.”

Jayson noted, “We don’t do dinner with enemies. Usually people we don’t like, we don’t even do dinner with. And yet here we are at a table with our enemies and God’s prepared it. Obvious, maybe God invited them.” He pointed out a grammatical detail: “Most of the scriptures are plural yous, like you all, all y’all, your community. ... This psalm is not that. This is you. This is a singular. He’s talking to you and me. He anoints my head with oil at the table with my enemies.”

The image of anointing is where we get the word Messiah: “Jesus is the anointed one. ... We’re in the family. Guess what? We get the anointing, the power to deal with our enemies real time in the midst. This is what Jesus tells us in the sermon on the mount. ... You bless them. You pray for them. ... He tells you how to do it.” See Matthew 5:43–48.

“My cup overflows”—Jayson explained, “He’s given me more than I need. He’s given me the grace I need to deal with this opposition, this enemy, this person that maybe has hurt me or wants to hurt me or this part of my soul that has velcro in it toward bad habits. ... The capacity that he gave to Jesus, he gives to us.”

► 1:22:40

Jayson connected this moment to Jesus’ words in John 15:15: “No longer do I call you servants ... but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.” He continued, “We’re making a transition here from servants to friends. ... We’re going to hear it from the Father. We’re going to know the Father. ... It’s an amazing thing that he takes an 11-year-old girl from about as broken and poor a family that you can imagine in the middle of the dust bowl recession and impacts people around the world. ... That’s what he does with each one of us.”

6. Goodness and mercy: legacy and hindsight

► 1:23:58

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

PSALM 23:6 ↗

Jayson said, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. It’s both a statement of fact of the future and it’s a statement of reality in present tense. Goodness and mercy are following me now.” He shared, “Barbara, she was a person full of joy. I never heard her complain, though she was in pain the rest of her life ... But she was so full of joy and goodness and mercy everywhere she went. ... She blessed people. I want to offer you the same encouragement that goodness and mercy will follow all the days of our lives and we can dwell in the house of the Lord.”

“It’s usually after the fact that you realize, ‘Oh, that was good. Oh, I’m glad that happened.’ ... After the fact, 2020 hindsight, all that stuff is better. ... The closer we are to him, the more we can see the blessing in the midst of the shadow of death, in the midst of the conflict and the challenge ... but if you can’t see it right then, you will be able to look back and see it. That’s the promise. Surely, certainly, absolutely. ... Goodness and mercy will follow you. You’ll see it.”

The journey of spiritual formation is not linear: “There’s just like multiple little spirals within this. ... Oh, leading through paths of righteousness. Oh, I need to rest again. ... It’s not like a linear progression. Okay. This is life with God.”

7. Responding to the Shepherd’s call

► 1:30:11

Jayson closed, “My prayer for all of us is that we will have such a legacy born out of trusting and following Jesus, aligning with him. ... When we don’t know what to do, the best thing to do is just obey him. And if you don’t understand it, it’s okay. You can really trust him. ... If you’re in the valley of the shadow of death and he’s whacking you with a stick, trust him. ... This may be ... a litmus test for spiritual maturity. If when he whacks you for something you know you did ... you go, ‘Oh, thank you.’ That repentance becomes joy.”

He invited the congregation to pray the psalm together as their closing prayer and confession:

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me to 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.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.
Your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

PSALM 23 ↗

He concluded: “So wherever you are in all these things, if you’re at the place of calling him Lord for the first time, this is a great day to do it—like the 11-year-old Barbara at the Salvation Army band on the street. If you say that today, the trajectory of your life will change and the universe of lives that touch yours will change and the world will be a different place. If you’re at the place of really trusting him as a shepherd, does he know what he’s doing? Let folks pray for you and maybe testify that that’s true. If you find yourself in the valley of a shadow ... there’s folks here to pray for you. In the name of Jesus, who took on our failures so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. In his name be blessed and go and be a blessing. Amen.”

FOR FURTHER STUDY**SCRIPTURE IN THIS MESSAGE**

- Psalm 23
- Colossians 1:12–14
- Matthew 5:43–48
- John 15:15
- John 17:21

FOR YOUR HOPE GROUP

1. Where have you seen God's goodness and mercy following you—either in hindsight or in the present?
2. How does Psalm 23 shape your understanding of what it means to belong to God's "household" or family?
3. What part of the Shepherd's process—rest, correction, walking through the valley—do you find most challenging right now?
4. How does the shift from "he" to "you" in the psalm reflect changes in your own relationship with God?
5. What one step can you take this week to trust the Shepherd's leading, even if you cannot see the outcome?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER

Jayson Knox spoke at Hope Chapel on July 12, 2026, teaching from Psalm 23. Drawing on stories from his own experience and the life of a family friend, he explored how following Christ as Shepherd shapes every season of life, from rest to suffering to legacy. Jayson's message emphasized practical trust in God's leading and the process of spiritual formation.

Watch the full message:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OQyxIga8hps&t=4094s>

These notes summarise a message preached at Hope Chapel in Austin, Texas. They are a reader's aid, not a transcript — scripture references link to the full passage so you can read it in context.