

Homily – October 11, 2026

Lord and Savior, please join me in prayer.

God, we come this day hearing the words of Psalm 23 and boldly declaring that you indeed are our shepherd, and knowing that all our needs are met.

God, give us the strength to believe and trust and to claim our identity in you so that we might not long for anything. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit to believe, to trust, and to live in faith. We ask all of this in Jesus' name.

The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing.

So I have two stories to tell you about Psalm 23.

The first one is about Richard Burton. Richard Burton went to his home church, and his pastor begged him to read some scripture for the congregation. And Richard Burton read Psalm 23. And the people, at the end, were just clapping and so enthusiastic.

And so Richard said to his pastor, "Well now, Pastor, will you read Psalm 23?" And so the pastor read Psalm 23. And by the end of that reading, the congregation was in tears.

And Richard said this: "I know the psalm, but your pastor knows the shepherd."

So that's the first story I want you to keep in mind as we unpack this one simple line.

The second story is of a young pastor sitting in an airport waiting for his connecting flight home. And he had a tattoo on his arm in Hebrew, and he had hoped it said, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." But it was in Hebrew, and who knows if the tattoo artist spoke Hebrew.

So he's sitting there FaceTiming his son, and his tattoo is in clear view of this woman who's sitting next to him waiting for the same plane. And when he got off the phone with his son, he asked the woman how she was and, you know, could he help her?

And she said, "Do you know what that says?"

And he said, "Well, I hope it says, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.'"

And she said, "It does. I'm from Israel, and I speak Hebrew, and it does indeed say that. But do you know what the word shepherd truly means in Hebrew?"

And he said, "Well, someone who protects us, someone who cares for us."

And she said, "There's so much more. It means also that God is our friend."

So do we truly know this one who promises us we shall not want? Do we only know him as one who provides, or do we also know him as a friend?

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You know, when we think about this first line, I wonder how we would see it differently if we expanded our vision of the shepherd, of not only one who provides for us, who protects us, but who is also our friend.

You know, we often hear this psalm at a funeral because it is indeed meant for comfort. But that's not the only thing it's meant for. It is actually meant to equip us to live in this world, in this time, in this place.

I want you to hear that again. Psalm 23 is indeed a psalm of comfort, but it is also a psalm of equipping us with a spiritual strategy, a kind of power manual that lets us cancel out our dependency on the world, our dependency on these broken systems that the world keeps telling us are our lifeline.

Our lifeline is our Lord and Savior, and we shall not want.

We need to reclaim that identity as children of God. I think as we go through our week, somehow that identity can get lost, can get buried. And what better way today to boldly say together and affirm one more time: the Lord is our shepherd.

You all are sweet.

The Lord is our friend.

I truly believe I belong to him. And I have an identity as a child of God.

We're not lost. We're not forgotten. Our identity is not our job. Our identity is not the people we hang out with. Our identity is not the house or the car or anything.

Our identity is centered in our Lord and Savior. It's found in the one who created us, who knew us in the womb, who has claimed, named, and redeemed us, and leads us, inviting us to disconnect from the world and establish him as Lord of all.

We don't have to live in a performance-based faith: "If I do something, God will do something else." No. The Lord says, "I am your shepherd, and you shall not want."

May the Holy Spirit give us the power to believe that and to live that.

Amen.