

## Psalm 23

### Fourth Sunday after Easter

May 11, 2025

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Today, Morgan and I wanted to reflect on Psalm 23 and how its message has shown through in our Calvary experiences. Psalm 23 reads: “The Lord is my shepherd; \*I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures \*and leads me beside still waters. He revives my soul \*and guides me along right pathways for his Name's sake.”

In the scripture, we hear about the Lord as our shepherd, guiding, protecting, and leading us. The sheep follow, learning to trust, to listen, and to grow.

As we thought about this passage, we realized that this is exactly what Calvary has been for us—our community of shepherds. And we, over the years, have been the sheep, growing up in this place, learning, being guided, and shaped by the love and leadership we've experienced here.

As Morgan and I reflected on Psalm 23—“The Lord is my shepherd”—we began to see how this church, Calvary, has been a shepherd in our lives. For me, that guidance started with my grandmother, Anne Connell, also known to many of you as Dearie. Psalm 23 has been special to me for as long as I can remember, because it's the first prayer Dearie taught me. She was the reason my family came to Calvary and the most consistent spiritual guide I've ever had. Whether I was singing in the St. Cecilia Choir or later in the adult choir, she was right there beside me—every Wednesday night at rehearsal and every Sunday morning. She also taught my Sunday school classes growing up. Our class was small, but that made it even more meaningful. She was always fully present, and her quiet leadership shaped how I understand God's love and Jesus' story. Dearie's steady presence and guidance were the earliest signs to me of what it means to be shepherded with love.

While Dearie led me here, I've been lucky to have other shepherds in my life too in my time at Calvary, especially my mom. She's shown me what it means to love your neighbor as yourself and what leadership through service looks like. Whether it was serving on the vestry or waking me and my brothers up early on Saturday mornings to crack eggs for Emmanuel Meal prep, she always found ways to stay involved and lead by example. Watching her, I've learned that being a shepherd sometimes means simply showing up.

And since it's Mother's Day, I've been thinking even more about how both Dearie and my mom have shaped the way I see faith. They've each led with care, commitment, and quiet strength—just like a good shepherd does. I'm grateful for everything they've modeled for me.

As I've gotten older, Calvary itself has become that guiding presence. One of the biggest ways I've felt that is through outreach, especially Room in the Inn. I started volunteering when I was seven, baking cupcakes and decorating them with my mom before bringing them downtown. I didn't fully understand it then—I was mostly excited to push the dessert cart or play Jenga with our guests. But looking back, those moments taught me what compassion looks like: sharing time, care, and dignity. This year, I chose Room in the Inn as the focus of my service

project with my school's Kimmons Wilson Society. We decorated and laminated placemats to go with meals, and I helped lead a group of younger students at Hutchison. It reminded me that even small things—a placemat, a game of Jenga, a conversation—can help someone feel seen.

I also want to thank Mrs. Terry Dulaney, who's been a quiet shepherd for so many of us in outreach. She's the kind of leader who makes everyone feel capable and welcome, no matter how small the task. And, Room in the Inn is always looking for people in the congregation who would be willing to serve as overnight shepherds if you feel called to be a shepherd for others in our community. From Room in the Inn to the Emmanuel Meal, the Lenten Preaching Series, snack bags after church, and just the general energy here, Calvary has consistently shown me what it means to serve with intention and care. In those moments, I've felt led—and, gradually, learned how to help lead others.

Another part of my experience here has been acolyting. I've really valued being part of the service—lighting the torches for the Gospel, setting the altar, and working with a team. The acolyte leaders and team members have been steady examples for me—people who guide without needing to be in the spotlight. Their leadership reminds me that shepherding often happens behind the scenes. It's helped me see that worship isn't just something we attend—it's something we create together.

Jesus says in John 10, "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." I'm grateful that Calvary has been a place where I could hear that voice—through choir rehearsals, service projects, Sunday school, acolyting, and the steady hands of people who showed me how to care for others. Whether I was being led or learning to lead, I've come to understand that being part of this community means both following and becoming a shepherd in our own way.

Like Kate, I have also been blessed enough to have my grandmother play such an influential role in my Calvary experience. First and foremost, my Gigi, June Rose, is who I have to thank for being able to stand up here and talk to you, this congregation, today. She was the one who encouraged me to go to Calvary with her one Sunday, knowing what I needed in a time of spiritual need, and as a result, introduced me to the loving, eclectic community of people here. She is always there to go out of the way to help me, whether it be driving me to EYC on Wednesday nights or just checking up on me through calls, which I may or may not always answer. Anyways, I know she is a shepherd to me, as she imitates Christ's love in all she does and seeks to help lead me down the right path, like so many others here do likewise.

Thanks to following my grandmother's simple suggestion, I have been given countless, wonderful opportunities to become involved here at Calvary such as through attending EYC on Wednesday nights, getting involved in the Happening community, being able to help with the Emmanuel Meal and Neighborhood Breakfast, serving in the Nursery, and serving as a Eucharistic Minister.

In particular, one ministry here at the Church that has had a meaningful impact on me was the Neighborhood Breakfast. I have always had a special place in my heart for those less fortunate and hope to help veterans experiencing such through my future career. By being able to pass out basic goods such as toiletries to the guests, I was greeted with an overwhelming new sense of gratitude. Gratitude for what I have been blessed with in my own life and a gratitude for Calvary's heart to help these people out, as they imitate Christ's neighborly love in

the heart of downtown. I am reminded that these people are just as human, flesh and blood, as you and I, and each has a story to tell, if we will just simply sit and listen.

Through these opportunities, I have also been fortunate to meet more shepherds such as Ardelle, Brennan, Nathan, Jocelyn, Ebet, Scott, Katherine, and Paul, all of which have made an impact on me in some form and for which I will always be grateful for the lessons that they have taught me. Calvary welcomed me, a shy, lost sheep, with their rod of guidance and showed me a type of love - no exceptions, like I've never seen before. That is, the love of acceptance and care. Helping lead me along this crazy thing called life.

Reflecting on our years here, we've seen that we have been the sheep, and Calvary has been our flock—our shepherds everywhere. In the choir directors, the Sunday school teachers, the clergy, to the volunteers, and for both of us, our grandmothers.

Psalms 23 reminds us that we are never alone—that we are led beside still waters, our souls are restored, and even when we walk through difficult valleys, we are not afraid. Because we are lucky enough to have had the guidance of so many amazing shepherds.

On this Mother's Day, we give thanks not only for our mothers and grandmothers, but for all the people, especially in this church, who have guided us with love and care.

We also want to encourage you today to find someone who you can be a shepherd in their life, whether that be through prayer and guidance, or take a second to recognize someone who has been one in your own life. What impact that leading has had on you, and how you can show the same to others.

Our shepherds are God's voice and those he speaks through within the community. We have been fortunate to have received such amazing guidance, and call you all to reflect on the sheep that may be looking towards you for guidance, or those that have led you.

Like the psalm says, surely goodness and mercy have followed us through every step we've taken here at Calvary. And I trust they'll keep following us, wherever we go next.

Thank you, Calvary, for being our shepherd.