



St Barnabas Cray

Have Your Way, Lord: Trust the Shepherd

Weekly Devotional Journey

Monday - The Lord Is My Shepherd — But Am I Following?

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. (Psalm 23:1 KJV)

Devotional Thought

There is a world of difference between knowing who the shepherd is and actually following him. Psalm 23 opens with one of the most personal, intimate declarations in all of Scripture: not 'the Lord is a shepherd' or even 'the Lord is our shepherd,' but 'the Lord is my shepherd.' It is a confession of relationship, of trust, of dependency. And yet, as the sermon reminds us, there is a picture worth holding in our minds — a flock of sheep spread across a hillside. Some are close to the shepherd. Some are a little behind. Some have wandered quite far ahead, convinced, perhaps, that they know the path well enough to lead themselves.

Where are you in that picture today?

It is a question worth sitting with honestly. Many of us would say without hesitation, 'Yes, the Lord is my shepherd.' We sing it, we pray it, we have perhaps even clung to it in moments of crisis. But the confession of the shepherd's identity must lead to the practice of following. A sheep that wanders ahead of the shepherd is not truly being shepherded — it is simply moving in the same general direction for now, relying on its own instincts and preferences rather than on the wisdom and vision of the one who can see the whole terrain.

The beauty of the shepherd-sheep relationship lies precisely in the sheep's willing dependence. Sheep, by nature, are not self-sufficient creatures. They need guidance, protection, and care. And in the spiritual life, this is not a weakness to be overcome — it is the very posture God invites us into. To say 'the Lord is my shepherd' is to say, 'I am not sufficient on my own. I need him. I trust him. I will follow him.' This is not passivity — it is the deepest kind of active faith, the daily, deliberate choice to orient your life around his leading rather than your own desires.

Today, let this ancient declaration become a fresh and living prayer. Say it slowly: 'The Lord is my shepherd.' Let it settle into the places where you have been trying to lead yourself.

Reflection Question

In which area of your life right now are you most tempted to walk ahead of the shepherd rather than follow him — and what is driving that impulse?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Wherever you are, in identifying the shepherd as your leader, or probably you have gone ahead of him — wherever you are, we need to bring ourselves back to where we say, the Lord is my shepherd. The Lord is the one that I want to follow."

Today's Application

Begin this week by taking a few quiet minutes to draw an honest map of your life right now. Think

about your relationships, your work, your finances, your spiritual life, and your future plans. In which of these areas are you genuinely following the shepherd's lead? In which are you walking ahead, making decisions based primarily on your own wisdom, preferences, or fears?

Choose one specific area where you sense you have wandered or moved ahead without truly seeking the Lord's direction. Write it down. Then spend five minutes in prayer, not asking God to bless the path you have already chosen, but genuinely asking him to show you his path. If it helps, use the words from the sermon as your prayer: 'Have your way, Lord. Have your way.' Let that be the posture of your heart as you begin this week — not demanding answers, but opening yourself to his leading.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I confess that I say your name more easily than I follow your lead. Today I come back to the beginning — to the simple, profound truth that you are my shepherd. Forgive me for the times I have wandered ahead, convinced I knew the way. Forgive me for the times I have lagged so far behind that I have lost sight of you entirely. Draw me close today. Help me to hear your voice above the noise of my own desires and anxieties. I want to follow you — not just in word, but in the actual decisions of this day. Have your way, Lord. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Returning to the Fold

Evening Reflection

As this day draws to a close, take a moment to look back over it gently. Where did you sense the shepherd's presence guiding you? Were there moments when you felt the pull to go your own way — to make a decision based on habit or self-interest rather than trust? The sheep in the picture from this morning's reflection are spread across the hillside at varying distances from the shepherd. But the shepherd's eyes are on all of them. He has not stopped watching, stopped caring, stopped moving towards those who have wandered.

There is something deeply comforting in this. Your distance from the shepherd today — whether great or small — has not changed his commitment to you. He is still your shepherd. And tonight,

wherever you find yourself, you can return. The fold is open. His arms are wide. The declaration 'the Lord is my shepherd' is not just for the mornings when we feel close and confident. It is for the evenings when we are tired, perhaps a little lost, and aware of how much we still need him. Let tonight be a moment of return.

Evening Reflection

Looking back over today, where did you sense the shepherd guiding you — and where did you notice yourself pulling away from his leading?

Evening Prayer

Good Shepherd, thank you that your eyes never left me today. In the moments I wandered, you were still watching. In the moments I felt lost, you were still near. As I rest tonight, draw me close. I am yours, and I am grateful. Amen.

Tuesday - The Rod and the Staff: Comfort in Both

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4b NIV)

Devotional Thought

Most of us, if we are honest, have a strong preference for the staff. The shepherd's staff — that long, hooked pole used to gently guide the sheep, to pull them back from the edge, to draw them close — feels like the instrument of grace we most want to experience. It speaks of tenderness, of rescue, of the Lord drawing near to help us. And it is a beautiful picture of his care.

But the psalm says that both the rod and the staff bring comfort. The rod — that short, club-like instrument used to defend the flock and, remarkably, to discipline wandering sheep — is also a source of comfort. This is a truth that can challenge us deeply if we let it.

The sermon draws our attention to something striking: the shepherd would sometimes throw the rod in the direction of a sheep that was wandering too far from the flock. Not to harm it, but to startle it, to interrupt its wandering, to send it back to safety. In other words, there are moments when what feels like disruption, difficulty, or even discipline in our lives is actually the shepherd's rod at work — not because he has abandoned us, but because he loves us too much to let us wander into danger.

This reframes so much of what we experience. The season that felt like setback. The door that closed unexpectedly. The plan that unravelled. The relationship that required painful honesty. Could these be the rod, thrown in love to redirect us? The apostle Paul understood this. He wrote that God disciplines those he loves, as a father disciplines the son in whom he delights (Hebrews 12:6). Discipline is not the absence of love — it is one of love's most faithful expressions.

Today, can you look at the difficult things in your life and ask not just 'Why, Lord?' but 'What are you

doing, Lord?' Perhaps the rod is at work, and it is working for your good.

Reflection Question

Is there a difficulty, disappointment, or disruption in your life right now that might be the shepherd's rod redirecting you rather than evidence of his absence?

From Sunday's Sermon

"There will be times when the Lord would need to apply the rod. There will be times when he would use the staff to draw us closer. Sometimes he would use the rod to draw us back into the flock, to bring us back into his plan and into his purpose."

Today's Application

Today, take a piece of paper and draw a simple line down the middle. On one side, write 'Staff moments' — times recently when you have clearly felt the Lord drawing you close, providing for you, guiding you gently. On the other side, write 'Rod moments' — times when something difficult, unexpected, or disruptive has happened that you have perhaps not yet made sense of.

Now, pray over the rod moments specifically. Ask the Lord honestly: 'Are you redirecting me here? Is there something you are protecting me from, or calling me back to?' This is not about manufacturing meaning for every hard thing, but about opening yourself to the possibility that the shepherd is at work even in what feels like disruption. Share one of these 'rod moments' with a trusted friend or spiritual companion this week. Ask them to pray with you for eyes to see the shepherd's hand in it.

Morning Prayer

Father, I confess that I want the comfort of the staff far more readily than I welcome the correction of the rod. But today I choose to trust that both come from the same loving hand. Where you have been redirecting me through difficulty, give me eyes to see it. Where I have resisted your discipline, soften my heart. I want to be a sheep that returns to the fold — not reluctantly, but willingly, because I trust the shepherd who calls me back. Have your way, Lord, even when your way feels hard. Amen.

Evening Devotion**Both Instruments, One Love****Evening Reflection**

As you reflect on this day, consider the ways the shepherd has been at work — perhaps through both the staff and the rod. There may have been a moment of unexpected gentleness, a word of encouragement, a sense of his nearness that felt like the staff drawing you close. And there may have been a moment of friction — a conversation that didn't go as planned, a reminder of something you have been avoiding, a quiet conviction in your spirit about a choice you need to make differently.

Both of these are expressions of the same shepherd's love. The psalm does not say that the staff comforts and the rod disturbs. It says that both comfort. This is a profound truth that only becomes real through experience. When we look back on our lives and see the moments that shaped us most deeply, it is often the rod moments — the disruptions, the redirections, the disciplines — that we are most grateful for, because they brought us back to the shepherd and back to ourselves.

Tonight, rest in the knowledge that every instrument the shepherd uses is held in hands that love you.

Evening Reflection

Where did you sense the shepherd at work today — and can you receive both the gentle and the challenging moments as expressions of his love?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you that your rod and your staff are both instruments of love. Tonight I lay down my resistance to the harder ways you work in my life. Comfort me with your presence, and let me rest in the knowledge that I am held. Amen.

Wednesday - Rain in the Amazon: When God's Way Looks Nothing Like Ours

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9 NIV)

Devotional Thought

The story of Antonio Senna, the Christian pilot stranded for thirty-six days in the Amazon rainforest, is one of those accounts that stops you in your tracks. He had taken a job he knew he should not have taken — the money was compelling, and he overrode the quiet warning in his spirit. When his plane went down deep in the forest, he prayed one specific prayer every single day: Lord, please let it not rain. Because in his understanding, rain meant danger. Rain meant the foliage would close over the wreckage, hiding it from search teams. Rain meant he could not light a fire to keep the animals at bay.

And every day, it poured.

For thirty-six days, the very thing he feared most kept happening. And then, on the thirty-sixth day, a family came to collect nuts — drawn to that remote part of the forest by the flooding caused by thirty-six days of continuous rain. They found him. They saved him. The very thing he had prayed against was the very thing God used to bring his rescue.

This is a story about the distance between our vision and God's vision. We see the next step; he sees the destination. We see the obstacle; he sees the instrument. We see the rain; he sees the rescue. And the painful, humbling, beautiful truth is that we cannot always tell the difference between a problem and a provision — not until we are standing on the other side of it.

This is why submission to the shepherd's will is not simply a nice spiritual sentiment. It is a practical necessity rooted in the reality of our limitations. We do not know what tomorrow holds. We cannot see around the next bend. But the shepherd can. And when we insist on our own way — when we pray only for what we think we need — we may be praying against the very thing God is using to bring us home.

Today, what are you praying against that God might be using for your good?

Reflection Question

Is there something you have been persistently asking God to remove or change that he might actually be using as an instrument of grace in your life?

From Sunday's Sermon

"Little did he know that it was the rain that would bring salvation. Brothers and sisters, there are many times in our lives that we have ordered everything that will make us who we want to be. Nevertheless, God will see the end from the beginning."

Today's Application

Take some time today to revisit your prayer list — whether it is written down or simply held in your heart. Look specifically for the prayers that are essentially asking God to remove something difficult: a health concern, a financial pressure, a strained relationship, a frustrating circumstance at work. For each one, try praying a different kind of prayer alongside your request. Instead of only asking God to take it away, also ask him: 'Lord, if you are using this, help me to receive it. Show me what you might be doing in this that I cannot yet see.'

This is not resignation or passivity — it is the active faith of someone who trusts that the shepherd sees the whole terrain. Write down one specific situation where you are willing to loosen your grip on the outcome and say genuinely, 'Have your way, Lord, even here.' Return to that written prayer at the end of the week and notice what has shifted in your heart.

Morning Prayer

Lord, I confess that my vision is so small. I see the rain and I fear it; you see the rescue it will bring. Today I choose to trust you with the things I do not understand. Where I have been praying against your purposes without knowing it, forgive me and redirect my prayers. Teach me to hold my requests with open hands — bringing them to you honestly, but trusting you with the answer. You see the end from the beginning. I choose today to rest in that. Have your way, Lord. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Seeing the Rescue in the Rain

Evening Reflection

As this Wednesday evening settles around you, take a moment to look back — not just over today, but over a longer stretch of your life. Can you identify a season that felt like relentless rain at the time, but which you can now see was bringing something you needed? Perhaps a door that closed and led you somewhere better. Perhaps a loss that opened you up in ways comfort never could. Perhaps a season of difficulty that drew you back to the Lord when prosperity had made you complacent.

The story of the Amazon pilot is a story about perspective — about the difference between what we see in the middle of the storm and what we can see from the other side of it. We are often in the

middle. We rarely have the full view. But the shepherd always does. And the testimony of Scripture, from Joseph's pit to Paul's prison, is that God is faithfully at work in the places that look most like abandonment.

Tonight, let that testimony strengthen your trust. The rain is not evidence that the shepherd has forgotten you. It may be the very means of your rescue.

Evening Reflection

Looking back over your life, can you identify a 'rain season' that you now recognise as God's instrument of grace — and how does that shape your trust in the difficult things you face today?

Evening Prayer

Father, thank you for the times you used what I feared most to bring about what I needed most.

Tonight I choose to trust you with the rains I am still walking through. You see the rescue. Help me to rest in that. Amen.

Thursday - Not My Will, But Yours: The Prayer That Changes Everything

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, 'My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.' (Matthew 26:39 NIV)

Devotional Thought

There is a prayer that the sermon holds up as the hinge upon which an entire life can turn: 'Have your way, Lord. Have your way.' It is a simple prayer, almost childlike in its brevity. And yet it is perhaps the most radical prayer a person can pray, because it is a prayer of complete surrender. It is the prayer that says: I trust you more than I trust myself. I want your plans more than my plans. I release my grip on the outcome.

Jesus prayed this prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, and it is worth sitting with the full weight of that moment. He was not praying abstractly or theoretically. He was facing something he did not want — the cross, the suffering, the separation from the Father that sin would require. And he asked, honestly and without pretence, whether there was another way. But then he submitted: 'Not as I will, but as you will.' This is not the prayer of someone who does not care about the outcome. It is the prayer of someone who cares deeply, but who trusts the Father even more deeply.

The sermon reminds us that one of the words our generation has lost is obedience. We live in a culture that prizes autonomy above almost everything else — the right to define our own path, our own truth, our own identity. And the church is not immune to this. We can become very skilled at praying for God's blessing on the plans we have already made, rather than genuinely submitting our plans to him and asking what he wants.

But obedience is not the opposite of freedom — it is the path to it. The sheep that follows the shepherd closely does not live in constriction; it lives in abundance. 'I shall not want,' the psalm

declares. The life of submission to the shepherd is a life of provision, protection, and purpose. The prayer 'have your way, Lord' is not a prayer of defeat. It is the prayer that opens the door to everything the shepherd has prepared.

Today, will you pray it — and mean it?

Reflection Question

What would it look like, in the most practical terms, for you to genuinely pray 'have your way, Lord' over the biggest decision or struggle you are currently facing?

From Sunday's Sermon

"The moment you begin to pray this prayer, your life can never remain the same. Because what you're telling the Lord is, I am submitted to you. I would rather have your plans than my plans. I want what you want, not what I want."

Today's Application

Today, set aside fifteen minutes — more if you can — for a specific prayer exercise. Begin by writing down, honestly, what you want in the situation that is most pressing in your life right now. Do not spiritualise it or soften it. Write down your actual desires, fears, and preferences. Then, read what you have written back to the Lord. Tell him honestly that this is what you want. And then, deliberately and prayerfully, write underneath it: 'But Lord, have your way. Not my will, but yours be done.'

This is not a formula or a magic prayer — it is a posture of the heart. And it may need to be repeated tomorrow and the day after. Submission is rarely a one-time event; it is a daily practice. Consider also sharing this prayer with someone close to you — a spouse, a friend, a small group — and asking them to hold you accountable to it. Obedience flourishes in community.

Morning Prayer

Lord Jesus, you prayed 'not my will, but yours' in the darkest moment of your earthly life. You showed me that submission is not weakness — it is the deepest expression of trust. Today I bring you my plans, my desires, my fears, and my preferences. I lay them before you honestly. And then I choose to say: have your way. I do not always know what that means, and I confess that it sometimes frightens me. But I trust you. I trust that your way leads to life, even when it passes through places I would not choose. Have your way, Lord. Amen.

Evening Devotion**The Discipline of Daily Surrender****Evening Reflection**

Surrender is rarely dramatic. Most of the time, it happens in the small, quiet moments of a day — the moment you choose to respond with patience rather than frustration, the moment you pause before making a decision and actually ask the Lord what he thinks, the moment you let go of the need to control an outcome and trust it to him instead.

As you look back over today, where did you practise surrender? It may have been in a conversation where you chose to listen rather than dominate. It may have been in a moment of prayer where you genuinely released something you have been holding tightly. It may have been in a small act of obedience that cost you something — comfort, pride, or convenience.

The sermon reminds us that obedience and discipline are not popular words in our generation. But they are the words of the disciple — the one who follows. And the more we practise the small surrenders, the more naturally the larger ones come. Tonight, notice the moments of surrender today, however small. Celebrate them. They are the signs of a life being formed in the image of the Good Shepherd.

Evening Reflection

Where did you practise surrender today — even in a small way — and what did it cost you, and what did it give you?

Evening Prayer

Lord, thank you for every moment today when I chose your way over mine, however small it felt. Where I held on too tightly, forgive me. Tomorrow I want to surrender more readily. Tonight I rest in your hands. Have your way. Amen.

Friday - Dwelling in His Presence: The Goal of the Journey

Morning Devotion

Today's Verse

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. (Psalm 23:6 KJV)

Devotional Thought

We have spent this week walking through the landscape of Psalm 23 — through the meadows of the shepherd's provision, through the valley of his discipline, through the forest of his mysterious ways, and through the garden of surrender. And now we arrive at the destination. Not a place on a map, but a state of being: dwelling in the house of the Lord.

The word 'dwell' is rich with meaning. It does not speak of a brief visit or an occasional attendance. It speaks of making one's home somewhere — of belonging, of settling in, of living there. And the psalm declares that this is the destination of the sheep who follows the shepherd: not just safety, not just provision, not just guidance through the valleys, but the fullness of God's presence as a permanent dwelling place.

The sermon reminds us that this is what the Lord desires most for us — that we would come to that place where we are dwelling in his presence every day, every week, every month. And the path to that place runs through submission. It runs through the daily practice of saying, 'Have your way, Lord.' It runs through the willingness to be led by the staff and corrected by the rod. It runs through the Amazon rains we did not want but which brought our rescue. It runs through the garden prayers of 'not my will, but yours.'

The journey of this week has not been about learning techniques for a better life. It has been about learning to follow the shepherd — because the shepherd leads to a destination that is worth every valley, every discipline, every moment of surrender along the way. And notice what follows the shepherd's flock: goodness and mercy. Not occasionally, not when we deserve it, but all the days of our life.

You are not walking towards this destination alone. The Good Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep is walking with you, guiding you, protecting you, and preparing a place for you. The journey is his. The destination is his. And you — you are his.

Reflection Question

As you reflect on this whole week, what has shifted in your understanding of what it means to follow the shepherd — and what is one thing you want to carry forward into the weeks ahead?

From Sunday's Sermon

"To get to where the Lord wants us to be, for us to be able to come to that place where we are dwelling in his presence every day, every week, every month — it must be your will and not mine. It must be the will of the Lord and not yours. It must be submitting to him."

Today's Application

As you close this week, take time to write a brief letter to yourself — or a prayer — that captures

what the Lord has been saying to you through these five days. Include: one thing you have learned about the shepherd's character; one area where you sense him redirecting you through the rod; one 'rain season' you are choosing to trust him with; and one specific way you want to practise 'have your way, Lord' in the week ahead.

Keep this somewhere you will see it — on your phone, in your journal, on your desk. Share it with someone who can pray with you and check in with you. The life of following the shepherd is not lived in isolation; it is lived in community, in the flock, together. Commit to returning to Psalm 23 regularly — not just in times of crisis or grief, but as a daily companion, a map for the journey, a reminder of who the shepherd is and where he is leading you.

Morning Prayer

Good Shepherd, as this week draws to a close, I am grateful. Grateful that you are not a distant God who watches from afar, but a shepherd who walks with me through every terrain — the green pastures and the dark valleys, the still waters and the Amazon rains. Thank you for the rod that redirects me and the staff that draws me close. Thank you for the testimony of those who have surrendered their will to yours and found you faithful. As I go into the days ahead, let this be the prayer of my life: have your way, Lord. Not my will, but yours. Lead me where you want me to go. Correct me when I wander. Draw me close when I am afraid. And let me dwell in your presence — not just one day in eternity, but today, and tomorrow, and all the days of my life. Amen.

Evening Devotion

Goodness and Mercy: All the Days

Evening Reflection

This evening, as the week ends and the quietness settles, let the final words of Psalm 23 wash over you: 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.' The word 'surely' is a word of certainty, of confidence, of settled trust. It is not 'perhaps' or 'hopefully' or 'if I am good enough.' It is surely. Goodness and mercy are not occasional visitors in the life of the one who follows the shepherd — they are constant companions, trailing behind every step of the journey.

Look back over this week. Where did you see goodness? Where did you experience mercy —

perhaps especially in the moments when you wandered, when you resisted, when you insisted on your own way and the shepherd gently, patiently redirected you? The mercy of God is not reserved for the moments when we have it all together. It follows us into our failures, our fears, and our wanderings.

You have walked with the shepherd this week. He has walked with you. And tomorrow, and the day after, and all the days of your life — he will still be walking with you. That is the promise. That is the shepherd's word. Rest in it tonight.

Evening Reflection

Where did you see goodness and mercy following you this week — even in places you might not have expected to find them?

Evening Prayer

Lord, surely goodness and mercy have followed me this week — I can see it now, even in the hard moments. Thank you. As I rest tonight, I choose to dwell in your presence. Tomorrow I will follow you again. Have your way, Lord — always. Amen.