**The Graduates’ Shepherd**

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.****2****He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.****3****He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
    for his name's sake.*

***4****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.*

***5****You prepare a table before me
    in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
    my cup overflows.****6****Surely goodness and mercy[*[*e*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=ps+23&version=ESV#fen-ESV-14242e)*] shall follow me
    all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
    forever. (Psalm 23, ESV)*

 The Lord is our Shepherd – when a graduate begins a new life, they are called to trust in the Lord. Greetings dear brothers and sisters as we celebrate our Heavenly Father, our earthly fathers and we rejoice for our graduates. The Lord has granted our graduates success, and they now find themselves in a new stage of their journey. Within that reality, there is a special need to trust in the Lord. Today we’re going to be talking about just that kind of trust. What is it that a graduate needs? What is the need of any person that is going into a new stage of life? Again, the Lord is our Shepherd – when a graduate begins a new stage of life, he or she is called to trust in the shepherding of the Lord. Let’s move on to the explanation of the above…

 At all time periods, but especially in new life-situations, the Lord is our Shepherd. God shows us through this prayer of David a specific multi-faceted picture: God is David’s Shepherd, and David is the sheep that trust the Lord. God, within the fields that only He knows, makes David rest to feed and satisfy his thirst. God works that David is recovered from the inhospitable desert weather and challenges. (Remember, shepherds in that part of the world often led sheep through arid and desert-like conditions.) God is the One that guides David in straight paths, not dangerous or crooked paths. Of course, there are two meanings within these statements: these are physical paths on which God guides, but also, allegorically, they are life-paths.

Continuing the extended metaphor, even in the worst of situations when death was waiting for David, God gave him courage and reminded him that He was with him. Not only that, but that His Shepherding and Defending Power would lead and rescue David from all difficulties. Even if David was going to have opponents or adversaries on the way, God would set up a table for His man – He would take away the fatigue with oil (often used to relieve stress when rubbed on the neck) and water (the most precious commodity in the desert given to guests in a tent). Given this kind of Shepherd, how could David not say, “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life”, or that he would always be in God’s house for time immemorial?

This is like an inheritance that never runs out. The beneficiary uses it for personal needs, the resources are still there. It is used to help the poor, and yet it’s still there. It’s used for the improvement of the local town or city, and the resources are still there. Just imagine for a minute, what kind of feeling would you have if your needs were always met because the Lord was your Inheritance and Shepherd?

Today our graduates are called to remember the Lord who is their Shepherd. Dear graduates, the Lord is going to watch over you. It is the Lord that is going to see you to your successes. It is the Lord that is going to provide your financial, spiritual, and physical needs. It is the Lord that will defend you from the enemy and it is He that will walk with you every day, for countless days.

Especially as we enter new stages of life, there is a call to us to remember and to ask the Lord’s Shepherding Presence into our lives.

The Lord is our Shepherd – and if we believe and trust in Him, if we ask Him for what we need, we will have no lack. May the Lord bless our graduates, our fathers, and us on this beautiful day. Amen.