

Yahweh Raah: I Am Your Shepherd. You Can Trust Me.

By Bobby Schuller

God is so good. He is just so, so faithful. Man, maybe you come to church today and you think God is mad at you. He's not. He loves you. Maybe you think God's abandoned you because of all the challenges you're going through. He hasn't. He's shepherding you into victory. Maybe you've been betrayed, tricked, lied to, swindled. All the evil and all the wrong, all the challenges you've faced, God's going to work it out for good, for your good and for the blessing of others. He's so good. He hasn't abandoned you. He loves you and if you're hearing this right now, it's because He wants you to. He wants you to know that He is going to shepherd you unto victory. And that whatever it is you're going through, He's there with you in that pain. He hasn't abandoned you. He hasn't forgotten you. He will bring you through. Amen.

Today we're studying one of the names of God, and it's a surprising name. It is Yahweh Raah, or Jehovah Raah which means I am the Lord your Shepherd. When the Old Testament introduced this as a name for God, it might have been surprising to that generation because a shepherd was a very humble or lowly job. And so for God, who is the master of the universe, the creator of all, the all powerful one to say that I'm your shepherd is to say in no uncertain terms I am with you. I'm alongside you. I am for you. God is for you, not against you. Amen.

Now what is a shepherd like? And many of us don't know anymore because there's not really very many shepherds left. But in the Old Testament days, in the Bible days a lot of people were shepherds, and this was something that an agrarian people would understand. A shepherd is not a butcher. A shepherd is someone who cares for his sheep. A shepherd has little names for his pets, and they are like his pets. Little chop chop and white muffin and.. that's enough. He knows them all by name and they know his voice, and it's like they're friends. And what's really important is that in the Bible days, sheep weren't just owned by one guy, it was the property of like a whole village. So the shepherd was called by his community to guard the wealth of that village represented in these sheep. These sheep represent the bulk of the economy of most small villages, so you'd have a shepherd and his job is to protect the sheep. So by God calling us His sheep, He's like saying I know you personally. I know your name. And to me, you are incredibly valuable. Isn't that good news? That God considers you valuable? In the same way that a shepherd values his sheep, He values you.

Maybe you don't feel valued today. Maybe you heard from pastors, religious folks things that were not true that God hates you, He's angry at you, He's mad at you, He's not. He's your shepherd and He loves you.

The shepherd defends the sheep. A shepherd is willing to lay down his life for his sheep. If the lion or a predator comes to kill one of his sheep, the shepherd bravely stands in the way. God's going to defend

you. Whatever it is you're going through. Maybe it's a court case, maybe you just feel like you're being persecuted, maybe you feel judged, maybe you just feel like the whole world is crashing on you, God is going to defend you and He has very strong arms. Sixteen inch biceps. Very nice. He will defend you. The shepherd will defend you.

And the shepherd also provides for his sheep. That line in Psalm 23 when it says "He makes me lie down in green pastures." You know why a sheep lays down in green pastures? Green pastures for a sheep is food. When the sheep lies down in green pastures, he's full. He's had a good meal. He's had such a good meal he's taking a nap. And that is the metaphor God uses in His shepherding for us. He's going to provide for you. You're going to have not enough, you're going to have more than enough. You're going to have so much that you'll rest in the loving, warm presence of the Good Shepherd who says, when you wake up, have some more. On the house. He's going to provide for you.

Maybe you come to church today and you don't know how you're going to pay that next bill. Maybe you're worried about your job. I want you to know He provides for us. He's a shepherd. He's not going to let you go hungry. And although we go through challenges in life, He is always so faithful to return to us a hundred fold all that was lost because of our journey and because of our faith. He'll provide for you.

And the shepherd guides. I don't know about you, but I need guidance. You know sheep are wonderful animals, but they're easily

spooked. And maybe you feel like you've made a lot of bad decisions in your life. And maybe you feel like you've gone down the wrong path. The Lord is here, not to condemn you, but to say my son, my beloved daughter, this is the way to go. This is the path that leads to life. Follow me. You don't have to worry. Isn't that good news? He's our shepherd. And we call our church Shepherd's Grove because we understand this is the kind of God we serve. He provides, He cares, He loves, He guards and He guides. That's good news. And He is faithful even when we are failures. That's even better news.

The story we've been looking at for the last few weeks is the story of a family that God chose to save the whole world. We're in the part of the story; we're in the 12 tribes of Israel. Now up to this point, God's good and wonderful and perfect creation has been ruined by mankind's evil and violence. Mankind has gone to war and invited all sorts of darkness into this world and God decides to pick one family and through that one family, He's going to rescue the whole world and that family is Abraham. In His covenant He makes with Abraham is Abraham, I'm going to bless you, and you're going to be a blessing to the whole world. And can I tell you this family is messed up. You think your family is weird? Abraham's family is messed up big time.

It kicks off where Abraham decides to give his wife away to a king pretending he's her brother so that he doesn't get killed. What a hero, huh? When they don't have enough faith to believe in the miracle, she

says to her husband, sleep with my slave girl and God will fulfill the promise through her.

The story we talked about last week, Jacob tricks his brother Esau by putting goat skin on his arms to trick the blind father into giving him the inheritance. And one time after another, Abraham's family whose been given this promise, fails, makes moral mistakes, breaks their covenant with God, does all sorts of awful things, but God continues to hold up His promise to them. He reaffirms it. He brings them through and brings redemption in every story. And this is good news for us because you need to know, you need to know that the dream God put in your heart He didn't kill because you made a mistake. You need to know that you are alive and in this building or watching on this channel because God wants to remind you that guilt is maybe the number one thing that is keeping you from fulfilling your destiny. And that today you have the opportunity to get a fresh wind, a fresh vision and a fresh perspective for your life. And that He is not going to withhold your destiny because you messed up. That's called being human. He fulfilled Abraham's covenant, and He'll fulfill the promise He made to your heart.

We see this in the story of Joseph. Joseph was one of the 12 tribes, so Abraham had Isaac, Isaac had Jacob, and Jacob had 12 sons. And God put a dream in Joseph's heart, a big dream. Joseph had 11 brothers. He was the second youngest and Joseph was annoying. He would always tell his brothers about all the great things he was going to

do. He would say he had a dream that they were going to bow down to him someday. This did not help him in his PR with his brothers. The omness, to add insult to injury, Joseph was by far the dad's favorite, Jacob. Jacob would just tell them, hey guys, I like you guys, but by the way Joseph's my favorite. He's great. In fact, I like him so much, I'm going to put together a Technicolor dream coat and I'm going to ask him to wear this, just to remind all you all he's my favorite. That's kind of funny, isn't it. Again, this family is totally messed up. Anyway.

So Joseph has this Technicolor dream coat, a symbol of his father's love and favor, and he seems to have no problem flaunting it in front of his brothers. And he continues to remind them of his dream. One day his father sends him to go get his 11 brothers, they're out in the field, and by the way, they're all shepherds. And God speaks over Joseph twice – I will be your shepherd. And this promise Joseph will need because little does he know he's about to go on the most painful, horrible, difficult journey of his life. He's going to need a shepherd. Maybe you're there and you need a shepherd. He's with you.

Joseph is walking to his big brother's, presumably whom he loves and adores, even though he naively is insulting them, and they say this: here comes that dreamer and they plotted to kill him. This is an important part of the story because if you trust your life to Christ, He's put a dream in your heart. He's put a dream in your heart. The dream is to be alive. To daydream and write things on cocktail napkins and

wonder what the future could hold, to believe in possibility and opportunity is one of the greatest things we can enjoy as people. But what we must never forget is that when God puts a dream in our hearts, others will notice it and desire to destroy it.

And maybe you've got to a point where you had a dream in your heart, and people you loved, maybe your brothers and sisters, maybe your own family set out to destroy you because of that dream. I want you to know God's going to shepherd you unto victory. He did for Joseph, and He will for you and that's very good news.

They said here comes that dreamer, and they plotted to kill him. And as he's coming, they're like all right, we're going to kill this guy, we are going to take that Technicolor dream coat and just like cut it up and slather it in his blood and give it to our dad and tell him that this was a wild animal. And as he's coming, the oldest brother Ruben says guys, guys, guys, this is crazy. We can't just kill our brother. Let's sell him into slavery. We don't want to lose money on this. I thought that was funnier, but.. they sell their little brother for eight shekel's of silver, and here's Joseph, betrayed. He's sitting in a caged box, wondering what on earth just happened. He was just running out with a big old smile on his face to get his brothers and they like bound him and sold him to Ishmaelites.

And here he is on his way to Egypt, wondering what is going on. And you know what's profound about this story, is Joseph didn't know that being sold into slavery was actually lucky. He didn't know they were

going to kill him. That he actually barely and narrowly escaped death. He thinks this is the worst thing that's ever happened to him, and in a way it is, but it could have been a lot worse. And his journey really is only begun.

And there he is, on his way to Egypt, and when he arrives, an Egyptian official named Potiphar buys him. And Potiphar finds out very quickly that this young man has a lot of talent for shop keeping. He puts him in charge of his slaves, he puts him in charge of his household, puts him in charge of everything, and now Joseph's kind of feeling like he's back on top. He's like, Potiphar says this man is amazing, I am going to put you in charge of everything. This is the kind of guy, if you're a business owner, you want to hire and you don't want anybody to find out about, right? This is like awesome.

One day Potiphar is gone and his young, beautiful wife sees Joseph working on something like with his six pack, and he looks awesome, and she's a bit lonely, and Potiphar and her are maybe are having trouble, and so she reaches out to Joseph, hey Joseph, just between you and I, my bed's a little cold tonight. What you up to? She tries to seduce Joseph, and he says you evil woman. (SINGS "EVIL WOMAN") He looks at her and he says your husband Potiphar has entrusted everything to me except you, because you're his wife. I'm not going to sleep with you. And at that point, she wants him all the more, of course, and she starts reaching for him, grabbing for his clothing, and he's like no! And all the

men in here, if you're an 18-year-old guy, and some, you know, hot.. anyway, we're going to get past that. All I'm saying is.. this is a good, good.. this is a good man. He's very good. And he says no, and she's pulling on his clothes, and he breaks free from his clothes, and runs away from the house naked.

And of course she's humiliated, and she tells her husband Potiphar, he tried to get into my bed, and as the guards came, I grabbed his robe to show you proof. Man, no good deed goes unpunished, huh? Again, lied about, betrayed. This is a good man. Maybe you're here today and you've been betrayed. Maybe you've lost everything. Maybe you're here today and something like that happened to you, I want you to know God has not abandoned you. He's shepherding you. It's going to be okay. He's going to take you to victory.

So of course he winds up in prison. And there in prison the warden gives him some menial job and he begins to do it. And the warden's like whoa, this guy's good. And he puts him in charge of the whole prison. Again, you just see the promise of God over Joseph: I will bless you, and you will be a blessing. Even in prison, Joseph is blessed and he's a blessing to others. Isn't that amazing? That's God's promise for you, my friends. Believe it.

So there he is, in prison, he's in charge of everything, and then finally he gets this opportunity, there is a cup bearer and a bread maker come to him and they said we have these horrible dreams. He interprets

the dreams. One guy goes on, the other guy gets killed, and he says to the guy, the cup bearer, hey when you go see the king, tell him my story. And he's like, my friend, you have no idea what you've done for me. I absolutely will tell him. I'm going to get you out of here. And of course he gets to the king and what happens? He completely forgets.

Maybe you're here today and somebody's taking credit for your work. Maybe you're listening to the sound of my voice and you feel as though you've been forgotten. You've been totally overlooked. I want you to know it's okay because in Joseph's case, this is one of the luckiest things in the whole story because it's a long time later all of a sudden the Pharaoh has this big dream and nobody can interpret it, and then all of a sudden the cup bearer remembers Joseph, and he says king, there's this guy he interpreted my dream and he was right, and he can interpret your dream.

And so the Pharaoh brings him up and Joseph interprets this dream. And now Pharaoh puts him in charge of the whole country, and in those days Egypt was the biggest, baddest, richest empire in the world. He became the number two most powerful man alive. And it wasn't for his ego, it was to save Egypt and he did. You see God showed him that Egypt would be going into a famine, and using his skills that he learned that whole journey, he prepared Egypt for that famine, and he saved the whole country. He saved millions of lives.

And later on, he would even save his brothers, who thought he was probably dead or in some other country. They come to Egypt for grain because they're starving. There's this big like reality TV show, bachelor type reveal, they're like I'm your brother! And their response is no! Please don't kill us! They were afraid of him, of course, and they should be. He's a powerful man. He can have them killed on the spot.

And what he says to them is the theme of the gospel, of the whole story, and that is what you meant for evil, God meant for good in order that many lives could be saved. Despite the failures of our family and of you and of me, God brought us to this point that the world might be blessed through our blessing. He swore to our great grandfather Abraham that we would be blessed to be a blessing to the world, and despite our failures, he has brought us here to save many lives.

And there's no way Joseph could have seen in the moment when he went from betrayal of his brothers to the betrayal of Potiphar's wife, to rotting in a prison that that was a part of God's plan to save millions of lives. The Bible says that when he was in that prison, it says God was there with him. He was with him in the prison, he was with him in the cage, he was with him in the betrayal and he was with him when he was running across a field naked, wondering what his life was going to be like. He was with him and never abandoned him. And because of this, God was able to save a whole nation. God shepherded him to the fulfillment of the dream he put in his heart.

It's time to dream again, friend. Maybe you're here today and you just feel like you're going through a lot. Maybe you're in a prison, maybe you're being betrayed, maybe you're being tricked by your siblings or by people you love and you just don't know what's next. Maybe you feel like Bobby, you don't understand. I can't go back. I'm in too deep. I can't get out of this. Not true. Not only can you get out of this, you will get out of this. God is going to get you out of this. Keep hope alive. He did it for Joseph, he'll do it for you. He's faithful, even in our faithlessness. The Bible says even when we are faithless, He remains faithful. He cannot deny Himself.

Maybe you're in life and you just feel like you're going through so much and you wonder if that dream will ever come to pass. But with every disappointment, with every major setback, with every trick and with every act of evil against you, and with every bit of bad luck, little do you know you're like an arrow being pulled back in a bow and the tension between you and your destiny only grows and you're not far now from when God will release you. If you believe it, say amen.

Man, you're going to be so blessed. You're going to be blessed to be a blessing. You're going to be above and not beneath. You're going to have more than enough. Your cup is going to run over. You're going to lay down in green pastures. You're going to be restored. You're going to have full batteries. You're going to have fresh vision. You're going to have victory after victory because He chose you.

And that is what Jesus says. He says I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep. And He says to them, you did not choose me, but I chose you, and chose you to bear fruit, fruit that will last.

And this morning, remember you didn't choose Him, He chose you. He picked you. Bearing fruit, being full of joy, it's your destiny. You haven't lost your calling. In fact I even sense right now the Holy Spirit is drumming up in you a fresh dream, a fresh vision, and fresh batteries. Receive it. Don't push that down. Let it blossom in your heart. Its going to give you life, and it's going to give you a reason to wake up in the morning. God's going to bless you so you can be a blessing to the whole world. He's going to bless you and you're going to bless the whole world. I can't wait to see it. I'm so proud of you. You haven't lost your calling because the calling, the one who called you hasn't given up on you yet. He still believes in you. You're still alive. The only time you lose your calling is when you die. And you're alive, and that's good.

So stay poised and ready. So much of life is being ready for those opportunities that come. You know Warren Buffet, the richest man in the world, he made 90% of his wealth in 10 trades. That's like one trade.. he's like 87 or something, that's like one trade every ten or so years. He was poised and ready for victory.

So be ready this week. Be poised. Because now that you've heard this, God has built up faith in your heart and you're ready to receive the

good thing that's going to come. I believe it. Be poised for the opportunity and receive it in Jesus' name.

And let me just speak this blessing over you. Will you hold your hands out like this to receive what God wants to say over you? Take a deep breath. The spirit of God is called Ruah. It means breath or wind or life. And we're just going to breath in the truth of the word of God.

The Lord is your shepherd. You will lack nothing. He will cause you to lie down in green pastures. He's going to lead you along quiet waters. He is even now refreshing your soul. He will guide you along the right paths for His name sake. Even though now you're walking through the darkest valley, don't be afraid of evil. He is with you. His rod and His staff, let them comfort you. He prepares a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He's anointing your head with oil. Your cup is overflowing. Surely goodness and everlasting love will follow you all the days of your life and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Amen.