

Psalm 23:1a

April 15, 2020

“My Shepherd!”

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

1st Midweek in Easter

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[*Introduction*] What is your favorite Bible verse?

In a recent Pew Research poll, these three verses were the top choices.

Comin in at third place was Rom 8:28,

***“And we know that for those who love God
all things work together for good,
for those who are called according to his purpose.”***

In second place was Jn 3:16, ***“For God so loved the world,***

***that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”***

In first place was Psalm 23, the beloved Shepherd Psalm.

This is the text we will look at for this midweek prayer service.

We are doing this for the season of Easter.

Yes, Easter is more than a day. It is a season.

The season of Easter goes from Easter day until Ascension.

You know...

The Twenty-Third Psalm is a favorite to many because it brings comfort and peace.

Many Jews and Christians have memorized it,

and it is often used at funeral services.

In the Psalm we

listen to David as he paints a most beautiful picture of God—

a picture that draws us ever closer to this God, who is my Shepherd.

The first words tell us clearly that “God is my Shepherd.”

The author, David, who himself was a shepherd,

conveys the image of God as his personal Shepherd.

A shepherd is one who cares for you,

is concerned about you,

and considers your every need.

[*Known to Me*]

David wants us to have a clear and concrete picture of who God is—

He is tangible, touchable, and true.

He is comforting, consoling, and committed to you.

He is *NOT* like the gods of this earth—

He is *NOT* like a genie in a bottle or

like Santa Clause waiting for you to climb upon his lap.

No, the God we have is above all gods.

And as powerful and mighty as he is, he is a Shepherd.

shepherd, who touches

with his hands of love and mercy

the downtrodden, downcast, and disheartened—that is you.

In this psalm, David devotes the entire psalm to explaining the first two words,

“The Lord.”

The Lord is the one who made himself known to Moses, another shepherd,
in the burning bush and in the splitting of the Red Sea.

Samuel heard the voice of The Lord as a little lad serving in the temple.

Jeremiah was comforted by him in a prison cell.

And Isaiah saw his glory as the temple shook by his presence.

David spent time with him while he fought the lion, bear, and Goliath,
and as he served and was chased by King Saul.

David especially knew the Lord

and desired to spend every moment with his Shepherd-God.

That is why you hear him say:

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” (Ps 122:1).

That is why he teaches us about his Shepherd-God who brings us peace, saying:

“But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared” (Ps 130:4).

For this reason, David spoke of God’s salvation, stating:

“Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (Ps 51:12).

[I Need Caring]

“The Lord is my shepherd,” David proclaims.

And that is our proclamation as well,
not just today but every day of our lives.

The Lord is the Shepherd who cares for the sheep because they need caring.

You see, sheep are finicky and fussy.

A sheep will not lie down if it is uneasy, fearful, or restless.

That is why Jesus says,

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28).

He leads us in green pastures

and leads us beside still waters of serenity and peace.

The reality is ... sheep are determined and dumb.

They are of all God’s creatures the least able to take care of themselves.

They have no way to defend themselves. No claws to scratch or fangs to bite.

They can’t outrun their attackers.

They can’t even clean themselves.

AND

They often get themselves in predicaments that they can’t get out of.

Doesn’t that remind you of us—his sheep?

How often we try to do it our way or tell God we know better.

It is true. Many of us, follow the theology of Frank Sinatra, “I did it my way.”

Yes, we humans want to do things our own way.

Forget the easy way.

Forget the common way.

Forget the best way.

Forget God’s way.

We want to do things *our* way.

And the Bible is very clear that this is our downfall and demise.

Isaiah put it this way:

“All we like sheep have gone astray;

we have turned—every one—to his own way” (53:6).

Oh, how often we have wandered from the fold.

But the faithful Shepherd comes to the rescue.

He comes to bail us out of our own way that leads to death.

[*Jesus Came*]

That is why today you need to remember your Shepherd,
who from day one has been ready and waiting to come to your aid and rescue.

He came to the lost sheep in the Garden of Eden and promised deliverance.
He told Moses that he would send a Prophet from among his people. (Deut 18:15)

God himself would be the Shepherd, who would be faithful and true to his people.

God sent his own Son and David's heir, Jesus, to be the eternal Shepherd
who would care for all of humanity
and deliver them from the power of death and the devil.

In the Gospel of Matthew, we hear this:

***“When he [Jesus] saw the crowds, he had compassion for them,
because they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a shepherd”*** (Mt 9:36).

In John 10, Jesus taught the multitude:

***“I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”*** (v 11).

This faithful Good Shepherd did lay down his life for the sheep
—you and me—
on the splinter of Calvary's wood.

He died for the sake of the sheep.

He gave his life for you, his sheep, by lying in a cold, dark grave.

But he rose

Christ is risen! ***He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!***

He rose ...

from that dark, cold prison of death on Sunday morning
to give you, his sheep,
forgiveness of sins, salvation, and eternal life.

[*Conclusion*]

David got it right when he said, “The Lord is my shepherd.”

And so do we!

We confess and declare the same, “Jesus is my Shepherd!” Amen.

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)
