

Devotion for the Third Thursday of Easter

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

Old Testament Reading: Exodus 40:1-38 *The tabernacle and God's Glory*

New Testament Reading: John 10:1-42 *Jesus the Good Shepherd*

Devotion: The Good Shepherd

In Scripture, Jesus is both the Lamb that was slain for the sins of the sheep and the Shepherd who guides the sheep to streams of living water. He is the shepherd who became one with the sheep; clothing Himself with our flesh and sharing in our humanity, through His conception by the Holy Spirit and birth by the Blessed Virgin Mary. A good shepherd loved the sheep in his or her care, but none would have wanted to become one of the sheep. There were many good shepherds in Israel, such as Rachel and David, but I doubt that any of them would have wanted to join the sheep and be transformed into one of them, but Jesus did! Consider the words Paul writes in the letter to the Philippians, "*Who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant; being born in the likeness of men.*" That's how much Jesus loves us!

But there is more. Jesus loved the sheep so much that not only did He become one of us and live with us, but He offered Himself into death in our place, so we would become one with God through faith in Him and baptism into the divine Name; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul continues writing, "*And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*" There may have been shepherds in Israel who did protect the sheep from predators even to the point of death. However, as the Son of God, Jesus did more than die for the sheep, He rose again for our salvation. Because Jesus lay down His life and took it up again He is the shepherd who watches over us in time and leads us through death into eternity.

The bible ends with the image of the Shepherd, slain as a lamb, risen as the Son of God, leading His flock to streams of living water and giving them eternal life. St. John writes "*The Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and He will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.*" Jesus is the Good Shepherd! He leads us along righteous paths in life. He guards us with His rod. He heals us with His staff. He guides us through the darkness of the valley of the shadow of death. He brings us into His Father's house to live with Him in eternal light.

Hymn: “SAVIOR, LIKE A SHEPHERD LEAD US” (Public Domain)

**Saviour, like a shepherd lead us; much we need your tender care.
In your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use your fold prepare.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours.**

**We are yours; in love befriend us, be the guardian of our way;
Keep your flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear us children when we pray.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear us children when we pray.**

**You have promised to receive us, poor and sinful though we be;
You have mercy to relieve us, grace to cleanse and power to free.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, early let us turn to you.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, early let us turn to you.**

**Early let us seek your favour, early let us do your will.
Blessed Lord and only Saviour, with your love our spirits fill.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.**

Prayer: The Good Shepherd

Almighty God, merciful Father, since you have wakened from the sleep of death the Good Shepherd of your sheep, Jesus our Saviour, grant us your Holy Spirit that we may know the voice of our Shepherd and follow Him; that neither sin, nor death, nor prosperity, nor pride, nor anything else in all creation, may pluck us out of your hand. We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit; one God, now and forever. Amen

The Lord’s Prayer

The Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Benediction

Hebrews 13:20-21

*“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen.”*