

## Sermon Notes

[Acts 9:36-43](#)

[John 10:22-30](#)

## Fourth Sunday of Easter and Mother's Day

Good Shepherd Sunday

### Psalm 23

O God, you are my shepherd; \* I shall not be in want.

You make me lie down in green pastures \* and lead me beside still waters.

You revive my soul \* and guide me along right pathways for the sake of your Name.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I shall fear no evil; \* for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

You spread a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me; \* you have anointed my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

Surely your goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, \* and I will dwell in the house of God for ever.

*St. Helena's Psalter*

### Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; \* he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul; \*

he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; \*

for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;

thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life

*King James version*

Do you know the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm by heart? Who taught to you?



Children, in general, do not memorize the psalms, perhaps because we have not taught them the value of having words with us in the dark or when we are feeling lost. Easy access to text in the Bible and in the world in our smart phones has made us all able to easily reach for words, lyrics and even poetry. It is both a good thing and a different thing. How do we think about words like we hear in Psalm 23? Many of us, not practicing those words, do not find them on the tip of our tongue or part of the language we can recollect in twilight or in the dark without our phones... Sometimes we try to be distracted in our hard times, rather than turning our attention quietly toward holy words. In song or word, do we carry messages of love and hope in our hearts? Have you ever turned to the words from Psalms in a God moment? The image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd comes out of a biblical tradition and agrarian tradition that most of us do not experience.

I remember my children at the petting zoo at the fair, but there were no shepherd crooks; the teens sleeping with their animals during 4-H part of the fair carried no crooks and did not wear long gowns. Even so, there was a quiet wondering at the lambs that responded to the children and the children and teens who cared for their sheep. How do we call these images from scripture forward so they continue to have meaning for us? We can listen to contemporary poets who speak. We need a community to tell the stories of love and abundance, knowing that God hears us and that we can hear God in love.



The darkness encroaches and the Good Shepherd leads the sheep to safety, calling to each lamb, each of the beloved sheep.

Vincent Van Gogh, 1884

Or can the call of Love look different?

### Little Dog's Rhapsody in the Night (Percy Three)

He puts his cheek against mine  
And makes small expressive sounds.  
And when I'm awake, or awake enough

he turns upside down, his four paws  
In the air  
and his eyes dark and fervent.

Tell me you love me, he says.

Tell me again.

Could there be a sweeter arrangement? Over and over  
he gets to ask it.  
I get to tell.

*Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems*

### What I Have learned So Far

Meditation is old and honorable, so why should I  
Not sit, every morning of my life, on the hillside,  
looking into the shining world? Because, properly  
attended to, delight, as well as havoc, is sug-  
gestion. Can one be passionate about the just, the  
ideal, the sublime and the holy, and yet commit  
to no labor in its cause? I don't think so.

All summations have a beginning, all effect has a  
Story, all kindness begins with the sown seed.  
Though buds toward radiance. The gospel of  
Light is the crosswords of –indolence or action.

Be ignited, or be gone.

*Mary Oliver, New and Selected Poems*

Did we find a moment of God's embrace in our mother's Love and embrace? And in that moment did the whispers of God's call and reminders of abundance speak to our hearts?

Did God's Love lead us home to embrace our mothers and fathers with God's love like the son who was lost, and found that he was always loved and welcome?

Perhaps warm embrace of welcome will bring into our hearts that we are all members of God's family.

*Pastor Susan+*