

our Lord Jesus, the great

SHEPHERD OF THE SHEEP



**Amy Ladas, Photographer
Lois Ewald, Writer**

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CHILDREN OF THE HEAVENLY KING

By John Cennick / Ignaz J. Pleyel

**Children of the heav'nly King,
As ye journey sweetly sing;
Sing your Savior's worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.**

**We are trav'ling home to God
In the way the fathers trod;
They are happy now, and we
Soon their happiness shall see.**

**Shout, ye little flock and blest;
You on Jesus' throne shall rest;
There your seat is now prepared,
There your kingdom and reward.**

**Lift your eyes, ye sons of light,
Zion's city is in sight;
There our endless home shall be,
There our Lord we soon shall see.**

**Fear not, brethren; joyful stand
On the borders of your land;
Jesus Christ, your Father's Son,
Bids you undismayed go on.**

**Lord, obediently we go,
Gladly leaving all below;
Only Thou our Leader be,
And we still will follow Thee.**

After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. Revelations 7:9



***The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said,
"Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"***

John 1:29

***I am the good shepherd.
The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.***

John 10:11

Isaiah 53

(1-3)

*Who has believed our message
and to whom has the arm of
the LORD been revealed?
He grew up before him like a tender
shoot, and like a root out of
dry ground.
He had no beauty or majesty to attract
us to him, nothing in his
appearance that we should
desire him.
He was despised and rejected by
mankind, a man of suffering, and
familiar with pain.
Like one from whom people hide their
faces he was despised, and we
held him in low esteem.*

(4-6)

*Surely he took up our pain and bore
our suffering, yet we considered
him punished by God, stricken by
him, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our
transgressions, he was
crushed for our iniquities; the
punishment that brought us
peace was on him, and by his
wounds we are healed.
We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own
way; and the LORD has laid on
him the iniquity of us all.*

(7-9)

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he
did not open his mouth; he was
led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its
shearers is silent, so he did not
open his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was
taken away.
Yet who of his generation protested?
For he was cut off from the land of the
living; for the transgression of
my people he was punished.
He was assigned a grave with the
wicked, and with the rich in his
death, though he had done no
violence, nor was any deceit in
his mouth.*

(10-12)

*Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him
and cause him to suffer, and though
the LORD makes his life an offering
for sin, he will see his offspring and
prolong his days, and the will of
the LORD will prosper in his hand.
After he has suffered, he will see the
light of life and be satisfied; by his
knowledge my righteous
servant will justify many, and he
will bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will give him a portion
among the great, and he will divide
the spoils with the strong,
because he poured out his life unto
death, and was numbered with
the transgressors.*

Introduction

I've never been a shepherd. My family and I spent a few years living on a farm where the owner had some sheep certain times of the year. Observing them was a learning experience...happening about the same time I was learning to walk with Jesus Christ, that Great Shepherd of the sheep. Because of personal interest I've done some research...but the most I learned about sheep and shepherds aside from Scripture is from the very dear author, Philip Keller. If you have interest, get copies of his books to read that give awesome insight from one who was a shepherd. Also, you probably would love his video, Lessons From A Sheepdog, one you have likely seen if you've known me personally very long.

So this little writing is to put in words what Amy Ladas sees and feels when she takes these photographs. As you know, she also walks with The Good Shepherd, and has deep spiritual thoughts when seeing these with spiritual eyes. We are simply two of His sheep He rescued and made a part of His fold...this loving and kind Shepherd who promises never to leave us or forsake us...like you too, if you are His child...one of His sheep. THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD...OUR SHEPHERD.

I've yet to meet a person, young or old, who disliked the idea or picture of The Good Shepherd. The scene of Him carrying the lamb on His shoulders...or the one with His tender face, standing in the midst of a flock of sheep, staff in hand moves us. Everything we hear and know about our Good Shepherd is buried in our hearts from the treasures of God's Word that delights and comforts. It is a happy delight to be His sheep.

So, this book will hopefully add to all of that for us. It is intended to strengthen, comfort, encourage, help, and guide us in our weary and stressful world, as we walk with Him, sometimes inviting other sheep close by who might not even know that God provided a Shepherd for them, Jesus Christ, that Good Shepherd.

Lois Ewald, Writer

Summer, 2024

***Jesus said in John 10:27,
“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them,
and they follow me.”***

“Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.”

OUR PRAYER FOR THIS BOOK

These beautiful photos were taken over recent years in sheep pastures of New Palestine, Indiana...at different times of the years and days, always with thoughts of the sheep of the Scriptures, the words of Jesus Christ and the pictures our hearts carry of Him as our Great Shepherd. Many if not most of these photos were taken in the very early hours of a new morning... the sun is not yet gracing the land...and in the faces of the sheep, looking up from nibbling breakfast, we see their wonderment noting a person out so early, asking themselves, "What is she doing? We are usually the only ones out here so early in the new day. Shall we trust her or run? We can trust her; she's the same lady who's been here before...several times, actually!" The early light is not the bright and vivid sunshine bringing us into our new day but the early rising creatures of our Father already exploring. Yet not too early for Amy who loves the 'rising of the sun' in the beauty of God's hand for His blessing of the world He created and the joy and delight of His children.

"MY HOME IS GOD HIMSELF"; IT WAS NOT SO!

A long, long road I traveled night and day,
And sought to find within myself some way,
Aught I could do, or feel to bring me near;
Self effort failed, and I was filled with fear,
And then I found Christ was the only way,
That I must come to Him and in Him stay,
And God had told me so.

And now : "my Home is God," and sheltered there,
God meets the trials of my earthly life,
God compasses me round from storm and strife,
God takes the burden of my daily care.
O Wonderous Place! O Home divinely fair!
And I, God's little one, safe hidden there.
Lord, as I dwell in Thee and Thou in me,
So make me dead to everything but Thee:
That as I rest within my Home most fair,
My soul may evermore and only see
My God in everything and everywhere;
My Home is God.

- Author Unknown

The last few lines of this poem describe the heart of the Photographer, Amy Ladas: SEEING MY GOD IN EVERYTHING AND EVERYWHERE. He 'meets the trials of my earthly life, compasses me round from storm and strife'; as one little sheep, He watches and brings us HOME. My Home is God.



MY HOME IS GOD HIMSELF...

It is Jesus Christ, that Good Shepherd of the sheep, who brings me into God, that special fold setting us apart for life, into God, into His presence, always in His presence.

“I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to myself.” (Exodus 15:4)

“My people will be satisfied with my goodness.” (Jeremiah 31:10-14)

Jesus said to Philip, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

(John 14:9)

“I and the Father are one.” (John 10:34)

*“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: they also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and **ONE SHEPHERD.**”* (John 10:16)

Jesus Christ began the witness to the world of His Father. When He returned to Heaven, He called and assigned His followers to continue what He began, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit He sent to empower us to work with Him in His building of His Kingdom. (The other sheep)

My heart and strength fails but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever. (Psalm 73:26)

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him? (1 John 3:16-17)

We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. (Romans 15:1)



***Then we your people,
the sheep of your pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation
they will proclaim your praise.***

Psalm 79:13



Please consider our little 'bowing sheep' inside the page frames of Scriptures. We are asking our Father to give 'bowing hearts' before our Good Shepherd to all who read our Shepherd book. His loving kindness and tender mercies that underlies and defines His Sovereignty brings to all His sheep both the joy and the sad, the ease and the difficult, the pleasure and the pain in human life, but He works it all for 'good', His and ours. (L & A)

Is He wanting to save, to redeem you? Does He want to bring you into His fold? **Bow before Him.**

Is He wanting to sanctify you? **Bow before Him.**

Is He wanting to teach you new things? **Bow before Him.**

Is He wanting you to obey a call you heard from Him but are ignoring (with a heavy heart)? **Bow before Him.**

Is He wanting you to relinquish something to Him that you are trying to handle yourself? **Bow before Him.**

Is He wanting you to yield to His 'fenced in places' He has erected for His will and plan? **Bow before Him.**

Is He asking for your will to be His will in everything, even though His will seems not good? Even with tears are you resisting? **Bow before Him.**

Is our Father wanting to bless you as you want His blessing that your heart longs for? **Bow before Him.**

David, from the Scriptures, revealed his deep relationship with God as he wrote many of the Psalms we read over and over. God said David was 'a man after His own heart' and that's not hard to see when we steep ourselves in the Book of David's songs. He describes His God with words of love, worship and praise...he weeps before the Lord with his sorrows and cares...he pours out his anxieties with his expressions of personal fear...he confesses his sins with laments of emotional pain at his betrayal of God, His God, and keeps returning to God with words and songs from his heart. David was a man of melody and one of the ways he describes how he feels is as a sheep. He knew about sheep and he knew about shepherds.

As a boy, David was a shepherd boy...all his life he seemed to see himself as a shepherd...not a surprise that he sees God as the great shepherd of this world of people...who always draws sheep into His personal fold, out of a dark and dangerous world. He had a shepherd's heart even as a king. This one analogy of sheep and shepherd is so real and feeling that most followers of Christ instantly move into this position with our own view of ourselves, and we take comfort in it. Perhaps this is true for you.

'The Psalms are the songs of the soul.' So, in the collection of photos of sheep may we invite you to come along and let us sing together the melodies of our hearts as we walk with our Great Shepherd. May we follow after this Great Shepherd of the sheep travelling through our broken world, always needing His great care. May we also be always looking in His face, listening to His voice, feeling the touch of His hand, watching for His signals, moving in obedience to His leading and knowing He loves us and is taking us Home.



Psalm 95

***Come, let us sing for joy to the LORD;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.***

***For the LORD is the great God,
the great King above all gods.
In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.
The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.***

***Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.***

***Today, if only you would hear his voice,
“Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,
as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,
where your ancestors tested me;
they tried me, though they had seen what I did.
For forty years I was angry with that generation;
I said, ‘They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways.’
So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’”***



***We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to our own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.***
Isaiah 53:6

***When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them,
because they were harassed and helpless,
like sheep without a Shepherd.***
Matthew 9:36



The Scriptures say that sheep stray...that something inside them compels them to wander...that their decisions and choices are governed by personal desires and wants, and that people are like them, each person governing himself by the demands of his own wants, physically, mentally, emotionally, without reason and even common sense. There is no advance thought of the result of choices and personal consequences of action and no evaluation of timing; 'now' dictates the demands. The Scripture's last three words are 'his own way' (Isaiah 53:6) and what does this lead to for the sheep (and for the human being)? Thoughtless moves based on desires rooted in the sheep (or the person) and when looked at carefully, moves that are often destructive, some deadly. Sadder still, there is no inward power or wisdom to make a change. Without outside help, there is no help. The Creator knows this, so He sent THE GOOD SHEPHERD; He knows what happened and what to do...but will the sheep listen?

Compassion is in the heart of the Good Shepherd as He looks at the sheep, broken, wounded, lost, and helpless. He is the only One powerful enough to deal with the cause, which is sin. Sin destroys.



***But he brought his people out like a flock;
he led them like sheep through the wilderness.
He guided them safely, so they were unafraid;
but the sea engulfed their enemies.***

Psalm 78:52-53



While Jesus withdrew at times to be alone with His Father, we see Him in the Gospels moving where the crowds of people were gathered...scriptures show us He followed the crowds or they followed Him. God knows about the wildernesses of life...still with us today.

Without a companion, without One who loved them, without One who listened to their cries, who would embrace them when they weep? Jesus saw them. He not only saw the large numbers, but He also saw the weeping widow, the blind begging by the roadside, the one who climbed the tree so he could see Jesus passing by. He felt the touch of the woman who maneuvered closer to Him because she had spent everything she had for doctors and medicines. Jesus knew the hurts and longings they carried in their hearts. He loved them, and He loves people still. But people still follow the crowd, going nowhere, still in pain and suffering. His is the heart of compassion. He knows how helpless we feel, how afraid, like sheep not knowing what to do, where to turn for help. Jesus sees you. He sees me. While working the crowd He knows the individual by name...listen for yours if you think you are just part of the crowd, one of the ninety-nine still lost.



***The gatekeeper opens the gate for him and the sheep listen to his voice.
He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.***

John 10:3

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

***Worship the Lord with gladness;
come before him with joyful songs.***

Know that the Lord is God.

***It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, the sheep of his pasture.***

***Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise;
give thanks to him and praise his name.***

***For the Lord is good and his love endures forever;
his faithfulness continues through all generations.***

Psalm 100



We are the sheep of His pasture! What does this mean?

HE IS GOD! He created us. He opened the gates to us and invited us to enter...we became His sheep, with His special care and provision and protection. We are with Him and He gives us songs to sing as we stand in His courts to offer praise. We are so blessed that our soul shouts for joy...He blesses the whole Earth; it was after we entered His gates we saw that and now our hearts are filled with thanks and we praise Him. We have personally come to experience His goodness; we have personally felt His love and have come to see that His love is divine love...far different than human love and it will be stronger than anything in this present world...even stronger than death. We have seen His hand of mercy; faithfulness to generation after generation around us...we are His sheep, Earth's receivers of the Shepherd heart of Christ Jesus.

So, of course we worship the Lord with gladness and come before Him with joyful songs. Who could do anything else!



***Now may the God of peace,
who through the blood of the eternal covenant
brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus,
that great shepherd of the sheep,
equip you with everything good for doing his will,
and may he work in us what is pleasing to him,
through Jesus Christ,
to whom be glory forever and ever.
Amen.***

Hebrews 13:20-21



It is comforting that Jesus included information in the Bible about failures in the behavior of His disciples, the ones who followed Him, professing love for Him, the ones with whom He spent most of His time, shared the most intimate of His teaching and insights, those He had with Him to watch His miracles, etc. They were close friends.

The Bible tells the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Peter was a braggart, declaring himself to be more spiritual than all the rest... 'even if they all fail You, I will follow You even to my death'. Of course the others were angry with him and said they would follow Jesus to death also. We are told of Peter's broken heart over his failure; he wept bitterly.

Thomas was not sure Jesus was truthful...He did not trust Him. He was personally invited to place his hands on the wounds...the Bible does not say he did this. Sorrow!

All the disciples forsook Him because of fear. None of them listened or believed what He told them about His death on the Cross. They had their own plans.

But these were the sheep Jesus chose and called to follow Him. Jesus still loved them...nothing had changed in His heart, not before or after. Jesus loves His sheep.

SAME FOR US...THE SAME FOR US



***My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them and they follow me.
I give them eternal life,
and they shall never perish;
no one will snatch them out of my hand.***

John 10:27-28



Think about this! Life with the Shepherd is ideal... an awesome picture of life in Christ.

- 1. We're invited into the fold...He is our hiding place.**
- 2. He opens the door...He is the door.**
- 3. He goes in and out with us...He is the Way.**
- 4. When we need to know...He is the Truth.**
- 5. He said we would know His voice...deep, personal.**
- 6. He feeds us perfect food...He is the Bread of Life.**
- 7. He takes us to water-places...He is the water of life.**
- 8. He gives us rest in green pastures...He is our Rest.**
- 9. He walks us through dark valleys...He is Light.**
- 10. When the enemy comes, He fights...He is our deliverer.**
- 11. When we fear...He holds our hand.**
- 12. When we need assistance...He provides.**
- 13. When we hurt...He carries us.**
- 14. When we get lost...He comes to find us.**
- 15. When we need new life...He is LIFE.**
- 16. When it's time to come Home...He is our HOME.**

No wonder, we call Him The Good Shepherd.



***Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him;
behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.***

***He will tend his flock like a shepherd,
he will gather the lambs in his arms;
he will carry them in his bosom
and gently lead those that are with young.***

Isaiah 40:10-11

***Jesus said, "suffer the little children to come unto me,
and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven".***

Matthew 19:14



This Good Shepherd keeps His eye on the little ones, on the young in the flock...notice the old ones are kept close by because they have work to do that the Shepherd oversees...but first He gathers the lambs in His arms. Don't you love it in the Gospels when others felt the little ones were a bother, and some of the disciples asked that they be moved along by the Mothers, implying that Jesus was far too busy to spend time with the young...but Jesus rebuked them with a sound tone. He was happy to have them, so Mothers from all around brought their young ones to Jesus. You and I can do that...we are encouraged to bring the lambs. And you who are pregnant...what does this say to you? 'He will gently lead those that are with young.' None too young and none too old...the old are standing by, on guard with the Shepherd who loves all the sheep, those in the fold, those who have fallen in the ditches, those who are all the way down and can't get up. Stand by the Door of the sheep with welcome arms and tears...like His, the Good Shepherd...

Father, help me, one of the old ones, to find my place in Your very special gathering. Amen



***For this is what the Sovereign Lord says:
“I myself will search for my sheep and look after them.
As a Shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them,
so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where
they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness...
I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down,
declares the Sovereign Lord.
I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.
I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak,
but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.
I will shepherd the flock with justice.”***

Taken from Ezekiel 34



O Good Shepherd, this situation has overpowered me and my strength is gone. Weakness has taken over. I can't seem to think right, hope right, nor can I emotionally pull myself together. My next move is impossible and physical weakness has taken over. O Shepherd, not only show me the way to go, but give me strength to take it. Your strength is what I need...the written stories of Your strength cause me to hope, because of Your marvelous works; even the judgments of Your mouth came to pass; none thwarts Your plans, and Your wonders characterize Your power. Your face I seek this day as I think about Your omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence to do the marvelous works You have done...a long list, Lord; wonderful wonders when I move toward You, Lord. Hear my cry, I pray. Amen

***Sing to him, sing psalms to him;
Talk of all his wondrous works!
Glory in his holy name;
Let the hearts of those rejoice who seek the Lord!
Seek the Lord and his strength;
Seek his face evermore!
Remember his marvelous works which he has done,
his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth.***
Taken from Psalm 105



***Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
“Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”
And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”
Isaiah 6:8***



The Bible says there are four main calls from the Shepherd after which there is a lifetime of calls. We listen!

The first is “Come to Me...” (for salvation)

The second is “Come and abide...” (for sanctification)

The third is “Come and go...” (to live as a servant)

The fourth is “Come Home...” (to be where He is)

WHO? Me, (just a sheep).

WHAT? Come, follow Me, & go.

WHERE? Into all the world.

WHEN? Now until He comes again.

HOW? Empowered by His Holy Spirit.

WHY?

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

As the Father has sent me, so send I you. John 20:21



***My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.
He will not allow your foot to be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; he shall preserve your soul.
The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in
from this time forth, and even forevermore.***

Psalm 121:2-8

He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed.

Psalm 112:7



When Bad News Comes:

'There's no other friend like Jesus...

He reaches out and takes our hand.

Jesus walks along our journey, His love is faithful to the end.

There's no other friend like Jesus...I can speak for Him as true.

His presence and His power, is in every trying hour...

Jesus loves and cares for you.'

And the good news is:

Jesus loves me, this I know...for the Bible tells me so.

Little ones to Him belong...they are weak but He is strong.

Yes, Jesus loves me! Yes Jesus loves me!

Yes Jesus loves me! The Bible tells me so!

Good Shepherd, the bad news is weakening, frightening, and will change many things in my life. If it is true, Lord, if it is true, I feel very shaken and ask myself the human question, "What shall I do?" Lord, give me that trust in You and Your promises that become my foundation of hope, as I wait to see Your hand of goodness and power. I wait upon You, O Lord. Remind me that You created Heaven and Earth...that You are my keeper and are not sleeping. You knew about this 'bad news' before it came to me...You are the One who preserves your child from evil...the One who watches over the activity in my life. Oh, Shepherd of peace; if it is true, fill me with Your peace as You preserve. I thank You, Amen.



***Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;
for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.***

***Today if only you would hear his voice,
“Do not harden your hearts as you did at Meribah,
as you did that day at Massah in the wilderness,
where your ancestors tested me; they tried me,
though they had seen what I did.***

***For forty years I was angry with that generation;
I said, “They are a people whose hearts go astray,
and they have not known my ways.’***

***So I declared on oath in my anger,
‘They shall never enter my rest.’***

Taken from Psalm 95



We do not all look alike, we do not walk alike, we are different in many ways, but we have one thing in common. We follow Jesus because we have heard His voice...just like He said we would. There is no voice like His...everything is right about it...from our ears to our hearts...then we get ON THE MOVE. He says, “follow me” and we don’t mess around. He speaks and we follow that voice. His voice awakens and His presence gives enablement...that’s the wonderful part about our following Jesus. How we love His voice. If my heart says yes, my feet begin to march! Determined and faithful, while feeling inadequate...but that’s alright. It is in His strength we accomplish His will...so it does not matter how we feel, just that we obey Him. He is saying that He trusts us when He says, “and they follow Me”...let it ever be true, Lord, now and for ever, You know Your sheep...and we follow You. See us, Lord Jesus? We are following hard after You, sometimes stumbling and out of breath...but what privilege is ours.



***For thus says the Lord God:
Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep
and will seek them out.
As a shepherd seeks out his flock
when he is among his sheep that have been scattered,
so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them
from all places where they
have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness...
I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep,
and I myself will make them lie down,
declares the Lord God...
Taken from Ezekiel 34***



What a picture of rest and contentment, peace and fellowship. Interesting that we are gathered in, (as He promised)...safe and secure even in the midst of shades of darkness. His fences are for purpose...He knows what He is doing and makes no mistakes in our lives. Our Good Shepherd sometimes stops the walks, stops the activity and sets us aside. It is easy to question what He is doing since we know there's lots of work to be done and He has used us before in His work force...but it seems there is a time to trust...to simply trust and wait for the Good Shepherd who someday will come to the gate and call us by name with His command we love, "Follow me." And there we are, back in service with Him...but for now, His command is to rest in Him, and wait for the sound of His voice...that voice we learn to know well and love. The voice of our Shepherd is like no other voice for with His calling, comes His new equipping. "They that wait upon the Lord will not be put to shame."



***I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.
The hired hand is not the Shepherd and does not own the sheep.
So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away.
Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.
The man runs away because he is a hired hand
and cares nothing for the sheep.
I am the good Shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.
Just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—
and I lay down my life for the sheep.***

John 10:11-15

***He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.***

Isaiah 53:7



Shepherd, I cry out to you this day. Fear wants to take over in my heart because of the haze in my world that may soon engulf me. Because I can't see you, I only see the possibility of harmful things; because these are present, I am afraid. The Scripture says you are my refuge and strength, a present help in trouble and I should not fear. The Scripture says that God is in the midst, so I will not be moved... things are moving, but my security rests in You being in the midst of my life. Give me that sense of Your presence and the gift of faith in You, O Shepherd. Let me see You, Lord, with spiritual eyes and feel the security of Your loving kindness. Amen



***What do you think?
If a man has a hundred sheep,
and one of them has gone astray,
does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains
and go in search of the one that went astray?
Matthew 18:12***



Consolation in this message from Jesus: He looks for the strays and I have been there. He sought and found me, placed His arms around me and brought me Home. He looks for the strays I bring to Him in prayer and He will find them too.

Look at this face...I suspect the bleating gave the location. He left the 99 others...so much wiser and not causing any trouble...appreciative of His goodness and mercy and content to stay near the Shepherd and walk with Him...but then here's the stray. Most strays do not realize how far away they have moved from the Shepherd...but one day it comes to them that they don't know how to get home, and life is exhausting, can't go another step, and alone...alone and afraid and hungry and thirsty and the dark night is coming...what can I do? Bleat, only bleat...maybe the Shepherd will hear me. Dare I hope? Maybe He will carry me Home. It will be for mercy I cry...mercy alone.

No question...Jesus is on the search. He has asked some other sheep to search with Him, to bring Home the strays, some are wounded and quite dirty. May I go with You, Lord, to search for others of Your lost sheep?



***Cast your cares on the Lord and
he will sustain you;
he will never let the righteous be shaken.***

Psalm 55:22



Shepherd, I'm clinging to Your direction, reading this with care because the burden of today is heavy. I have found everyday life to hold many burdens because our world is a fallen world, with difficulties caused by fallen people. It is disappointing with broken systems and promises. And at times my own personal handling of life's matters creates its own problems. While there are many joys and much happiness, there are also many heavy burdens. If I obey Your instruction in this Scripture, I am told to cast burdens and cares on You. The promise is that You will carry these and not myself...in fact the Scripture says You will sustain me even after I cast the burden on You. The promise says You will never permit the righteous to be moved...moved away from You. It is all Your grace, Your goodness, Your love to bless and walk with the one who wants to walk with You. Help me not only to understand this, to see it clearly, but to do it. Amen



When all seems against me, Psalm 18.
The Good Shepherd comforts me.



**And out of this awesome Psalm today, I say to You, O Shepherd,
*(35) You have also given me the shield of Your salvation; Your right hand has held me up. Your gentleness has made me great. You enlarged my path under me, so my feet did not slip.***

Good Shepherd, the praises spoken in this Psalm come to You from my heart today. You, in Your power and strength moved into my personal world and I am delivered because of Your loving kindness and mercy extended me in the salvation You surround me with as a shield. I am Your sheep, under Your protection and it is Your hand that held me up, kept me from falling, held me close to You as the battle raged for my heart and soul. You did enlarge my path and it included Your Presence as the Rock of my salvation, the light that caused me to see You. O Shepherd of love, thank You for these words that speak my heart to You, words beyond my ability to speak. Amen



***Then we your people,
the sheep of your pasture,
will praise you forever;
from generation to generation
they will proclaim your praise.***

Psalm 79:13



I hear Your call, Shepherd, and my heart and mind are also bowing before You...Your call was personal and I said, "I will". I surrender all to You and will take up my cross and where You lead me, I will follow." I bow at Your feet, Good Shepherd. It is time for the anointing that You alone can do. So, I moved away from the group because You called me...it's just You and Your waiting sheep, me. Others are watching to see what You have in mind...they all know my record, not always good, not always victorious, not always brave, not always righteous...but You have repeated Your Word to me more than once, "even if you are faithless, I will be faithful." So, here I am, overflowing with tears because You are with me, filling me with Your Spirit, bleating as sheep bleat; do with me what You choose...



***See, the Sovereign Lord comes with power,
and he rules with a mighty act.
See, his reward is with him,
and his recompense accompanies him.
He tends his flock like a shepherd;
he gathers the lambs in his arms
and carries them close to his heart;
he gently leads those that have young.***

Isaiah 40:10-11



With that water and that rest, He, My Shepherd, refreshes my soul. With that refreshed soul, He guides me into the pathways of His personal choice for me...it is all done for the sake of His name. I am known as the sheep of this particular Shepherd. I bear His Name...so the paths taken will honor Him, will actually put me in the right place to do the 'good deeds' He puts in my heart and mind. My Shepherd causes me to see with His eyes and feel with His heart and think with His mind. That's how He guides me along the right path...right meaning His plan, His will. Could a sheep ask for anything more than this? The Shepherd is tall and filled with power and understanding while I walk close to the ground in these pathways. I see nothing; He sees everything. His judgment is whole and clear...mine is barely above the brown earth. He talks to me along the way, gives me His Word, and it is enough.



***Do not be afraid, little flock, for your
Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.***

Luke 12:32



Look at the size of my enemy, Good Shepherd. Much larger than myself, standing right in my pathway...can't get around it, over it, or under it...blocking the way to my shelter where there is peace and safety. I feel cornered and isolated. But what are You whispering in my ear, across these fields? "Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You."

Yes, I will trust in You. I look around and what am I seeing, Good Shepherd? Green pastures all around me. You prepared a table before me...a table spread in the presence of my enemies. So I eat at Your table. I feed on Your Word. The enemy is nowhere to be seen... You are always with me.



***“You hem me in, behind and before;
and you have laid your hand upon me.”***

Psalm 139:5



Be sure to notice He fences in the pasture and I am safe. While the sheep don't know it, the Shepherd knows that on the other side of this fence is a creek with a steep incline. He lovingly blocks the way. He chooses the right places. He makes me lie down because He knows rest is needed. I am inclined to ignore this and often push into exhaustion. Sometimes I move into pastures He has not assigned...they looked green and healthy to me. My Shepherd lets me learn things I need to know about this and about myself. His staffs are ever near, shaped to fit each sheep, and each circumstance. The pastures are green and nourishing for my soul that He chooses... it is the will of the Shepherd or my will, the will of the sheep that often brings contention in our relationship. Sheep follow sheep... that is known...but how my Shepherd leads me is not always the same that He chooses for others. It is often after these experiences that He invites me to drink. Jesus says, "Come to the water, stand by My side" and I go...I've had this water many times in my life...cool, refreshing, life giving...then He makes me lie down in green pastures because He loves me!

After all, He is THE GOOD SHEPHERD.



***I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my sheep know me
just as the Father knows me and I know the Father
and I lay down my life for the sheep.***

John 10:14-15



If the 23rd Psalm began with, 'The Lord is OUR Shepherd', we would still regard it as one of the great Psalms, a special song to bury in our heart...but there's just something awesome about, 'The Lord is MY Shepherd'...personal, connecting, stabilizing, comforting, warm, embracing, strengthening, loving, encouraging and more. It is the fact that gives truth and foundation to all the other things written about our position with the Shepherd. Because He is MY Shepherd, everything in the rest of this Psalm is true for me. Think about it! What else could be said with Jesus Christ as our Shepherd?

I LACK NOTHING!



***I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.
I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak,
but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.
I will shepherd the flock with justice.***

Ezekiel 34:16



Perfect, right? Green pastures for feeding, others for fellowship, God's handiworks above always to consider and know He is near; fenced in from danger, shade when the sunshine is hot...but we all know that life is not always like this. Sometimes we feel alone, sometimes we do not see God's hand providing, sometimes we feel starved for the necessities of life, sometimes no shade or hiding place, we feel insecure and once in a while like victims...this is life in our fallen world. We are concerned that we will outlive the savings account, or already have none left...people around us are battling terminal illnesses as we wait for a coming diagnosis...the family structure is breaking down...our country no longer breathes in the atmosphere of safety.

We huddle with others, we buy into human securities, we think of 'safety in numbers'...we stay close to exits, and make sure we have some hiding places...that is the human way of preparedness. Sometimes we find ourselves reminded that we are like sheep, nervously aware, very vulnerable, and feeling hopeless and helpless.

But because He loves us, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, He reminds us of His promises...the Book is full of hundreds of them, from God our Shepherd, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. And there are times when His voice says something deep within our spiritual ears, something awesome and we know it is Him. Yes, that is our Shepherd, that Great Shepherd of the sheep of His pasture.



Be still and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

***I am the Gate; whoever enters through me will be saved.
They will come in and go out, and find pasture.***

John 10:9



The goodness of the Good Shepherd cannot be measured. There is no measurable quantity of a heart that is good. It holds the love and mercy needed for a day, needed for a lifetime. No life living in a fallen, broken world system can have personal peace apart from Jesus Christ. The Good Shepherd displays goodness from the start, from the first concern for the welfare of the sheep that is lost and will be found and brought Home...Home to tend the wounds and heal the diseases, Home to be loved and nurtured, to be protected and sheltered from further harm...Home to begin that dwelling in the house of the Lord forever...a forever Home with the forever Good Shepherd.



***For this is what the Sovereign Lord says,
“As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them,
so will I look after my sheep.
I will rescue them from all the places
when they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.”
Ezekiel 34:11-12***



The darkest of valleys has been my experience more than once, Good Shepherd; the darkness hides Your face and when I don't see Your face, it is as though You are gone and with tears I say aloud, "Where are You?" Aloneness and darkness. No sound but my own inward voice speaking words of anxiety and fear. The clouds change but often darker than before and I look around and see no other sheep. You seem not to be present and all other sheep have left the valley. But, Good Shepherd, You promised never to leave me or forsake me and You do not make false promises. I cannot see You, but I hear Your voice in the depths of my being. I am reminded of those dark places in the past when I felt alone but realized that even if I cannot see You, You are seeing me and so You are with me and Your Spirit is comforting me. Your rod touches my shoulder and just enough; your staff at times lights up with a holy light so I can see the path even when darkness falls. I am comforted by You, Good Shepherd. And life is not all valleys, the sun will shine again. I fear no evil, for You are with me.



***“Yes, 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.”***

Psalm 23:4



Young people think about death when someone close dies...and that thought moves along with other things that have happened... into the distant past.

As we move along in life and begin to experience the loss of others, watching families and friends, noting that those our own age die sometimes, it becomes a more personal issue. We read the statistic: **ONE OUT OF ONE DIES.**

At some point in life, we realize that there are more years behind us than are left to live on earth, and we begin to think about the end of our life, how and when, etc.

For some people these are hard thoughts and are pushed away; death has been an enemy from its beginning. Our deep longing is to live forever...God has put Eternity in the heart. As we grow older, then old, the truth of it walks with us and we wonder about it with questions. We have many questions, actually, and none easy. Our Creator knows this and in His Word He tells us things that will help us. Peace is ours if we move ourselves into the sheep world. In the 23rd Psalm, He talks about it in simple and understandable words because He loves us, His sheep.

'He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Yes, 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.'

He calls death a shadow...a dark experience, but His plan is to be with us. As we found in life, in experiences that were frightening, God was with us. He walked with us, our Good Shepherd, toward His destination, His ending.

So...He will be in that shadow with us, as the Light of the morning, the new day, the new life.

Nothing to fear, when the Shepherd is near; and has He not said to us that He will never leave us nor forsake us?

Yes, He is our Good Shepherd in life and in death.



**My shepherd will supply my need,
Jehovah is his name;
In pastures fresh he makes me feed,
Beside the living stream.**

**He brings my wandering spirit back
When I forsake his ways;
And leads me for his mercy's sake
In paths of truth and grace.**

**When I walk through the shades of death,
Thy presence is my stay;
A word of thy supporting breath
Drives all my fears away.**

**Thy hand, in sight of all my foes,
Doth still my table spread;
My cup with blessings overflows,
Thine oil anoints my head.**

**The sure provisions of my God
Attend me all my days;
O may thy house be mine abode,
And all my work be praise!**

**There would I find a settled rest,
While others go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest,
But like a child at home.**



**The living Lord my shepherd is;
What can I want while I am his?
In greenest fields my soul he feeds,
My steps by stillest waters leads.**

**He guides me in his holy way,
He brings me back whene'er I stray;
The vale of death, without a fear,
I walk for he is kind and near.**

**Yes thou art with me, night and day,
Thy rod my guide, thy staff my stay
By thee my table still is spread;
Thy oil of joy anoints my head.**

**Where'er I rest, where're I go,
I meet thy mercies here below;
When to thy presence shall I soar
To see and praise thee evermore.**



**Great Shepherd of thy people, hear;
Thy presence now display;
As thou hast given a place for prayer,
So give us hearts to pray.**

**The hearing ear, the watchful eye,
The contrite heart, bestow;
And shine upon us from on high,
To make our graces grow.**

**May we in faith receive thy word.
In faith address our prayers;
And in the presence of the Lord
Unbosom all our cares.**

**And may the gospel's joyful sound,
Enforced by grace divine;
Awaken many sinners round,
And bend their wills to thine.**



Psalm 23

**God, my shepherd!
I don't need a thing.
You have bedded me down
in lush meadows,
You find me quiet pools to drink from.
True to your word,
You let me catch my breath
*and send me in the right direction.***

***Even when the way goes through
Death Valley,
I'm not afraid
when You walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook
makes me feel secure.***

***You serve me a six-course dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.***

***Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God
for the rest of my life.***

(Message Bible)

Psalm 23

(A Psalm of David)

The Lord is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack.

He makes me lie down in [fresh, tender] green pastures; He leads me beside the still and restful waters.

He refreshes and restores my life (my self); He leads me in the paths of righteousness [uprightness and right standing with Him—not for my earning it, but] for His name’s sake.

Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my [brimming] cup runs over.

Surely or only goodness, mercy, and unfailing love shall follow me all the days of my life, and through the length of my days the house of the Lord [and His presence] shall be my dwelling place. (AMPC)

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