

Bible Study for the week of Sunday, 3rd May

This week we are looking at both the Psalm and the Gospel.

The image of the shepherd is an ancient one which emerged from largely rural communities. Does it have any meaning for you today? What connections and differences of focus strike you as you read these 2 passages together?

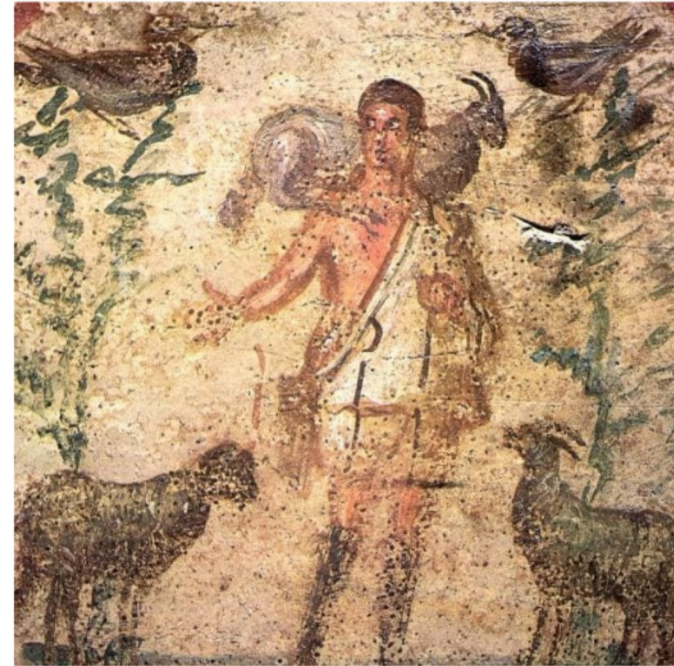
There are also links so that you can listen to two versions of the psalm. Does anything fresh occur to you?

Please share with our group anything that confuses, comforts or challenges you, explaining why, if you wish. Feel free to raise your own questions.

Please also share any prayers, pieces of music or art which you consider relevant.

Some tips for reading a bible passage:

- ❖ *Read the scripture passage aloud slowly, letting yourself hear the words.*
- ❖ *Pause and see if some word or phrase stood out or something touched your heart. If so, savour the insight, feeling, or understanding.*
- ❖ *Go back and read the passage again, seeing if a fuller meaning emerges. Pause again and note what happened. If you want to talk with God in response to this, do so.*
- ❖ *Seek to listen to what God may be saying to you or simply rest in God's presence.*



Early Christian image of the good shepherd from the Roman catacombs

Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;

³ he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
my whole life long.

John 10:1-10

10 "Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

A modern version of Psalm 23 by Christopher Walker:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIC1Qb8voQg>

Because the Lord is my shepherd,
I have everything I need.
He lets me rest in the meadow
And leads me to be quiet streams.
He restores my soul
And he leads me in the paths that are right:

*Lord, You are my shepherd, You are my friend.
I want to follow always, Just to follow my friend.*

And when the road leads to darkness,
I shall walk there unafraid.
Even when death is close I have courage,
For your help is there.
You are close beside me with comfort,
You are guiding my way:

In love you make me a banquet
For my enemies to see.
You make me welcome,
Pouring down honour from your Mighty hand;
And this Joy fills me with gladness,
It is too much to bear:

George Herbert's version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4INBgEvqHg>

The God of love my shepherd is,
and he that doth me feed;
while he is mine and I am his,
what can I want or need?

He leads me to the tender grass,
where I both feed and rest;
then to the streams that gently pass:
in both I have the best.

Or if I stray, he doth convert,
and bring my mind in frame,
and all this not for my desert,
but for his holy name.

Yea, in death's shady black abode
well may I walk, not fear;
for thou art with me, and thy rod
to guide, thy staff to bear.

Surely thy sweet and wondrous love
shall measure all my days;
and, as it never shall remove,
so neither shall my praise.