



Wednesday Prayer

4th Sunday of Easter – Good Shepherds

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 right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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 my whole life long.

Psalm 23

The fourth Sunday of Easter is known as Good Shepherd Sunday and the gospel reading is one of the passages in John's gospel in which Jesus describes himself as a shepherd caring for sheep. In biblical times, the shepherd made sure the sheep were fed and groomed, remained with the rest of the flock, were protected at night, and kept safe at all times. The shepherd carried a staff that was used as a walking stick, and for maneuvering and directing the sheep. The shepherd also carried a rod that could be used as a weapon to protect the sheep from predators.

As communities of faith, working alongside parents and caretakers, we are shepherds for the children in our midst. We bear the responsibility for giving our children guidance and direction, and for keeping them safe from harm. Human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of children are not topics that most people want to think about, let alone work to prevent. But I really love the idea of being a shepherd, of tending to children, giving them guidance and equipping them to make healthy decisions, putting safe church policies in place to create the best possible ministry environment, and surrounding them with trusted adults who are all on the same team.

As Christians, we join God in the work of caring for creation and humanity, and the description of God the shepherd in Psalm 23 provides lovely imagery for the ways in which we can join in this work of shepherding our children and youth. We can help make sure that daily needs are met, that comfort is given, that protection is provided, and that we enter into one another's joy and sorrow. Our love joins that of God, sustaining and encouraging, providing a place of rest and welcome, and reminding all of God's children that there is a place at the table, and a life sustained by the promises of God.

Good Shepherd, we give you thanks for the promise of your love and care. We ask for your wisdom and guidance as we seek to join you in caring for the most vulnerable among us, our children and youth. Give us courage and strength as we face hard things, and fill us with joy as we remember the hope of resurrection and new life. Amen.

Written by Deacon Erica Larson, Director of Faith Formation, Lake Nokomis Lutheran Church.