



Wednesday Prayer

20th Sunday after Pentecost – Good Shepherd, Lead us through

**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

Right now, millions of people in Israel and the Palestinian territories are walking through an unimaginably dark valley. We fervently pray for a glimmer of light in the shadows of evil and war. We remember the children and weep for the trauma they are experiencing.

In the context of such chaos and confusion, how do these familiar words speak to us? Can they bring guidance and hope? Where is this shepherd who leads us to green pastures and still waters and restores our souls?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes himself as the **good** shepherd, in contrast to the hired hand or the “ordinary” shepherd. In my congregation, we recently celebrated the lives of Roxy and Dorothy, two saints who were **good** shepherds. Through dedication and sacrifice, they looked after children and families who were refugees, immigrants, homeless and at risk. They expressed their faith through action, giving deeply of themselves to make others’ lives better and to nurture resilience in the next generation.

The writer of Philippians says, “Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.”

May we look to the good shepherds to learn and receive and hear and see what we can do to care for the lambs, so together we can create a more peaceful world.

Good shepherd, lead us through the dark valleys. Bring us safely to your sheepfold and feed us at your table so we are strengthened to do what you have taught us. Amen.

Written by Gay Gonnerman, Cherish All Children advisory committee member; member of Lutheran Church of Christ the Redeemer, Minneapolis; and development officer at The Food Group, a Minnesota non-profit focused on hunger and food justice.