

The Reality of the Resurrection... Is Ours Now!

Our sermon for this third Sunday of the Resurrection Season is taken from our Psalm. Hear again the Word of the Lord:

*You prepare before my face (a) table in (the) presence of my enemies;
You anoint with oil my head,
my cup overflows.¹*

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

Once again, the Church calendar has brought us to “Good Shepherd Sunday.” It is one week in the Church year wherein the Lord’s providing, securing, restoring, leading, comforting, feeding, anointing, calling, and nurturing His people are summed up in shepherding and dining imagery. For those who have not lived in pastoral settings, some of this day’s texts are made clear only through teaching and what we have learned from other’s records and experiences. For others, the day’s teaching is summed up in pictures or paintings of a long-haired, bearded, kindly looking guy wearing a white robe while casually strolling upon green grass in rolling hills. In some of those depictions, He is in the midst of pure, white, clean sheep, in others, He has a lamb about His shoulders as He leads others.

Those can be helpful images, which is why some of them have been hung in this building over the years. Rightly understood, they depict the reality of this day’s Psalm. That is to say, as long a one views the prints of the Good Shepherd as being fulfilled in Christ, then one is beholding the truths of this day’s texts rightly. The

¹ Psalm 23:5.

pictures of the Good Shepherd and His pure flock illumine the spiritual realities of those who continue to hear the Voice of Jesus, who follow Him, and who live in their new natures daily. That is to say, the imagery of the day is one of what God's people following God appear to be after our old natures have been drowned, the world and its evil driven back, and the satanic wolf is bound and hindered from attacking God's people. That means that the Good Shepherd Sunday texts really count on God to do all that is necessary so that the words of today's Psalm might be heard rightly by us, and be beheld to be possible as we remain following the Voice of God.

That means that this day is all about hearing God speak, of following Him, of receiving His care, of trusting in Him to protect us, and of partaking of His good gifts. In a world free from sin, in lives without sin, the images of this day concerning God and His care for people would be reality experienced all the time. Yet, in a creation ruined by Adam's Fall; in God's people who are tempted to and fall into sin; in a world run over by a bound devil, the positive and comforting wonders of Good Shepherd Sunday are beset by troubles, wanderings, fear, discomfort, hunger for bad, distrust in God's Word, and concerns about whether God is present and if we may actually be in His Faith and favor. Let us turn to the Psalm and consider those contrasts. The first line declares a *Psalm to David*:

The Psalm is attributed to have been written by King David, who likely composed it some 3,000 years ago. It seems to be that David penned the words we

know as the 23rd Psalm while, or shortly after, his son, Absalom had been rebellious! Those who have had child acting out badly in the home can understand some of the emotions and thoughts that were going through the King's mind as he dealt with a bad son.

That is not to say that any of you have faced the evil David suffered on account of the will and desire of Absalom. He killed his brother, acting as judge, jury and executioner. After the murder, Absalom fled to a foreign land, and stayed there for three years, while his father, David longed to see him. Then, when this sinning son returned home, he conspired to overthrow his father's rule. He even had himself declared king while David lived. Then, to add mortal insult to personal injury, Absalom plotted his father's death.

Humanly speaking, then, the words of today's Psalm were composed from a time of personal pain, and the threat of death. Yet, in those experiences there was hope. Even in the midst of pain, even the pain of death, a faithful person, represented by King David and his life realities, can look to God in Hope.

That is one reason why the texts of today's readings are often discovered in funeral and memorial services. And, before those days, this day's Psalm is spoken with, or over those who are nearing death. For, in the Word of the Good Shepherd, there is comfort for those who are facing life's last enemy - death. The comfort is there because Christ is all over, in, through, and out of this Psalm. Our Psalm continues:

*YHWH is my Shepherd,
I will not want.²*

Trust, belief based on the experience of what the Shepherd has done in the past. Jesus as Good Shepherd from the Gospel...

The Psalm continues:

*He will cause to make me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me upon still waters.³*

God is the cause and effect of any true peace His people experience in this fallen life...

Our Psalm declares:

*He restores my soul,
He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.⁴*

That God does through His Word. When the faithful, when you, hear the Voice of the Good Shepherd calling out His Good News, your new nature rises up and follows Him.

The Psalm you know so well moves into a greater confession of God's shepherding care.

² *Psalm 23:1.*

³ *Psalm 23:2.*

⁴ *Psalm 23:3.*

*For even as I walk in shadow of deep darkness,
I will not fear evil.*

Again the Psalm moves the faithful hearer to Christ in its text. Jesus is behold as the One who truly faced death's darkness without help from the Father. In our sins, in your sins, Jesus cried out... and the Father was silent. The Light of Life went down into the darkness of death... and was not extinguished....

This is the confession of the faithful:

*For You are with me,
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.⁵*

There we have the Good Shepherd leading with His rod – the Law, and His staff – the Gospel...

Then, having declared your hope in God's leading, you are moved to confess His provisions for you. In words of mealtime, the faithful can hear of that the ultimate fulfillment of these words. :

You prepare before my face (a) table in (the) presence of my enemies;

Tables like this have been set up around the world in the presence of your enemies – sin, death, and the devil. The world presses in ... the devil tempts ... your own flesh desires The Lord's Table stands as a visible and powerful witness to God care for you in this life. From that the Psalm leads you back to Christ, Who is both the

⁵ *Psalm 23:4.*

host at the Table and the Feast upon it:

*You anoint with my head oil,
my cup overflows.⁶*

There are more sacramental references. We hear of Baptism in the anointing – one reason why baptismal candidates for centuries have been anointed with olive oil, and the sick then also....

The conclusion of the faithful confession of those who may be troubled by anything in this world, in themselves, or from the devil, declares the hope of the Faith:

*Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all (the) days of my life;
and I will dwell in (the) house of YHWH forever.⁷*

God's Word of leading stands firm. You Christians may confess, even out of your darkest hours, the truth that God is caring for you. You believe that as you follow Him, He will give you that which you truly need for this life, that which is necessary to bear you into blessed eternal life....

Christ is risen!

The peace which passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus

Resurrection III (LSB One-Year Series)

Psalm 23; Ezekiel 34:11-16; I Peter 2:21-25; John 10:11-16

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⁶ Psalm 23:5.

⁷ Psalm 23:6.

Soli Deo Gloria

Translation, Second Draft

Psalm to David.

*YHWH is my Shepherd,
not I will want.⁸*

*In green pastures He will cause to make me lie down;
upon waters still He leads me.⁹*

*My soul He restores,
He leads me in paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.¹⁰*

*For even as I walk in shadow of deep darkness,
not I will fear evil.*

*For You are with me,
Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.¹¹*

*You prepare to my face (a) table in (the) presence of my enemies;
You anoint with oil my head,
my cup overflows.¹²*

*Surely good and loving-kindness will follow me all (the) days of my life;
and I will dwell in (the) house of YHWH to my eternal days.¹³*

⁸ *Psalm 23:1.*

⁹ *Psalm 23:2.*

¹⁰ *Psalm 23:3.*

¹¹ *Psalm 23:4.*

¹² *Psalm 23:5.*

¹³ *Psalm 23:6.*