

God, my Shepherd Midweek Reflection # 46, April 28, 2009

Sunday May 3rd, the Fourth Sunday of Easter, is Good Shepherd Sunday this year in the Church calendar . In preparation for Sunday I have been reading several of the passages most associated with our understanding of God as our Shepherd and of Christ as the Good Shepherd: Psalm 23, Luke 15 and John 10.

David Kalas, in *Emphasis, A Preaching Journal*, points out that these scriptures give us three different perspectives on the role of the Good Shepherd in our lives. In Luke 15 we see the shepherd of the Incarnation ~ the one who comes to seek and to save the lost . In Psalm 23 we find the shepherd of the daily walk with God through all of life's ups and downs. In John 10, which is this Sunday's Gospel, we see the shepherd of Good Friday & Easter Sunday, the one who lays down his life for the sheep and takes it up again when he rises in power. We can appreciate each one of these perspectives without exhausting the richness of this image which teaches us so much about the personality of God.

Because most of us do not live in agrarian societies familiar with the ways of sheep and shepherds many have rewritten Psalm 23 to help us capture the essence of what God offers his sheep in a relationship of trust with him. One such refreshing restatement is the following:

"The Lord is my shepherd; I have everything I need.

He lets me see a country of justice and peace and directs my steps toward his land.

Even if a full-scale violent confrontation breaks out I will not be afraid, Lord, if you are with me. Your shepherds power and love protect me.

You prepare for me my freedom, where all my enemies can see it;

you welcome me as an honored guest and you fill my cup with righteousness and peace.

I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;

and your liberating love will be my home as long as I live.”

Zephania Kameeta, Psalm 23, in Why, O Lord? Psalms and Sermons from Namibia (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1986

Shuyler Rhodes, also in the Emphasis preaching journal, suggests we should all write our own Psalm 23 to make these promises of God personal. He offers the following example:

“God is my webmaster, I’m chillin’

He shows me the god sites and lets me surf them. God reboots my system. He shows me the right way to navigate the web. Even though I am dealing with hackers and scammers, I don’t worry because I know you’re online

Your password and your back-up drive help me relax, You launch a new browser and invite my enemies to check it out. You give me a hackproof, and a failproof hard drive, and I know I am truly blessed. For sure, I will be in cyberspace with you forever and ever.”

Shuyler Rhodes, Emphasis, A Preaching Journal for the Parish Pastor March/April/May 2009 CSS Publishing Company

May we know the Name and the Power of the Good Shepherd from all of these perspectives as we faithfully follow Him and let Him care for us as His sheep.

Under God’s Mercy,

Howie