

A song to sing or to read: The Lord's My Shepherd – TiS 10

The Lord's my shepherd I'll not want, He makes me down to lie
In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again and me to walk doth make
Within the paths of righteousness, ev'n for his own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale, yet will I fear no ill
For thou art with me; and thy rod and staff me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnished in presence of my foes
My head thou dost with oil anoint, and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me
And in God's house for evermore my dwelling place shall be.

Tune: Crimond. In the Public Domain.

Closing Prayer

Good shepherd of the sheep. Let your peace rest on your world family.
That there may be an end to cruelty, anger, war, injustice, prejudice,
discrimination and alienation, and that the way of love may rule among
all humankind.

Go forth into the world in peace. Be of good courage. Hold fast to that
which is good. Render to no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-
hearted. Support the weak. Help the afflicted. Serve the Lord,
rejoicing in the power of the Spirit. And may the blessing of God
Almighty, the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit come upon us and remain
with us for ever more.

Amen

With thanks to Rev John Mason for preparing today's reflection



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Church in a Bag
Sunday 3 May
Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

This is a day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

They that wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. They shall
mount up on wings like eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They
shall walk and not faint.

My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I to you. Let
not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the
sheep.

Preparation

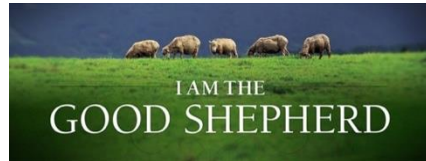


O God, maker of all things,
lover of all men and women.
Your presence is with us
always, around us and within
us, surrounding us in the
beauty and wonder of your
creation. You are the source of
our life, the hope that keeps us
going forward.

Help us to worship you with mind and heart. Take from us wayward
thoughts and help us hear your word for us. Let us set aside any fears,
any antagonisms or criticisms, and open all the doors of our lives to
seeking your nearness and guidance as we worship. We ask this in the
name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

Readings: Psalm 23
John 10:1-18



Reflection

If you use “With Love to the World” for your daily devotions, you may remember that a former minister of our congregation, Rev Russell Davies, writing about the good shepherd, told how when he was visiting Israel, he watched a shepherd with a flock of sheep. He was taken that the shepherd was right behind the flock and not leading them from the front as our scriptures always paint them. The tour guide told Russell that it was not the shepherd who was driving the sheep from the back, but it was the butcher!

What a wonderful way for us to begin thinking about the Good Shepherd and what Jesus is teaching us about the role, the calling, the work of a shepherd. Jesus is teaching us what the tasks of the church in the world should be.

Jesus declares Peter to be the rock on which he builds his church. Peter obviously represents both the shepherd and the sheep. He is a sheep who needs tending to, to be watched over, to be fed. He needs a lot of shepherd’s care. But he is also a shepherd. Charged with the tasks of pastoral care, of feeding, of leading, of watching over the flock.

And all of this is because our church is not a synagogue or a tabernacle.

It is Christ’s resurrection body and it is both shepherd, and sheep. Our day of worship is not on the Sabbath. Seventh Day Adventists will never have an argument about that. They are worshipping as the Jewish do.

But we celebrate the resurrection of Christ. For us that is the first day of the week. We want the living Christ first in all things. We celebrate as his sheep, his flock on resurrection day. Our cross is an empty one – not a crucifix, not a dead Christ, but a shepherd.

The other task Jesus declares is that the shepherd “Feed my lambs”. Caring for, protecting, teaching. These are the tasks of the church. ‘Lambs’ reminds us of our responsibility to enfold the young into the fellowship of the church. Some of our folk work very hard at that task. But don’t most of us know we become followers of Christ because we were so involved in the church from our earliest days into our teens? We must tackle that task again. One of the good things that we must pray for to come out of our terrible COVID19 is that the concern we are all asked to show for others may grow into people around the whole world learning the miracle that follows living, seeking to put into practise the command of Jesus to love our neighbours. To have, to grasp and build on what our Government is requiring us to do - think about our neighbours - and that includes everyone else.

Think about those folks who can no longer come to church. What about the people who only come when it suits? What about the stranger, the refugee, the indigenous, the poor, the homeless? We are called to be shepherds. Let us plan for when we are able to break down the barriers that stop us from reaching out to others.

We started with Peter. Let us picture the scene when Jesus has risen, and his disciples are lost and don’t know what to do. Peter says, “Let us go fishing”. It is while they are in their boat that Jesus calls from the shore “Cast your nets on the other side”. Peter recognises the voice and can’t wait for the boat to land but dives in and swims ashore. There Jesus has a fire and fish cooking. When they are all gathered Jesus instructs them “Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs”. He is the shepherd who has laid down his life for the sheep. That’s us. He is saying again to each of us “Follow me”. Be a shepherd. Love your neighbour.

