

BLESSINGS ALWAYS

May 4, 2022

Association Minister Message

Rev. Daniel L. Busch

SHEPHERD. "The Lord is my SHEPHERD..." (Psalm 23:1). "I am the good SHEPHERD...My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:11, 27). This Fourth Sunday of Easter is called *Good SHEPHERD Sunday*. The 23rd Psalm is the most familiar scripture of the Abrahamic traditions. It is a psalm of comfort and assurance. Farmers/ranchers describe sheep as not the brightest of animals, followers, and will even follow a leader over a cliff to their death. Faithful people throughout the ages have wondered why we are compared to sheep—again not the brightest of animals—but maybe that is why we are thought of as sheep. Sheep are spooked easily and seem so passive. They will ostracize one of its members cruelly, not letting that member into the fold, ignoring painful "*baas*" from "*lost*"/*ignored* sheep. *SHEPHERDS* can gather many folds of sheep together "*in green pastures,*" and when grazing time is over *SHEPHERDS* call for their sheep and sheep will find their *SHEPHERD*. Gospels use that image when Jesus calls for His sheep and they follow Him.

God is known as the *SHEPHERD*; Jesus is described as the "*good*" *SHEPHERD*. "*Bad*" *SHEPHERDS* were just in it for the compensation and did not give full attention to the sheep. Often when danger appeared, these *SHEPHERDS* might leave the flock and not protect the sheep; they had no vested interest in the sheep. Jesus as the "*good*" *SHEPHERD*, cares and is concerned about His followers' well-being.

We are in the midst of the Easter Season and these *SHEPHERD* scriptures draw us back to a pre-resurrection time in Jesus life. These words testify to who Jesus was, is, and shall be. Jesus is the caregiver, healer and protector, with us in joys and sorrows, in sickness and health, during plenty and want. Jesus prepares a Table of fellowship for us as a community of faith that is a reminder of His love and sacrifice for us "*in the presence of our enemies.*" Nothing and no-thing has the final word in our lives. Jesus said, "*My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me.*" In this Easter Season, The *SHEPHERD* calls us out of our tombs, out from behind closed and locked doors to be people of service as reflections and reflectors of God's grace, forgiveness and love. "*Christ is risen...Christ is risen INDEED!*"
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