

Pastor Geoffrey R. Boyle
Memorial for David Gardner
11 March 2011
Grace Lutheran Church, Wichita
John 10:11-16, 27-30

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit

*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 paths of righteousness for His name's sake.*

Have you ever wondered why this Psalm has so powerfully affected Christians at all times?
Have you ever considered how beautiful the words are,
how calming,
how serene,
how picturesque and peaceful, they are?

It's almost like King David wrote this Psalm from heaven—in the garden.

You can picture the heavenly bliss,
the green pastures,
the still waters,
the calm and restful soul.

But have you ever considered how difficult it is to find these green pastures on earth?
We do have wants;
we don't always lie down in the quiet of green pastures;
the waters in our lives are rarely still;
and our soul, how often we find it in turmoil within!

The Lord is our shepherd—
but is He only our shepherd in heaven?
Will our paths be marked with righteousness only in heaven?
Can we find any calm here on earth?

Yes, we can.
King David did.

He wrote this Psalm in response to the Divine Service at the Jerusalem Temple.¹

It was from watching and listening, praying and singing,
and above all,
receiving the gifts of the Lord that taught King David about His Shepherd Lord.

And so it was also for our David, Evelyn's David.

¹ Arthur Weiser, *Psalms*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1962), 228.

But for our David it wasn't in Jerusalem that he heard of his Shepherd Lord—
it was right here in Wichita.

It was here that David received the life-giving waters of Holy Baptism.

It was here that David heard the Word of sins forgiven for the sake of Christ crucified.

It was here that David knelt to the ground and received the very body and blood
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And so, yes, there is a Shepherd for us here on earth as well as in heaven.

And while King David learned to confess the Lord as Shepherd—
he didn't have as clear a picture to work with as our David did.

Our David gladly knew and confessed that *Jesus* is the good shepherd.

Jesus is the one who leads His sheep by His voice—

“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me” (Jn 10.27).

It is by His voice that He leads us to green pastures and still waters.

It's by His voice that He restores our souls and leads us in righteousness.

It's by His voice that He speaks the word of sins forgiven, *for us*.

It's this voice, coming from font, pulpit, altar, and Scripture,
that Shepherds us to green pastures.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd—

the Psalm 23 sort of shepherd—

because He lays His life down for His sheep.

Jesus laid His life down, on the cross, for His sheep,
for you, for David.

And for David, now, there's no more death,
no more valleys with the shadow of death,
no more enemies,
no more evil,

no more pain or Alzheimer's—
no more death!

And so it is for all of the Lord's sheep.
So it is for all who hear the voice of their Shepherd.

And here He's calling to you today.

He says to you,

“Look around you. Look at this world.

Do you see green pastures?

Can you find still waters?

Where can one flee from death and evil?”

And then He draws you close to Himself, into His hand, saying,
 “I am the Good Shepherd.
 I know my own and my own know me. (Jn 10:14)
 I am with you. (Mt 28:20)
 I prepare a table for you—a table of happiness and joy, of fine wines and rich foods.
 I anoint you with oil, and lavish you with my gifts.
 I fill your cup until it overflows—my gifts to you always overflow—
 they have no end.”

He says all this to you because He loves you,
 just like He loves David.

David was one of His sheep that He refused to let a hired hand guide.
 David heard the voice of his Shepherd and gladly followed.

He followed His Lord to the places He had promised to be—
 gathered around His word,
 and sitting at the table prepared with body and blood for his forgiveness and life.
 Here, at the Divine Service, David heard his Shepherd’s voice.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd, *because* He lays down His life for His sheep.

And just as He lays His life down for us,
 He also rises again from the grave.

His third day resurrection guarantees our resurrection, too!
 His life is our life,
 and that’s where He shepherds us all along.

And when the Lord Jesus is your shepherd,
 just as He is for David,
 then there’s no doubt that
**“goodness and mercy shall fallow you all the days of your life,
 and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever”** (Ps 23:6)—

With green pastures,
 still waters,
 and a calm and restored soul.

Jesus is the Good Shepherd—
 for King David,
 for our David,
 and *for you*.

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit