

# Good Shepherd Sunday, April 25, 2021

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## Big Idea:

God “shepherds” us through life, which means that God doesn’t selfishly run roughshod over us, on the one hand, or ignore us, on the other hand. God walks with us as a faithful guardian. In Jesus, that spiritual shepherding pattern of YHWH takes on a real human face and presence.



The shepherd metaphor runs deep in the Scriptures. This morning we heard Psalm 23 and John 10:11-18—let’s add a few more scriptures to the mix:

Isaiah 40:9-11—what stands out to you?

Ezekiel 34:1-6, 11-15, 23-24—what stands out to you? (at home, read the whole chapter when you get a chance!)

Why is the metaphor of shepherd so important to writers of scripture? What was their culture and background? Who were shepherds in the Scriptures? What other options did the ancient writers have for describing how a god expresses leadership (or lack of leadership). How does the shepherd image redirect your own image of God's leadership in your life?

What was happening in the ancient world that caused God's great concern over bad "shepherds"? What does God accuse the bad shepherds of doing? Do you think that bad shepherding is still a problem with leadership of God's people today? (If you haven't seen the movie "The Apostle" starring Robert Duvall, you might check it out—it's a powerful representation of the sometimes mixed motives of religious leaders.)

In the book of John, Jesus calls himself "The Good Shepherd"—how is Jesus contrasting his leadership with other leaders of his time? What problems did he see with leadership of other rabbis and priestly leadership in the Jerusalem Temple?

This image became the first, and perhaps most important, depiction of Christ in the earliest centuries of Christian iconography (Christian art). Watch this video for more on how early Christians interpreted the "Good Shepherd" visually and spiritually: <https://youtu.be/pBFwGYrfyXU> How does early Christian iconography contrast with later visualizations of Jesus? How does this expand your own visualization of Jesus?

How has God been a shepherd to you? Can you think of a story of when you felt you were being guided by a faithful presence?

God promises to send other good shepherds to care for the flock—whom do you list amongst those good shepherds?

Read this paraphrase of Psalm 23 as a prayer to God:

God, you are my shepherd! You provide everything I need.

You have bedded me down in lush meadows,  
you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid  
when you walk at my side.

Your shepherd's crook makes me feel secure.

You serve me a feast right in front of my enemies.

You revive my drooping head; the cup of my life brims with your blessings.

Your beauty and steadfast love chase after me every day of my life.

I am home in the house of God for the rest of my life.