

Meditation #5: Shepherd Visitation

What does it say? –

STUDY: Psalm 23

GOLDEN TEXT: Psalm 23: 2 and 3 = *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters, and he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.*

What does it mean?

In the first Christmas, no wonder the angels asked the shepherds to greet the baby Jesus! One of the most memorable texts of the Bible mirrors all of life in the pond and pasture that the Good Shepherd provides. (See John 10:1-18.) The Creator's shepherding provision and protection is powerfully symbolized in Psalm 23 by still waters and green pastures. He loves us, provides for us, and is always with us, in life and in death.

1. Are our souls restored by the green of a lawn, park, or nature preserve? How does being near clean ponds, streams and oceans generally calm us? Has the Creator made us to need nature, especially healthy nature? Why?
2. Where do you go to experience natural restoration—a park, a forest, meditating on a beautiful landscape painting or photo?
3. Have you felt the Lord's presence as the Good Shepherd protecting and providing for you? What difference did it make? Try to describe your Good Shepherd experiences.
4. Urban people may not relate well to the 'shepherd' model. Who are some good urban 'shepherds'? Pastors (literally meaning 'shepherds')? Counselors? Public advocates? Probation officers? Do we need more people to represent Jesus in these caring roles?

What are we going to do about it?

5. Is something missing when the pastures are not so green and the waters are not so good? How are the "pastures" in your life? Are people missing some restoration? What should we do to bring them HOPE? What have you done?
6. Whose responsibility is it to keep the pastures green and the waters calm? Is the Creator still our Good Shepherd? Can we be more responsible than dependent sheep?
7. Do city people need the restorative benefit of nature less than others? Or do they simply have to be more intentional in their nature meditations—and in their work to enjoy and protect the "pastures" and the "ponds"?

Truth to Celebrate: The One who makes all green things green also makes all things new, beginning especially with the first Christmas and the birth of the ultimate Good Shepherd.

Advent-Action: Consider buying a live tree this Christmas, decorate it for inside or outside your home, and after Christmas plant it in your yard, outside your Church or, with permission, at a nearby park or school. Even hold a dedication service with songs and prayers.

Freely copy these pages with this copyright notice—and then let Rev. de Vries know how this material helped you and others.