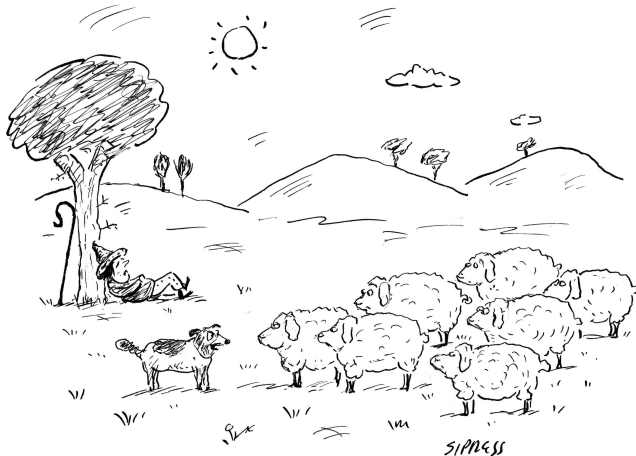


We are certain that Jesus lives.
 He lives as God with us,
 touching all of human life with the presence of God.
 He lives as one of us with God.
 Because he shares our humanity
 and has bound us to himself in love,
 we have an advocate in the innermost life of God.
 We declare that Jesus is Lord.
 His resurrection is a decisive victory
 over the powers that deform and destroy human life.
 His lordship is hidden.
 The world appears to be dominated by people and systems that
 do not acknowledge his rule.
 But his lordship is real.
 It demands our loyalty and sets us free
 from the fear of all lesser lords who threaten us.
 We maintain that ultimate sovereignty
 now belongs to Jesus Christ
 in every sphere of life.
 Jesus is Lord.
 He has been Lord from the beginning.
 He will be Lord at the end.
 Even now he is Lord.

Presbyterian Declaration of Faith



“What should I say this is about?”

Monday Morning

The Eternal is my shepherd, He cares for me always.
 He provides me rest in rich, green fields
 beside streams of refreshing water.
 He soothes my fears;
 He makes me whole again,
 steering me off worn, hard paths
 to roads where truth and righteousness echo His name.
 Even in the unending shadows of death’s darkness,
 I am not overcome by fear.
 Because You are with me in those dark moments,
 near with Your protection and guidance,
 I am comforted.
 You spread out a table before me,
 provisions in the midst of attack from my enemies;
 You care for all my needs, anointing my head with soothing,
 fragrant oil,
 filling my cup again and again with Your grace.
 Certainly Your faithful protection and loving provision
 will pursue me where I go, always, everywhere.
 I will always be with the Eternal,
 in Your house forever.

Psalm 23, The Voice translation

I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd will give his life for
 the sake of his sheep. But the hired man, who is not the
 shepherd, and does not own the sheep, will see the wolf coming,
 desert the sheep and run away. And the wolf will attack the flock
 and send them flying. The hired man runs away because he is
 only a hired man and has no interest in the sheep. I am the good
 shepherd, and I know those that are mine and my sheep know
 me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I am
 giving my life for the sake of the sheep.

And I have other sheep who do not belong to this fold. I must
 lead these also, and they will hear my voice. So there will be one
 flock and one shepherd. This is the reason why the Father loves
 me—that I lay down my life, and I lay it down to take it up again!
 No one is taking it from me, but I lay it down of my own free will. I
 have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up
 again. This is an order that I have received from my Father.

On no image does the early Church seem to have dwelt with greater delight than this of Christ as the good Shepherd bringing home his lost sheep. Proofs of this are the very many gems, seals, fragments of glass, and other early Christian relics which have reached us, on which Christ is thus portrayed as bringing back a lost sheep to the fold upon his shoulders. From a passing allusion in Tertullian, we learn that it was in his time painted on the chalice of the Holy Communion. Christ appears in the same character of the Good Shepherd in bas-reliefs on sarcophagi, and paintings in the catacombs—one of which last is believed to be as early as the third century... And it is observable that this representation always occupies the place of honour, the centre of the vault or tomb.

Richard C. Trench (1807-86)

While teaching New Testament in Beirut, Lebanon, I once had a class with some students from small farming communities in Syria and Lebanon. We were studying the good shepherd texts that appear in Luke 15, Matthew 18 and John 10. I asked the students if in their earlier years they had herded sheep. Some of them had. Their personal experience was a great help to all of us. I asked what was involved when they acquired a new sheep. Avedis Boynerian explained that the new sheep needed to be trained to listen to the new voice. Early each morning the flock starts to get excited because they have had nothing to eat for fourteen hours or more. In addition to being hungry they are restless from being cooped up all night. As daylight increases, they gradually become more and more active and eager. Finally they hear the shepherd's voice outside the barred sheepfold door. As soon as the door is opened by a member of the family, the shepherd calls the animals again and they rush out eagerly anticipating a new day full of lush grass, fresh mountain air, shady trees and rest beside peaceful waters. But for the unfortunate new sheep the voice (or the call) is wrong. It cannot go to the party! "What happens to that poor animal?" I asked. "It has a temporary nervous breakdown," replied Avedis as he carefully explained that the new sheep runs around and around banging its head against the rough stone walls of the sheepfold emitting a stream of pitiful, heartbreaking cries. It needs a few days of "therapy" to retrain its ear to recognize the voice of the new shepherd. Such a world of shepherds and their sheep forms the background to the account before us.

Kenneth Bailey — *The Good Shepherd:
A Thousand-Year Journey from Psalm 23 to the New Testament*

O God of all power,
Who hast called from death
the great Pastor of the sheep, our Lord Jesus,
comfort and defend the flock which He hath redeemed by the
blood of the eternal testament; increase the number of true
preachers; mitigate and lighten the hearts of the ignorant; relieve
the pains of such as be afflicted, but especially of those that
suffer for the testimony of the Truth, by the power of our Lord
Jesus Christ. Amen.

John Knox (1514–72)

Lo, the Good Shepherd
for the sheep is offered;
the slave hath sinned,
and the Son hath suffered;
for our atonement, while we
nothing heeded,
God interceded.

Ah, holy Jesus,
how hast thou offended,
that we to judge thee
have in hate pretended?
By foes derided,
by thine own rejected,
O most afflicted!

Who was the guilty?
Who brought this upon thee?
Alas, my treason, Jesus,
hath undone thee.
'Twas I, Lord Jesus,
I it was denied thee;
I crucified thee.

For me, kind Jesus, was thine incarnation,
thy mortal sorrow, and thy life's oblation,
thy death of anguish and thy bitter passion,
for my salvation.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee,
I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,
think on thy pity and thy love unswerving,
not my deserving.

Johann Heermann (1585-1647)



"Jesus the Good Shepherd"
by Bernardo Ramonfaur