**“My Shepherd”**

Psalm 23

Acts 20:17-35

Revelation 7:9-17

John 10:22-30

 Easter 4, May 7/8, 2022

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want …”

… And **He is risen!** He **is risen, indeed! Alleluia!**

**Bridge**

“The Lord **shepherds** me” which is the actual sense of that phrase: the **verbing of the noun, so the activity of the role**. The first reading talks about that as “**overseeing**”. The Epistle (in Revelation) about “**shepherding**” **…** **even in Heaven**. It’s Mother’s Day weekend, so “mother**ing**” is the “oversee**ing**” reminder that reinforces the **activity** from what otherwise might be considered just a **position**. Aware of that, I’ve seen a **somewhat-mistaken** bumper sticker saying that “God **can’t be** everywhere, **therefore He made mothers**”. Well, God of course **can be** everywhere, yet His shepherding is often **done through mothers who are, indeed, motherING** (“overseers” indeed faithfully and for an eternal end oversee**ING**).

For instance, “one ought never to make a momma bear uncomfortable if she has cubs” … **protective** **mothering instincts** then getting graphically kick-in possibly … and you don’t want to be perceived enemy in that. For, literally, **all** of the world created so as to reflect **God’s Creating** and **Redeeming** care, so “**Good Shepherding**” **(eternal concern and energy)**, protective and mother**ing** moms and appropriately oversee**ing** overseers hint at and are instruments-of the Shepherding Good **willing to** “lay down His life for His sheep” … then **doing** **that**.

My **pastor** (which is a title taken from the word “**pasture**” to represent what past**ors**, or **under-shepherds** (or, really, eternally mothering mothers and fathers and friends) **do in leading people** **to and into** then **keeping them in** **Good pasture**) is (as he would always tell me) a **militant task**. **He** would greet people standing outside the church door much like moms would welcome kids home from school at the door. He’d **guard** the door of the church (ushering people safely inside) demonstrating that he would (and I know **he** **would**) put his body is between His members and anything that could harm them. I think of that always as I greet you often at the door. I’m protective of you, and worried until all of you get safely pastured in the safe and feeding sanctuary of what’s inside … eternal consequence at risk for any missing or off on their own and not as protected and nourished. Well, “**the Lord” does that**, not only filling us up with what’s Good and doing that, strategically, in the deliberate pasture of the “Divine Service”, but also (from that) providing “Good daily bread”, caring for us and protecting us militantly from the “roaring lion” of Satan’s demons who, indeed, do roam around the weaknesses of sheep to “devour one”. God became (in Christ Jesus), the over-fill in that by becoming the “**sacrificial Lamb**” volunteering His flesh for satanic **consumption**.

**Text**

Mothers and overseers (under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd who did that) Goodly / Godly mother**ing** and oversee**ing** and **OUR** shepherds shepherd**ing** as “**my**” mom or “**my**” pastor or (more important than all the others but, actually, used by Him those others, and the source of them) “**my** Shepherd who Shepherds **me** / the Lord”. “The Lord is **my** **Shepherd**”, He (the Lord) Shepherding me as “My Shepherd” a **gift (in relationship)** …as the **others are**.

Tragically (and **most tragically**), Psalm 23’s **profession of faith** (and it really is that in acknowledgement of “**my**” **relationship** to the Good Shepherd who Shepherds me Good speaks of **enjoying and receiving and embracing the gifts of that**), but that can be **not embraced** so **not applicable** to many. Jesus said to people outside of it then: “**My sheep hear My voice** and **I know them** and **they follow Me**. **I give them eternal life**, and **they will never really perish (an articulation of the eternal reality)**, “and **no one will snatch them out of My hand if they’re under My protection**. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all, and **no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand**. I and the Father are one. But **you**” (as Jesus responds to those recorded as challenging that, **not willing to** **have it and live in it**) “**do not believe because you are not willing to be part of My flock**.”

## Application

I was drawn (**this week, especially**) to a **Goodly and Godly mothering mother** **(an overseeing overseer and under-shepherding shepherd who was, indeed, noted for shepherding faithfully under the Good Shepherd)** … a mom named Monnica who pastored her son 1600 years ago. Augustine became one of the most influential Good pastoring church fathers **because of her**, **passing faith then to us and all faithful Christians, effecting this much later, even, us (OUR pastor and overseer and under-shepherd)**.

He was **not always** welcoming of the Lord being His Shepherd though. Augustine **rejected the Lord’s Shepherding he was brought to by parents** (even his father’s death bed **re-assertion** of it not influencing his indifference). He became a philosopher … and **just that**, bright in knowledge but dumb in faithlessness and rejection of truth. Augustine stubbornly rebelled, keeping himself at arms-length from the **Good pasture of God’s Word**.

He lived as (what’s called) a “Libertine”, worshiping himself and embracing what made him **feel good for the moment**. His mother, Monnica, **prayed for him in tears daily (writings say)**, and she **tried constantly to knock him from his stubbornness and militantly protect him from himself**. But Augustine was **known for worshiping himself** **… he did that with pride that’s known 1600 years later**. He appreciated **the deification of himself** / him his own shepherd, so **never did consider himself a sheep of Christ**, but, really, a **sheep of Satan’s pasturing that he’d never recognized** …

… **until he** **DID**. **Mom’s prayers and words got answered by God favorably and his ugliness was cut through, Augustine becoming a** **student of the Lord, then humbled and receptive**. **Another** “**overseer”, Ambrose**, taught him fully of truth after Monnica had **begged him to be open to it**. **His passion for himself became a passion for God** and his **most notable writings** are **acknowledgements of his own sin and the fallenness of mankind** … as wellas **any man stubbornly-away-from-God**. ……………..

It’s possible that (having heard the “Good Shepherd” analogy so often, with all its benefits gifted to just those who are His / the Lord’s), it’s never quite **clicked with you**, or too easily poetic to, maybe, **diminish its value to you** (too analogous, maybe, and not direct enough). As you might have noticed from the John 10account, some **Jews** felt that same way, **wanting words that were more direct, smacking them between the eyes**: “How long, Jesus, will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us **plainly**” … yet He **had** and wants us **digesting** that **“Good Shepherding” gift** along with the part about being “**known by Him** and **hearing His voice** and “**following**” then being, yourselves, faithfully mother**ing** and oversee**ing** for others’ behalf as well as for your own: “I **told you**”, Jesus answered them, “and **you did not believe**”.

See, that’s where the Mother’s Day link might help. If you’ve ever watched **mother hens with her broods** thenyou have (in that as well as, also, Godly mother**ing** examples like Monnica’s) **images** of **the Good Shepherding care of the Lord for His sheep**. If you **appreciate your own mom for her mothering**, then know **ETERNALLY GOOD SHEPHERDING** and the **Good Shepherd’s work that, well beyond but not different / just bigger as the Good Shepherd Jesus uses mom as His hands for His eternal care of us**. Good mother**ing** **for the Good Shepherd** is **for this life**, but **only partially for the times** **of this life**. In Acts, moms and dad and friends, pastors and so forth, are to also and deliberately **be** “**overseers**” **who actively (and eternally) care for sons and daughters as the Church obtained-for-it by baptism and faith into the sacrificed-for-sheep blood of Jesus**”. ……..

I remember when our local funny floral shop posted that “**good** mothers let their children lick the beaters of their mixers, but **great** **mothers turn the beaters off first**” and I think that (if we’ve gotten nothing else from this day’s texts than this) we know that “**Good Godly motherING**” as a lot **more to do than care in for-earth stuff … it’s care for Heaven stuff**.

So may the Lord **equip us for the “overseeING” of the Lord’s flock … those in our families and beyond, and those who should be, but are not**. May we **enjoy our role and activities with, also, our place in it ourselves** (baptized, believing, hearing His voice, cared for, following, and with our own moms and pastor) … **sheep gathered safely and in the eternal protection and care and nourishing of the Good Shepherd Jesus**.

A **blessed Mother’s Day to you**. Christ **is risen! He is risen, indeed! Alleluia!** In +Jesus’ name. Amen.