

## Daily Reading & Meditation

# Come Away and Rest a While

SUNDAY 18 JULY 2021

**GOSPEL READING: Mark 6:30-34**

30 The apostles returned to Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 And he said to them, "Come away by yourselves to a lonely place, and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. 32 And they went away in the boat to a lonely place by themselves. 33 Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. 34 As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

**Meditation:** What does the image of a shepherd tell us about God's care for us? Shepherding was one of the oldest of callings in Israel, even before farming, since the Chosen People had travelled from place to place, living in tents, and driving their flocks from one pasture to another. Looking after sheep was no easy calling. It required great skill and courage. Herds were often quite large, thousands or even ten thousands of sheep. The flocks spent a good part of the year in the open country. Watching over them required a great deal of attention and care.

### ***Stray sheep must be brought back lest they die***

Sheep who strayed from the flock had to be sought out and brought back by the shepherd. Since hyenas, jackals, wolves, and even bear were common and fed on sheep, the shepherds often had to do battle with these wild and dangerous beasts. A shepherd literally had to put his life on the line in defending his sheep. Shepherds took turns watching the sheep at night to ward off any attackers. The sheep and their shepherds continually lived together. Their life was so intimately bound together that individual sheep, even when mixed with other flocks, could recognize the voice of their own shepherd and would come immediately when called by name.

### ***God himself leads us like a good shepherd***

The Old Testament often spoke of God as shepherd of his people, Israel. *The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want* (Psalm 23:1). *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock!* (Psalm 80:1) *We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture* (Psalm 100:3). The Messiah is also pictured as the shepherd of God's people: *He will feed his flock like a shepherd, he will gather the lambs in his arms* (Isaiah 40:11).

Jesus told his disciples that he was the Good Shepherd who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep (Matthew 18:12, Luke 15:4, John 10). When he saw the multitude of people in need of protection and care, he was moved to respond with compassionate concern. His love was a personal love for each and every person who came to him in need.

### ***Jesus is the Shepherd and Guardian of our souls***

Peter the apostle called Jesus the *Shepherd and Guardian of our souls* (1 Peter 2:25). Do you know the peace and security of a life freely submitted to Jesus, the Good Shepherd? In the person of the Lord Jesus we see the unceasing vigilance and patience of God's love. In our battle against sin and evil, Jesus is ever ready to give us help, strength, and refuge. Do you trust in his grace and help at all times?

### **Psalm 23:1-6**

1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
 2 he makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters;  
 3 he restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.  
 4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.  
 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.  
 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

**Daily Quote from the Early Church Fathers:** *The good shepherd feeds us with the words of God*, by Augustine of Hippo, 354-430 A.D.

"The pastures that this good shepherd has prepared for you, in which he has settled you for you to take your fill, are not various kinds of grasses and green things, among which some are sweet to the taste, some extremely bitter, which as the seasons succeed one another are sometimes there and sometimes not. Your pastures are the words of God and his commandments, and they have all been sown as sweet grasses. These pastures had been tasted by that man who said to God, 'How sweet are your words to my palate, more so than honey and the honeycomb in my mouth!' (Psalm 119:103)."(excerpt from *Sermon 366.3*)

**OPENING PRAYER** Lord Jesus, you guard and protect us from all evil. Help me to stand firm in your word and to trust in your help in all circumstances. May I always find rest and refuge in the shelter of your presence. **Amen.**

**CLOSING PRAYER:- World and Covet19.** Lord, Look upon the victims of Covet19 throughout the world with eyes of mercy, may your healing hands rest upon them, may your life-giving powers flow into every cell of their bodies and into the depths of their souls, cleansing, purifying, restoring them to wholeness and strength for service in your Kingdom. **Amen.**