



Reflection for October 11

By Bishop Jung



The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

*He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul. (Psalm 23:1-3a)*

The words of the 23rd Psalm may be the most recognizable in all of Hebrew scripture. They may be so familiar that we don't fully pay attention or hear them anymore. But as poetry goes, there are few verses more lovely or evocative.

In the midst of a pandemic, in a year of presidential elections, in times of racial unrest and extreme violence, we need a loving shepherd who will lead us to still waters, who will restore our souls. Calm. Tranquility. Rest. Comfort. Safety. Security. Who doesn't long for these things?

But it is not enough to dream of these restorative states. God asks the question, “But what will you do to make these a reality?” God often works through us, not simply for us. In many ways, we become the “still waters” and “green pastures” for each other. What can we do as Christian disciples and communities of faith to embrace and embody the qualities and characteristics that build safety and security? What can we do to be peace-makers, comfort-providers, to offer a calm center and a tranquil space?

We often wish for things but are not actively engaged in creating them. It calls to mind Gandhi’s famous quote, “Be the change you want to see in the world.” I also think of James Baldwin’s quote, “Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.” If we don’t like unrest and anxiety, if we are fed up with injustice and violence, if we want a better, safer world for ourselves and the generations to come, we cannot simply hope for change; we must change.

Many hear Psalm 23 as a comforting assurance; I hear it as a call to action. I believe we can only experience these lovely promises of God through an active discipleship rather than a passive sheep-hood. If we will commit – individually and communally – to work for peace, security, equity, safety, and justice, then and only then will we know the full meaning of the closing words of the Psalm: “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.”

Prayer: Loving Shepherd God, let us never content ourselves with merely being sheep. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, raise us up and teach us to be shepherds for others, to protect the dignity and worth of others, to provide safety and security, to offer peace, calm, and tranquility in an

abrasive and caustic world. Become our model, not simply our keeper, so that we might bless others as you bless us. Amen.

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May this devotion provide you with a moment of faithful reflection and care. You are involved in ministries of justice and witness, in ministries of standing up and standing with people working to create better systems and communities, in ministries of learning and searching and researching to become more aware and awakened, more technologically savvy and proficient, more virtually and personally present in your churches and communities and world. Each of us who serve as members of your Wisconsin Cabinet write these devotions in grateful prayer for you – for sustenance and buoyancy, for strength and courage, for safety and just actions, and for faith and love to be full and fulfilled in your daily lives. God’s grace and blessings, God’s challenge and healthy discomfort, God’s Spirit and energy be with you, in the hope Christ offers us all.

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