

Reflection: The Lord Is My Shepherd

Based on a sermon and service preached at Rosyth Methodist Church, September 2025, by Revd Daniel R. George.

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want.”

We know the words of Psalm 23 so well, yet they remain as fresh and challenging as when they were first sung millennia ago. Alongside Jesus’ parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15), we are given a glimpse into the heart of God: a Shepherd who refuses to lose even one of His flock.

The shepherd in the parable does not shrug and settle for ninety-nine out of a hundred; he searches until the one is found. The woman (in the second part of the teaching) does not accept nine coins as ‘good enough’; she turns the house upside down until the last is restored. And when the lost is found, joy erupts, on earth and in heaven alike. These images invite us to trust. To say with conviction, even in the darkest valley:

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.”

This is a declaration of truth. The sheep’s safety does not rest on the sheep’s hard work or cleverness. It is not about mustering enough wisdom or grit, reading enough books, or being more virtuous than the next. It is about daring to entrust ourselves to the One who has assumed responsibility for us.

Our faith does not demand that we understand everything. Rather, it invites us to contemplate, not through the mind alone but through the heart. It is in the heart that we can hear the voice of our shepherd.

Scripture has taught us that each life is a sacred gift. The Creator knows us by name, leads us, and - more than that - loves us with such intensity that it seeks us at every moment. A love so strong that it would even die for us, each one personally. In that love, revealed through Christ and Scripture, we experience the heart of God, and so in turn come to know ourselves. In His being, character, teaching, and actions, Jesus shows us who God truly is. As the Son, He reveals the divine in the only way we could begin to

The traditional image of the shepherd, for many, conjures images of our own landscapes; for us in Scotland, it might be a lone figure among the hills and glens, sheep scattered across crofts and fields, the wind sweeping through the moor.

In ancient Judah and Israel, the shepherd’s world was very different...

David himself was a shepherd who became king over Israel, first ruling Judah and then uniting the tribes into one Kingdom

...a dry, rocky land where water was scarce, wolves prowled, and shepherds, sometimes men and sometimes women, lived closely with their flocks.

understand...by becoming one of us. Jesus Christ, God incarnate on earth, teaches that the relentless love of God goes into the wilderness to seek the lost, carrying them home to a chorus of Heaven rejoicing. Each person, each and every one of us, each soul, is valued beyond our comprehension.

The psalmist reminds us that God is our Provider, so we can say in trust, "I shall not want." God is our Guide, when we are seeking the Way, we remind ourselves that it is the "Lord who is our Shepherd", leading us "in paths of righteousness." In those difficult times or when trouble comes, we can affirm strongly that God is our Protector, whose "rod and staff" comforts, driving away threats and clearing the way. And God is our Host, preparing "a table before me" even in the presence of enemies.

In a world scarred by conflict and division, where regimes oppress, wars destroy, and the voices of the oppressed, especially women, are silenced - the message of Scripture, embodied in Christ, is that God cares for all and hears the cries of the downtrodden (Exodus 3:7-9). In times of hatred and war, it may be difficult to hold to the promises of Scripture, but our faith must remain strong, and our comfort should be in the messages of Psalm 23 and Luke 15.

Why? Because both Psalm 23 and Luke 15 complement our understanding of the divine nature, a God who refuses to abandon, a God who gives Himself for His sheep, a God whose very being is love in action. The shepherd calls us all not only to safety, protection and rest as the flock, but also to rise as disciples, embodying the Shepherd's love in our own lives.

The mystery of Christian life is this: we are made in God's image, and our true nature is restored as we reflect divine compassion, mercy, hope, and love. Called to not only receive God's shepherding love but to embody it, to participate

Women were active as shepherds in the ancient Near East, their voices calling and leading the flocks. This realisation widens our image of God: the Shepherd-Mother who leads with her voice and her care.

In the ancient world, shepherds led by calling, the sheep recognising the voice that guided them.

The Bible names women as shepherds, such as Rachel in Genesis and Zipporah with her sisters in Exodus. The shepherd's call (John 10:3-4, 16), then, is not only a masculine image - it is also the voice of women who gather, guide, and give courage.

In Psalm 23, we glimpse the Shepherd who leads with both strength and tenderness: with rod and staff, yes, but also with the voice that calls us home, the vigilant Protector and relentless Guide. The Shepherd who leads, feeds, and defends with unyielding love.

in it. How? By providing for one another, guiding with compassion, protecting the vulnerable, and offering welcome and hospitality. In this way, we participate in the divine nature following the way of Christ.

The Shepherd shows us how not to conform to the world's ways, but to be transformed in mind and heart by abiding in Christ, listening to His voice, not the voices of hatred and accusation. Love refuses to let one be lost. It seeks reconciliation through peace, and interrupts cycles of hatred and violence through compassion. It is the message of Christ that remains such a challenge to those unable to view others but the enemy.

Embodying the Shepherd's way is not easy. Sheep can be silly, and so can we. It should be a wonderful feeling of freedom to realise that we, who have often tried desperately to carry our anxieties alone or attempted to shepherd ourselves, need but place our whole lives into his hands. To follow Christ is to entrust our frailty into His keeping and to discover that His intention is always love, for ourselves, but also for all. Then we can see each and every one as brother and sister, child of God: part of his flock at the moment or being gently called to him as he seeks all.

Points for reflection this week

- Where in your life do you most need to hear: *"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want"*?
- Who are the "lost sheep" God might be calling you to seek out in love?
- What cycles of anger, bitterness, or division are you tempted to step into, and how might you recognise Christ calling you to step outside, breaking the cycle of hatred instead?
- In what small ways could you embody the Shepherd's nature, as provider, guide, protector, or host, for someone else this week?

Reflection prepared by Revd Daniel R George, Presbyteral Probationer, Scotland Circuit, based on the sermon "The Lord Is My Shepherd," first preached at Rosyth Methodist Church, Sunday 14 September 2025.