

Pastor Jon's Sermon on Good Shepherd Sunday, April 30, 2023.

“Do you have enough?”

Do you have enough? Are you enough? Our lessons address these questions today.

The world tells us that we don't have enough. Just take advertising for example. It tries to trick us into buying things we don't need. Why do you think fast food, alcohol, cars, and potato chips are continuously being advertised? Because they want you to think these are good for you.

Not too long ago I was driving through Amish country and saw a family in a horse drawn carriage. I looked at them differently than I ever have. As a kid, I used to feel sorry for the Amish because they didn't have electrical wires running to their house. But now I thought, the simple life looks appealing. I bet this family won't go home and fill their minds with endless streams of data coming into their electronic devices.

But thanks be to God, that in our lessons for today, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, we are reminded that we do have enough... and we are enough... with the Lord is our shepherd.

And how does the Lord become our shepherd? We follow him, we get to know his voice, we enter through his gate by the waters of baptism and our faith.

In our beloved Psalm 23, attributed to David, it reminds us that with the Lord as our shepherd, we lack nothing. We have everything we will ever need... because we are a part of a community. Our Acts Lesson reminds us that the early church made sure no one in their community was in need... they shared all things in common.

And if the Lord is our shepherd, that makes us sheep. Right? And sheep have a tendency to wander and stray in the Bible... a perfect metaphor for us humans. Sheep are vulnerable creatures. Domestic sheep have no natural defenses other than huddling together in community. But David describes a good shepherd who brings the sheep to safe drinking water and a place to lie down with lush green

grass. The shepherd also guides the sheep down the paths of righteousness, which can also be translated as paths of justice... that is if we choose to follow the shepherd there. Even as the enemy tries to thwart their journey, the shepherd protects them and comforts them with his rod and staff.

Speaking of the enemy, 1st Peter speaks of satan as our enemy, who prowls like a roaring lion seeking whom he will devour. Satan is the tempter who tries to draw us away from God and make us think we don't have enough or aren't enough.

But the Lord sets a table before us in the presence of our enemies and anoints our heads with oil. Something we will do in church tonight for healing for those who want to come forward.

This is a psalm about placing our ultimate trust in God who provides for us daily. And when we realize that the Lord is our shepherd, even as we walk through the valley of the shadow of death we shall fear no evil. Our cups will runneth over... meaning we live thankful lives and want to share. But the part that got to me most this week is the last line, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life."

What does it mean that we have a God who follows us all the days of our life? Or better yet a God who chases after us, or pursues us every day of our life and beyond? We have a God who never gives up on us... leaving the 99 sheep in the fold to find the 1 lost sheep. We have a God who is patient with us sheep when we stray and will continue chase us until we are all safely in the fold?

Finally, in our Gospel from John 10, Jesus reminds us there are a lot of competing voices out there that drown his voice out? What voices are competing for your loyalty or attention today? I know for our family it is sports... as I care way to much about who the Packers drafted this weekend. Today we hear Jesus saying in John 10:7 that he is the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters by him, will be saved. A relationship with Jesus opens the gate to a life the world cannot give.

In John 10:10, Jesus says, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." There it is... God's dream for the world... God's will,

that all may have abundant life... food, clothing, shelter, community, and the gift of life after death. You don't need a special combination to get through the gate, just a relationship with Jesus. That's enough.

Amen!