

Returned to the Shepherd

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The Good Shepherd; Sheep / 1 Peter 2:19–25

- › Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia!
- › Grace, mercy, and peace be yours from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, our Resurrected King, the Good Shepherd. Amen.

Sheep like to wander away! Sheep like to go their own way, especially when they are in danger. Sheep are prey, they are never the predator. When sheep fear they are in danger they are going to flee instead of fight. Sheep will flee away and wander. When sheep are separated from the flock, they are even in more danger.

Wandering sheep have no one to look after them and are thus doomed to perish. When sheep wander, they are away from their shepherd, the one entrusted into their care. The Shepherd is unable to do his job!

You and I are those very sheep! You and I by nature wander. Really, you and I by nature are lost! We are lost from the Shepherd. We are by nature creatures that are who flee from their generous Shepherd. Sheep like us cannot help it. Their breeding has led them (us) to be rebellious stubborn beasts, self destructive to the last. This you were. You were in constant state of spiritual straying. That was your nature and still is in your sinful flesh.

It's still there! Yet, there is some good news. You have been given a new nature! You are a new breed of sheep! You are lamb who sticks close to your shepherd. Yes, you can stick close to your shepherd! That is not being prevented right now!

This does not mean that you are always obedient! This is so true! Just ask any parent of a child! You still wander in your actions. You still get lost in your words and thoughts! Where do you see yourself wandering right now during this time of being Alone Together? Are you words stinging to your spouse or you kids right now while you find yourself together even more? Are your actions showing proof

that you are wandering - maybe more alcohol use? Maybe your lost in your thoughts of doubt and despair? Maybe you are lost in your thoughts of "Is God really here?" My pastoral fear for all of you sheep is that during this time of isolation and separation...not from your shepherd...but from your flock is that you will wander slowly away to the point of no return. If you are struggling, please seek me out! We can set-up phone calls, video conversation or even if necessary a way to meet in person.

Yes, you and me, were straying like sheep! We even find ourselves straying, especially when times are tough, when there is suffering! Let me tell you this there is more good news for you. That is not who you are now. You were washed by Shepherd! You weren't just washed of the dirt and grime from your wanderings! You were bathed, cleansed, washed into a new image...the image of the spotless Lamb of God.

When the Good Shepherd looks at you, He sees a perfect Lamb. One that is spotless, one that is pure and perfect. That's because you have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. You didn't get there on your own though. You didn't come back on your own from your wanderings.

You were once that sheep that left the fold and the Shepherd came after you. You see your stubborn, selfish legs couldn't walk back to the shepherd on their own. So the Shepherd finds you and He picks you up and carries you. And it didn't come without a fight...you weren't happy at first being carried back. Your legs flailed. You kicked the shepherd and bruised Him. You bit the shepherd and made Him bleed. What did he do? Did he throw you down and call you a blasted sheep? No way. He continued to carry you. He bore that pain. He was patient with you. Your Good Shepherd was pierced, He was crucified, He Bore your sins on the Tree on Calvary's Holy Mountain. "By His wounds you have been healed." His cross was His acts of carrying you. He spread out His arms for you. As His arms were spread out, on his shoulders he carried you and all the rebellious sheep!

Your Good Shepherd isn't just a Shepherd for you, He also became a Lamb for you! He is the Holy, Perfect, Spotless Lamb who was sacrificed for you. He, the perfect Lamb, died for you unrighteous, unclean sheep. This perfect Lamb didn't stay dead, but He rose again for you. As the Resurrected Lamb, the Good Shepherd, He is also the Overseer of your souls. He continues to look out for you.

Trust me, He is looking out for your needs even now! He is there with you, even when it seems like no one else is or can be. Covid-19 is not preventing your Good Shepherd from being with you.

He now continues to watch over. He continues to speak with you. He continues to tenderly and gently remind you of His unequalled love for you. He calls you by name, His own Name that He gave to you! No other so-called shepherd can claim you or steal you. You are His!

You have been returned to the Shepherd by His own being. He returned you to Himself.

Now the Lord is still with You! He is still watching over you. You are still protecting You. You are sheep. You are prey, there are many that want to slay you. There are many the ravenous beast that wants to take you out.

There are false teachers out there that want to sneak in and take you out. Be careful during these days of what so called worship services you participate in during these weeks. Yet the Good Shepherd is there to protect you. You do not know the voice of strangers. They are not familiar to you. The Good Shepherd also calls out warnings to you because oftentimes these wolves are in sheep's clothing and their words sound oh so close to the shepherd, but yet they are not. They are twisting and perverting God's Word. Be in His Word, by being in His Word these wolves cannot overtake you.

And that hungry lion cannot overtake your shepherd either. Christ Jesus, the Good Shepherd has already crushed the head of the hungry lion.

When Christ Jesus crushed the head of the hungry lion he returned you to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls!

Now your Shepherd is braver than David who slayed mighty beasts (and a giant) with his sling. He is mightier than Samson who killed a lion with his mighty hands. Your Shepherd is none other than Yahweh, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of Everything.

Who can overcome the Shepherd? No one. He is the immortal God in human flesh, who bravely walked into death for you and shattered death's jaws with his bare and mighty hands. The devil and the grave they did their worst. Jesus let

them strike him as hard as they could. Yet he came forth, victorious and alive and more glorious than ever. This victorious one is your Good Shepherd!

Now yes, as you have been returned to the shepherd, you are called to imitate his ways. As he patiently endure the attacks of His enemies, so you bear with patience the thorns and thistles of life. And boy aren't we right now. Bear with patience...this too shall pass.

Even when you suffer, which we all our now, you are safe in the Shepherds Arms. If you notice that your wounds in life resemble the wounds of your Shepherd, what shall you do but rejoice? He has deemed you worthy to bear His image, even in suffering. Even in tears and pain, you are exalted by the grace of God, called in the image of God.

Rest assured that the Lord is your Shepherd. He carries you in paths of righteousness. He restores your soul. He leads you beside still waters.

Since you have been returned to the Shepherd...this returning, this restoration is more than simple refreshment on a hot summer day. This restoration is perfect. This restoration brings you to Him.

Because of this restoration and returning to the Shepherd and Overseer of your Souls. Your Good Shepherd Carries you in His paths, yet more than simply supporting you in the rough times of life. He, indeed, carries you in that way through the trials you bear. Yet even more than, He picks you up in His mighty arms for salvation and eternal life. He holds you close! There is no social distancing between you and your Shepherd. He lifts you up on to his shoulders, not only on this earth, but up to the heights of heaven, before the majesty of the Father.

What a blessing it is to be snatched out of the jaws of the Lion, Wolf, whatever predator it may be, and be returned to the Shepherd.

Yes, the Good Shepherd died and has risen for you!

In Jesus Name. Alleluia! Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! Amen.

- › Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus your Lord and Savior, your Good Shepherd. Amen.