

The Shepherd/Lamb

Revelation 7:7-19

Introduction

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Easter, sometimes referred to as Good Shepherd Sunday. The *Psalm* for the day is the **23rd**, the “Shepherd Psalm;” the introit was from *Psalm 78*, which talks about David being the shepherd of Israel and the antiphon was *John 10:14*, where Jesus identifies Himself as the Good Shepherd; Paul is encouraging the overseers of the church in *Acts 20* to be good shepherds of the flock; in the Gospel lesson, *John 10:22-30*, Jesus says that His sheep know His voice, and no one can snatch them out of His hand; and in *Revelation 7:9-17*, our text for the sermon today, we read: *For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd (v. 17)*. The day is full of images of sheep and shepherd. Today, we want to unpack that image.

The Good Shepherd – The Lamb

For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their Shepherd (v. 17). Of course, the Lamb is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is identified in *Revelation 1* as the *Son of Man*, the Redeemer, and Ruler of Israel. In *chapter 5*, before He comes on the scene, He is announced as *the Lion of the tribe of Judah (v. 5)*. When He appears, He looks like a *lamb that has been slain (v. 6)*. He is the only One who is *worthy to open the scroll*, the scroll with the story of life on this world between the first and second comings of Christ, the scroll with the seven seals. He is worthy to open the scroll because he was *slain and by His blood, He ransomed people for God (v. 9)*. Jesus is the Son of Man, the Lion of Judah, and our Good Shepherd because He was and is the *Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29)*. This is Who our Shepherd is, and these are His qualifications.

What the Shepherd Provides

We see four things in *verses 16 & 17* that the Shepherd provides for His sheep.

The Bread of Life

His sheep shall hunger no more (v. 16). That’s because the Shepherd provides His sheep with a food that will satisfy forever—the Bread of Life (Read *John 6:48, 51, 53-54*). Jesus Himself is the Bread of Life. We find complete nourishment in the body and blood of our Savior and Shepherd. While other shepherds lead their sheep from pasture to green pasture to feed them, our Shepherd feeds us on His own body and blood. He can do this because He died for us and was raised to life for us. He has given His life for His sheep.

Living Water

His sheep shall neither thirst anymore (v. 16). The Shepherd sees to this by *guiding His sheep to springs of living water (v. 17)*. (Read *John 7:37-39*) the “springs of living water” refers to the Holy Spirit, in Whom Jesus baptizes us. Two things necessary for life are bread and water. Our Shepherd provides what is necessary for eternal life.

Protection from Tribulation and Persecution

The sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat (v. 16). This is not the pleasant sunshine of springtime, but the scorching, burning, oppressive sun of the desert. This is the sun Jesus talks about in the parable of the sower (Read **Matthew 13:5-6, 20-21**). The Shepherd protects His sheep from tribulation and persecution. To say that Jesus protects us from these things doesn't mean we will never experience them. Picture His protection as an umbrella. In a rainstorm, you still get somewhat wet under it, but you keep from getting soaked to the skin, with your hair and clothes totally ruined and at risk of "catching your death of cold", as grandma used to say. While we will experience them and suffer through them, tribulation and persecution will never destroy us completely.

An End to Death and Suffering

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes (v. 17). What is it that causes tears? Suffering. And what is the greatest cause of suffering? Death. He will wipe away every tear by taking away all suffering and death (Read **Revelation 21:4**). Eternity with our Shepherd is peace and joy and happiness.

The Gifts of the Shepherd

Until we go to meet Him and be with Him for eternity, our Shepherd has given us gifts to get us through this life. He has given the gifts of Word and Sacrament. *As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Corinthians 11:26)*. In proclaiming His death, we are also looking forward to His coming again. We have that to look forward to because the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world is the crucified and risen Lamb of God. Alleluia! Christ is risen!

*And the peace of God,
Which surpasses all understanding,
Will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
