

Lectionary Readings
for
Fourth Sunday of Easter
Year A

Scriptures Set by
R. G. Huff

PSALM 23

This very familiar Psalm has so many variations “out there,” you probably don’t need another one. Unlike the Lord’s Prayer, few of us say this passage regularly in worship... and probably we should! It has in recent years been relegated to funerals, and few in the younger generations are able to quote it for reference in the midst of their own “valley of the shadow.” Consider making this a more-regularly read congregational scripture.

Like many passages, this one reads most beautifully in the KJV or NKJV.

Psalm 23 (unison)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul. He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 23 (unison)

(changed from first person singular to first person plural)

Lord, you are our shepherd; you give us all that we need.
You make us lie down in green pastures; you lead us by still waters.
You restore our souls; you guide us in paths of righteousness.
You anoint our head with oil; our cup runs over.
Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
You are with us, and you comfort us.
Let your goodness and love follow us all the days of our lives
until we live in your presence forever. Amen.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“He Leadeth Me”
“My Shepherd Will Supply My Need”
“The King of Love My Shepherd Is”
“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”
“New 23rd”

Any good choral setting of the text... they are legion!

If you haven’t used Cindy Berry’s “By the Gentle Waters,” give it a look. It’s a winner!

The Good Shepherd
(from Psalm 23 and John 10)

Leader: Hear the Word of the Lord.

People: The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.

Leader: I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep.

People: He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters.
He restores my soul.

Leader: The sheep hear his voice. He calls them by name and leads them.

People: He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Leader: I say to you, "I am the door of the sheep. If anyone enters through me, he shall be saved and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

People: Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Leader: The thief comes to steal, to kill, to destroy. I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

People: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over.

Leader: Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the Kingdom prepared for you.

People: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

on an idea by
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Obviously, this reading calls for hymns, anthems and solos on Shepherd themes. You probably have more than one anthem on the Twenty-Third Psalm and variations on it. Here are a few newer settings of Shepherd texts:

"By the Gentle Waters" – Cindy Berry

"The Twenty-Third Psalm" – Tina English

1 Peter 2:19-25

(changed to first-person reading)

Responsive Reading Based from I Peter 2:19-25

Leader: If, being aware of God, we endure pain while suffering unjustly, it is to our credit.

People: If we endure when being beaten for doing wrong, there is no credit in that.

Leader: But if we endure when we do right and are made to suffer for it, we have God's approval.

People: To this we have been called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we might follow in his footsteps.

Leader: He committed no sin.

People: No deceit was found in his mouth.

Leader: When he was abused, he did not return the abuse.

People: When he suffered, he did not make threats.

Leader: Instead, he trusted himself to the One who judges justly.

People: He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins we might live for righteousness.

Leader: By his wounds we have been healed.

People: We were going astray like sheep, but now we have returned to the shepherd and guardian of our souls.

(Same reading set as a unison reading.)

Unison Reading Based from I Peter 2:29-25

If, being aware of God, we endure pain while suffering unjustly, it is to our credit. If we endure when being beaten for doing wrong, there is no credit in that. But if we endure when we do right and are made to suffer for it, we have God's approval. To this we have been called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, so that we might follow in his footsteps. He committed no sin. No deceit was found in His mouth. When he was abused, he did not return the abuse. When he suffered, he did not make threats. Instead, he trusted himself to the One who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins we might live for righteousness. By his wounds we have been healed. We were going astray like sheep, but now we have returned to the shepherd and guardian of our souls.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“What Wondrous Love Is This?”

“O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”

“I Need Thee Every Hour”

“Footsteps of Jesus”

From Messiah:

“He Was Despised”, “All We Like Sheep”, “And with His Stripes We Are Healed”,

“He Shall Feed His Flock”

John 10:9-10

Call to Worship from John 10:9-10

Leader: Let us speak these words of Jesus.

People: I am the gate for the sheep. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that you might have life and have it abundantly.

Leader: Let us celebrate together this abundant life. Let us enter into this fold of faith by way of Him who is the Good Shepherd. Let us find safety in this place.

People: Let it be so. Amen.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us”

“I Will Enter His Gates”

“I Love Thy Kingdom, Lord”

“God Leads Us Along”

“I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord”

Acts 2:42-47

Reading from Acts 2: 42-47

Leader: The early believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

People: Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done.

Leader: All who believed were together and had all things in common.

People: They would sell their possessions and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.

Leader: Day by day, they spent much time together in the temple

People: At home, they broke bread and ate their food with glad and generous hearts.

Leader: They were active in their praise of God and had the goodwill of all the people.

People: Day by day, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Same passage set as a prayer in the first person:

Reading from Acts 2:42-47 (unison)

Like the early believers, may we devote ourselves to the teachings of scripture, to fellowship with one another, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

May we be awe-struck by the wonders and signs being done among us.

May we be unified and have all things in common.

May we sell our possessions and distribute the proceeds to all who have need.

May we spend much time together in worship.

May we break bread and eat our food together with glad and generous hearts.

May we be active in our praise of God.

May we have the goodwill of the people.

May the Lord daily add to our number those who are being saved.

In the name of Him who saves us, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn/Song Suggestions:

“Leaning on the Everlasting Arm”

“Day by Day”

“The Bond of Love”

“They’ll Know We Are Christians by Our Love”

“Christian Hearts in Love United”

“Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ”