

Sermon Title: **“The Lord is my Shepherd.”**

Bible: **Psalm 23 & John 10:11-18**

Where & When: at Gilroy UMC on Sunday, April 25, 2021

Audience: about 30 people (including 15 Youtube viewers)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God, you are our shepherd. We are your people and your sheep. Please lead us to get through the darkest valley with your rod and your staff. As you know us, please guide us to know you. Please be with my lips and mouth in your love and grace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

1. Psalm 23

Today's scripture readings come from the lectionary for the fourth Sunday of Easter. I believe that Psalm 23 is the most beloved Bible passage. Some of us might be able to memorize this Psalm 23, like the Lord's prayer. Reading Psalm 23 itself is a great gift for us, for healing and comfort. Whenever I meditate on this Psalm 23, I cannot help but confess that the Lord is my shepherd, because I am a sheep, a weak and vulnerable person.

2. The Darkest Valley? My Enemies?

When you walk through the darkest valley, when you are in the presence of your enemies, what do you do? Last November, I was in the church office preparing for a Bible Study class. My wife, Mihyun, gave me a call, but I missed it. I received a second call, and she told me that she had gotten into a car accident on the highway. It was near San Jose, and I was down in Gilroy. I did not know what to do. My mind just went blank.

Like God's rod and staff, a church member visited the church office with just the right timing. I asked him to give me a ride to where Mihyun was. When I arrived where she was, thankfully, she was okay, although the car was so damaged that we would need to buy a new one. The car was not worth fixing because it would cost more than the value of the car. I am still thankful that Mihyun does not have any injuries from the car accident. You know what? That night, Mihyun could not eat at all. And I ate a lot, because of the stress from the car accident. I was looking for more food to relieve my stress or to fill my blank mind. As you know, it was not like my cup overflows. I am just weak and vulnerable.

As this psalm 23 is known as a Psalm of David, I would like to share a couple of stories about David. David became the second King after the first king crowned in Israel, King Saul. As you might know, David was not a son of King Saul. After David killed the giant named Goliath, King Saul was very jealous of David, and Saul tried to kill David. On the contrary, David did not want to pay back. Even though his life was threatened, David played the harp for King Saul. Music was healing for King Saul, but Saul kept a spear in his hands. But how could David play music in front of his enemy? Even though David had an opportunity to kill King Saul, David chose not to kill King Saul. Actually, David protected King Saul from his soldiers who wanted to kill him, because God had anointed Saul as a King. David just took a piece off the corner of King Saul's tunic to prove that he had spared Saul's life. David really walked through the darkest valley, and he was in the presence of his enemies; however, he did not choose to do evil or take revenge. He let goodness and mercy be there. Because I know David's life, I love his

Psalm 23 more. When there is an accident, Mihyun cannot eat, and I need to eat a lot. I believe that David would eat well at the table, even in front of his enemies, or even in the darkest valley.

3. Who is your Shepherd?

Who is your shepherd? I wonder how other pastors interpret today's reading of the Gospel of John. But as you see, I am not a shepherd, but a sheep. I am very weak, fragile, and vulnerable. Many people might regard pastors as shepherds, but I do not think that pastors are shepherds. I just hope not to become like the hired hand or the wolf. I believe that Jesus Christ is our good shepherd. I just try to listen to Jesus' voice and follow that voice. I just want to be a good model of a sheep who follows Jesus.

During this time of the pandemic, sometimes I eat a lot, because of stress or frustration. What we cannot control is more than what we can control. What we cannot do is more than what we can do. I myself want to choose more and control more. But I do not want to forget that I am just a sheep. Surely, I need goodness and mercy. I need to confess that goodness and mercy shall follow me. I love this translation. Rather than us following goodness and mercy, goodness and mercy shall follow us all the days of our life. As Jesus knows us first, we can know Jesus, our shepherd. In the time of Eastertide, Jesus told us, "I am your good shepherd." Like David, let us confess, "The Lord is my shepherd."

Closing Prayer

Lord, our shepherd, we are your people. We are your sheep. As you know us, please guide us to know you. Please lead us to listen to your voice. May your goodness and mercy surely be with our lives. In Jesus' name. Amen.