



## Grain

“It is a mark of discernment and maturity to strip life down to one compelling loyalty, to be freed of all the others that turn out to be idolatrous.” Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann

## Field

<sup>1</sup>The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

<sup>2</sup>He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

<sup>3</sup>he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name’s sake.

<sup>4</sup>Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff— they comfort me.

<sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.” Psalm 23

## Thoughts

On Good Shepherd Sunday, many parishioners will speak or chant Psalm 23. Most of us know at least a couple of lines by heart. “The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want.” The repeated words through history haven’t lost their significance through overuse, but create familiar common ground for love.

Walter Brueggemann points out that the opening line of Psalm 23 “is clear about the goal and focus, the center and purpose of life: Yahweh and no other. No rival loyalty, no competing claim—not economic or political, not liberal or conservative, not sexist or racist, or any of the other petty loyalties that seduce us.” The Good Shepherd cuts through our allegiances that do not feed our souls or benefit society. In Old Testament times, the metaphor for shepherd was used for God and also kings who cared for the people or, like inattentive shepherds, allowed them to scatter. There were always tensions between loyalties to powers.

Today, from computer algorithms to books, movies, family, friends and our many encounters, so much can shepherd us for better or worse. Recently, at Ecumenical Advocacy Days, I heard one speaker talk about how some algorithms target people based on race for employment. The Brookings Institution also reports about growing algorithmic hiring systems, “and while some present opportunities to reduce systemic biases, others create new modes of discrimination.” New types of audits are needed.

Shepherding is about governance in every generation. We are alert to new opportunities and challenges within our private and public realms. May we be graced to always return to our loyalty to God in the shepherding we respond to and offer. Happy Monday!

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Many blessings upon you,

Pastor Cindy