

Staff Work

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## Through the Valley

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### Abstract

Just as the shepherd watches over the sheep, keeping them out of harm's way, so also God is already fighting battles on our behalf.

Posting about the Good Shepherd in Psalm 23 from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<http://inallthings.org/through-the-valley/>

### Keywords

In All Things, lectionary, anxiety, shepherds, leadership, Christ

### Disciplines

Christianity

### Comments

*In All Things* is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service at Dordt College](#).

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 [inallthings.org /through-the-valley/](http://allthings.org/through-the-valley/)

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## Daily Scripture Texts

[Psalm 23](#)

[Acts 2:42-47](#)

[John 10:1-10](#)

[1 Peter 2:19-25](#)

My husband and I went backpacking through the green pastures of Ireland a few years ago. When we arrived at the car rental place at the Dublin airport, we were given the keys to a rental car that didn't seem all that impressive at first sight. The car was old, the tires were worn, and there were scratches all over the doors. In hindsight, I think the Irish woman at the checkout counter knew what she was doing, but my husband and I didn't think we had gotten a very good deal at the car rental place until later. Driving through unknown territory presented its challenges, as my husband graciously agreed to drive while I enjoyed the lush views of the Irish countryside. What we didn't anticipate was that even though Ireland is a relatively small country, it took us a long time to get wherever it was that we were going. Not only did we need to drive on the opposite side of the road, but the roads in Ireland were mostly narrow. In the end, we were thankful for our semi-beat-up rental car because we were sure that we had added a few new scratches to the car during the trip: driving past trees, with long branches sticking out in the middle of the road, soon became a common occurrence.

Thinking of the Irish countryside with its beautiful landscapes, valleys, and pastures of sheep remind me of Psalm 23. Sheep are interesting creatures. While sheep spend a lot of time grazing, they are relational animals that are known to travel in groups, moving together to wherever the shepherd leads. When separated from the shepherd, they become anxious animals. This anxiety is with good reason because sheep have many natural predators. Depending on where the sheep live, they are vulnerable to such creatures as coyotes, wolves, foxes, bears, bobcats, and mountain lions. Sheep are defenseless creatures, and as such, they are best protected when they stay together in groups. They need a shepherd to keep them from harm's way, just as we need the great shepherd, Jesus, to watch over us.

God's word tells us that with God as our shepherd, there is nothing that we lack (Psalm 23:1). Yet, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, the reality is that over 40 million adults over the age of eighteen in the United States suffer from anxiety. While much of this statistic may be uncontrollable due to heredity or other environmental factors, many of us are losing sleep at night even though the Bible promises that we can rest because God is here through even our darkest valleys. We have nothing to fear. God is with us. He is here to comfort, guide, and protect, and He has good things in store for us.

Throughout the Psalms, we can see that David knew this, even as he was fleeing for his life. He had experience facing enemies who were out to get him. David knew the shepherd's voice and trusted that God was watching over him. This same God is watching over us. In John 10:9, Jesus says, *"I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved...The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full."*

If the troubles of today cause us stress or keep us up at night, we can be confident knowing that we don't have to walk alone. Just as the shepherd watches over the sheep, keeping them out of harm's way, so also God is already fighting battles on our behalf. We can rest, knowing that God is for us and that He loves us.

If you are going through a time when life seems to be coming apart at the seams, rest in Jesus. Know that He came to give you the fullness of life. And, if you aren't in one of those trying seasons, be the body of Christ for someone

like the believers in the Acts 2 church. Just as a defenseless group of sheep needs each other, so we need the body of Christ to protect us and point us to the shepherd. As we live life, the rains may still come, but there is peace in knowing that God holds our future and that His goodness and love are there for all who dwell in His house.

Each of us is being led by someone or something. What—or whom—is leading you?