

## **Psalm 23 - *Beside Quiet Waters***

To ancient people the sea held a terror especially when its boiling waves threatened and often destroyed human life. In the early stage of creation the waters were associated with the darkness and chaos. The sea was thought to be the home to the evil serpent. In the earthly ministry of Jesus too, the sea was a threat to the apostles, a threat which Jesus conquered. The absence of the sea from the new heaven and earth in eternity (Revelation 21:1-8) suggests not the absence of water in renewed earth, but an absence of any fear of water and terror. This assurance is proof of God's total victory.

The quiet waters are literally "waters of resting places," or restful waters. Sheep cannot safely drink from swift streams; they need quiet pools.

Although sheep thrive in dry, semi-arid country, they still require water. The body of an animal such as a sheep is composed of about 70 percent water on an average. Water determines the vitality, strength and vigor of the sheep for its general well-being. Water for the sheep came from three main sources...dew on the grass...deep wells... or springs and streams.

Luther says "God gives us His Word and Sacrament to refresh us. There are all kinds of afflictions, anxieties, and distresses in both our spiritual and physical lives. When we cannot find help and comfort anywhere, we can cling to the Word of grace. There alone, and nowhere else, do we find the right comfort and refreshment - and find it richly." (Luther's Works 12:163)

Like the different ways sheep receive water, the Good Shepherd's quiet and nourishing waters come to us in many ways. Every weekend we receive God's gift of forgiveness of sin. Every weekend we hear His faith strengthening Word of grace through the faith He has also given us. This is the living water that Jesus often talked about. At many weekend services Jesus comes to us in His body and blood. In Bible classes He comes to us to give us guidance for our lives. The sheep receiving the benefit of moisture from the morning dew is an excellent reminder for us to begin our day with a devotion that can stay with us all day long.

Prayer:

Dear Lord, you offer me so many nourishing gifts. Slow me down and help me to bask in all the many physical and spiritual gifts you continue to shower on me. Help me to appreciate them fully and share them generously with others.