

ctkAlive! Scripture Study
16th Sunday in Ordinary Time
2021—B Cycle

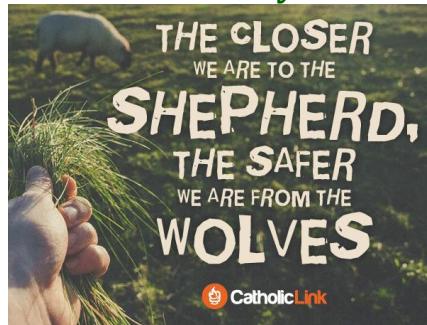


Image found at [Catholic Link](https://catholiclink.org)

Opening Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer to the Good Shepherd

Lord of the 23rd Psalm,
I have known fear, and you comforted me.
I have known hunger, and you set a feast before me.
I have known death, and you refreshed my soul.
In my darkest valley, no calamity of humankind or nature has separated us.
Teach me to walk as you walk,
beside those in mourning so they will know joy,
beside those in fear that they will know comfort,
beside those in hunger that they will feast until their cup overflows.
And so let me strive to help build on earth
what you have promised us in heaven.
In the face of all calamities, present and yet to come,
let me lead my neighbor beside peaceful waters,
the quiet waters of the Good Shepherd. Amen.

Source: [Catholic Relief Services](https://catholicreliefservices.org)

Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 23: 1-6 “Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the Lord.”

Psalm 23: 1-6 “The Lord is my shepherd. . .”

Ephesians 2: 3-18 “In Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have become near by the blood of Christ.”

Mark 6: 30-34 “Jesus said the disciples, ‘Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’”

A Reading from the Book of Jeremiah (23: 1-6)



*Prophet Jeremiah by Michelangelo
(Sistine Chapel), 1508-1512.*

“Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the sheep of my pasture!

This is the message of Yahweh, God of Israel, to the shepherds in charge of my people: ‘You have scattered my sheep and driven them away instead of caring

for them. Now I will deal with you because of your evil deeds. I will gather the remnant of my sheep from every land to which I have driven them and I will bring them back to the grasslands. They will be fruitful and increase in number. I will appoint shepherds who will take care of them. No longer will they fear or be terrified. No one will be lost.’

“Yahweh further says, ‘The day is coming when I will raise up a king who is David’s righteous successor. He will rule wisely and govern with justice and righteousness. That will be a grandiose era when

Judah will enjoy peace and Israel will live in safety. He will be called Yahweh-our-justice!’”

Personal Reflection

In the time of prophet Jeremiah (659-570 BC/BCE), people had grown accustomed to seeing their leaders abuse power and their rulers become richer. To counter this evil, God prepared for his people a true shepherd to look after the sheep. They would call him Yahweh-is-our-justice (not just mine but *everyone's*).

The new people of God Jeremiah envisioned would be more than a mere continuation of the old kingdom of Israel. The *new* king would be more than all earthly kings. Humankind hopes for unity in peace on planet Earth. Unfortunately, it seems we might find that perfect condition only in the heavenly Jerusalem.

“Woe to the shepherds who mislead and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” This applies to *all* shepherds, both civic, religious, and maternal/paternal.

— *When did I last have to make an important decision about my life? How did I distinguish(discern) among the many voices urging me to go this way or that?*

— *Whom do I consider trustworthy leaders I can follow with confidence—in my family, in the Church, in my civic community, in my country? Why these people? What qualities and standards do I look for in leaders who want me to trust them?*

The above Personal Reflection says, "Humankind hopes for unity in peace. Unfortunately, it seems we might only find that perfect condition in the heavenly Jerusalem."

— *How do I feel about that statement? How important is it for me to strive for goodness (if not perfection) in and around me here on Earth?*

Responsorial Psalm 23 (1-6)

God, shepherd and host: a psalm of confidence.



*The hand of the Lord feeds us;
the Lord answers all our needs.*

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside the still waters,
 Where he restores my soul.
*The hand of the Lord feeds us;
the Lord answers all our needs.*

He guides me through the right paths for his name's sake.
Although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
 I fear no evil, for you are beside me:
 your rod and your staff comfort me.
*The hand of the Lord feeds us;
the Lord answers all our needs.*

You spread a table before me in the presence of my foes.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup is overflowing.
Goodness and kindness will follow me all the days of my life,
 I shall dwell in the house of the Lord as long as I live.
*The hand of the Lord feeds us;
the Lord answers all our needs.*

Image courtesy of [Pavel Czierwinski](#) on [unsplash](#).

Personal Reflection

In the course of years, the ultimate Shepherd-Lord took flesh and died for his sheep—thus leading us through a dark valley to green pastures beyond. Should we falter, he

will take us home in his arms. To such a shepherd, David sang this poetic hymn. In our lives, we fumble our way along the road to the Promised Land. As we journey, this psalm gives us light, hope, and consolation. We do not await death as an end to misery, rather we wait for the resurrection that will bring us home to the Father. What more assurance do we need to become a true Christian, that is, Christ-like? The original manuscript of Psalm 23 read, ‘*Yahweh* is my shepherd.’ More current Christian translations of the psalm prefer ‘*The Lord* is my shepherd,’ to encompass Jesus the Christ.

- *What is my favorite verse in Psalm 23?*
- *When did I last become aware of my Shepherd-Lord leading / guiding me? Today? Yesterday? When?*

King David’s many sins, including the murder by proxy of Bathsheba’s husband (2 Samuel 11: 14-17), made him anything but a perfect servant of God.

- *How, then, do I account for his writing this beautiful psalm—almost everyone’s favorite?*

- *As I live my imperfect life, how much hope does it give me to know that some of the great religious leaders in the Old and New Testaments, including the 12 Apostles and St. Paul, had “skeletons in their closets”? Or have I used their sins as permission not to take my faith too seriously?*

A Reading from St. Paul’s Second Letter to the Ephesians (2: 13-18)

“In Christ Jesus, and by his blood, you, who were once far off, have come near. For Christ is our peace; he, who has made the two people [*Jews and Gentiles*], one; destroying, in his own flesh, the wall—the hatred—which separated us. He abolished the Law, with its commands and precepts. He made peace, in uniting the two people, in him; creating, out of the two, one New Man. He destroyed hatred and reconciled us both to God, through the cross, making the two, one body. He came to proclaim peace; peace to you who were far off, peace to the Jews who were near. Through him, we—the two people—approach the Father, in one Spirit.”

Personal Reflection

The Letter to the Ephesians stands as the first of St. Paul’s many letters to the Christian communities he founded (actually, the current version consists of two separate letters, possibly three). Paul knew the city well, having spent three years preaching daily in the open and organizing there.

Before Christ, various peoples across the world did the best they could to understand their Higher Power. God the Father began to prepare for Christ’s coming by choosing a special people, the Jews, and separating them from other nations through a law forbidding them to mingle with non-Jews. In the Temple, far from the Sanctuary, a wall separated believing foreigners from the native Jews. Foreign converts could gather only in an open patio apart from other worshipers.

In this reading, Paul announces an end to this racial-cultural separation. He taught that Christ, now risen, gathers all people to himself. He united the two people (Jews and Gentiles), reconciling both to God (vv. 15-16). The Spirit enables each person to be true to themselves while forming a close-knit community with the Risen Christ as their Lord and Savior.

From there, Paul moves on to another image: the *community* of believers form a new Temple of God. In Christ we live by the core beliefs of our faith, while seeking ways to unite with our fellow Catholics, other Christian communities, and all people of good will.

“In Christ Jesus, and by his blood, you, who were once far off, have come near.”

— *When in my life was I “far off” from God, faith-wise / emotionally / physically / spiritually? What caused that separation? What changed that allowed my return to closeness to God? In what ways do I still see myself a work-in-progress?*

Today, the *community* of believers form a new Temple of God.

— *Who make up my “community of believers,” my companions on the journey of faith?*

Proclamation from the Gospel according to Mark (6: 30-34)

“The apostles returned and reported to Jesus all they had done and taught. Then he said to them, ‘Let us go off by ourselves into a remote place and have some rest.’ For there were so many people coming and going that the apostles had no time even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a secluded area by themselves. But people saw them leaving, and many could guess where they were going.

“So, from all the towns, they hurried there on foot, arriving ahead of them. As Jesus went ashore, he saw a large crowd, and he had compassion on them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd. And he began to teach them many things.”

Personal Reflection

The apostles returned from their mission exhausted but “on a high” and raring to go again. Jesus knew better. They needed to rest and review their experiences. Jesus helped them reflect upon what they’d seen and done. After the disciples had gone through the villages of Galilee telling them about Jesus, many people wanted to know about this person who sent them. Thus, the crowd searched for Jesus and approached him. As much as he and his disciples needed respite and some “alone time,” his compassion for the crowds caused him to change course. Their needs held higher priority than his own and his apostles.

The Hebrew Scriptures had shown the Jewish people the compassion of Yahweh as a Father. Jesus now reveals divine compassion physically and spiritually in his own human flesh. No one could fully understand the mercy of Yahweh before the Son came to share everything, making himself poor among the poor, able to *feel* their need and desire for more than what they saw in their own religious and political leaders. Instead of “preaching” to them, he conveyed that he understood their dawning spiritual hunger for more than what they had.

“Let us go off by ourselves into a remote place and have some rest.”

— *When have I said, “I’m too busy to take time off,” when I knew I had little energy left to keep working day after day at peak energy and performance? What did I do the last time I heard my inner self say, “slow down”? How did I get in touch with my inner self?*

— *When I can’t take extended time off, how good am I at taking one or more “me-days”? Or even a “me-hour” when needed?*

For Inspirational Viewing/Listening

Video:

[Ephesus](#) A wonderful guided tour of ancient Ephesus by [Joe Stowell](#), recently retired president of [Cornerstone University](#), Grand Rapids, MI (25 min. but worth your time).

[“Shepherds in the Fields near Bethlehem”](#) by [Drive Through History](#) (3 min.)

Music:

[“I Am The Good Shepherd”](#) by Faithful Heart

Just because it so beautiful . . . [“The Prayer”](#) sung by [Celine Dion](#) and [Andrea Bocelli](#)

The Week Ahead

Journaling Prompts

— *Based on this weekend’s Scripture readings, what does the Risen Christ ask me to do TODAY regarding . . .*

(1) the quality of the love I bring to my personal relationships . . . and

(2) my life as an emissary of Christ, committed to bringing God’s love to the people with whom I interact in person and on social media?

Who this week needs to hear from me some expression of love?

Who needs to receive from me a moment of laughter and personal concern?

Why do I hesitate?

Take some time to write about your experience and feelings about events occurring in your life today and what you see happening in the world.

Preview of Next Week’s Scriptures

17th Sunday of Ordinary Time

II Kings 4: 42-44 “They shall eat and there shall be some left over.”

Psalm 145: 10-11, 15-16, 42-44 “The Lord is near to all who call upon Him.”

Ephesians 4: 1-6 “Live in a manner worthy of the call you have received.”

John 6: 1-15 “Jesus said to Philip. ‘Where can we buy enough food for them to eat?’”

Closing Prayer

(edited and abridged for use here)

Prayer to Follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd

Gentle Jesus, compassionate and caring Shepherd,
help me to follow you faithfully.

Strengthen me daily with your love,
and guide me along life's paths.

Keep me free from every evil,
protect me from sickness and danger,
and lead me to serve you with all my mind, heart, and soul.

Hear my needs, especially the intentions important to me.

My own needs *today* are _____.

Gentle Jesus, bless me each day with peace of mind and heart.

May I experience your saving power in my daily life,
as I await the fullness of life and joy with you forever. Amen.

Source: [The Catholic Crusade](http://TheCatholicCrusade.com)

Questions?

Send any questions or comments you might have to algarrotto@comcast.net

Gender usage in writing: We are conscious of gender references to God in the Scripture texts. Often, attempts to rewrite these passages result in awkward sentence structures. We have left the biblical translations as they are but do our best to be inclusive in all other parts of the reflection.

The Sunday readings are from [Christian Community Bible: Catholic Pastoral Edition](http://www.ccbe.org)

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Follow this link to my spiritual novel, [Bishop Myriel: In His Own Words.](http://www.bishopmyriel.com)

Coming soon!! *Inspector Javert: At the Gates of Hell*

(a novel exploring "what happens next?" after we die)