

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

Psalm 23 with a NT Shepherd

Sir Henry W. Baker's paraphrase of Psalm 23 is reminiscent of Isaac Watt's Psalmody. The King of Love is replete with references to Jesus, the Lord's Supper, the cross and other New Testament figures.

The first verse begins where Psalm 23 begins, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." To this comforting thought, Baker adds the endless promise found in John 10:27-28, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand."

In the second verse, the quiet waters of the Psalm are replaced with streams of living water. This is a reference to a conversation that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman in John 4, "Jesus answered and said to her, 'Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.'"

In the third verse, the Good Shepherd guides in paths of righteousness, by seeking lost sheep and bringing them back, rejoicing. Luke 15, "So He told them this parable, saying, 'What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the [b]open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his

friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!'"

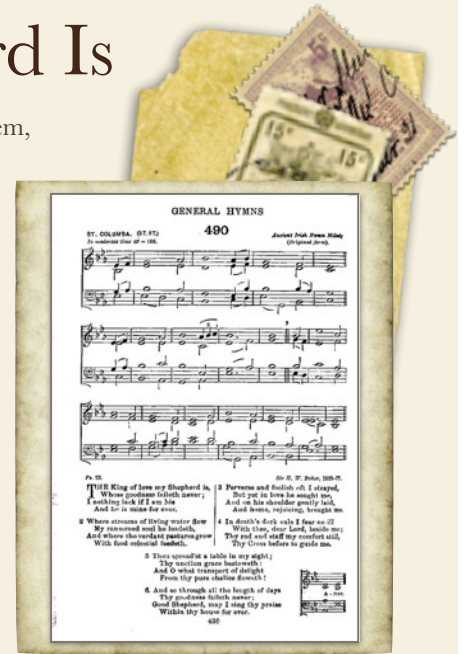
In the fourth verse, the cross lights the way through the valley of the shadow of death. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." Mark 8:34

In the fifth verse, the table that is spread before our enemies is the Lord's supper. The pure chalice is the cup in Luke 22:20, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."

The last verse ends as the Psalm, "Surely goodness and lovingkindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Our praise for this forever-life is directed to our Good Shepherd revealed in John 10:11 where Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep."

Irish Melody

The hymn-tune ST COLUMBA was first paired with this text after a copyright issue prevented the use of the also-popular DOMINUS REGIT ME. This Irish melody is loved by arrangers and singers alike for its plaintive melody, rhythmic interest and soaring skips. The song has recently undergone somewhat of a renaissance being included on a Fernando Ortega album and arranged for choir by Dan Forrest, John Rutter and others.



*The King of love my shepherd is,
whose goodness faileth never.
I nothing lack if I am his,
and he is mine forever.*

*Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul he leadeth;
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with food celestial feedeth.*

*Perverse and foolish, oft I strayed,
but yet in love he sought me;
and on his shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.*

*In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
with thee, dear Lord, beside me;
thy rod and staff my comfort still,
thy cross before to guide me.*

*Thou spreadst a table in my sight;
thy unction grace bestoweth;
and oh, what transport of delight
from thy pure chalice floweth!*

*And so through all the length of days,
thy goodness faileth never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing thy praise
within thy house forever.*