

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, April 30th, 2023, Easter IV
Acts 2:42-47 Psalm 23 1 Peter 2:19-25 John 10:1-10

Why is Psalm 23 such a favorite? Maybe because there are so many images we can relate to. One of my favourites, an image of the Kingdom of God is the banquet table. *You prepare a table before me in the presence of those who trouble me.*

And in John's gospel Jesus the Good Shepherd calls himself either a gate or a door depending on which translation you read. Thus, protecting us, keeping us safe behind the gate or the door, keeping dangers out.

And from the Psalm; *he makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.*

This is another way of saying you are protected and safe in green pastures and beside still waters.

But the psalmist suggests safety beyond the gate or the door with the phrase, *he guides me along right pathways for his namesake.*

But what does it mean to go beyond the gate or the door?

In my daily prayers and Bible reading I came across this passage in Luke chapter 4 verses 18 and 19.

*'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.'*

This is about Jesus yes, but also about us stepping out beyond the gate and the spirit of God going with us.

But another story I told before came to mind. When I was Co-directing the pioneer camp at the Diocese of Quebec church camp, for 11- to 14-year-olds in the bush up the hill from the main camp, we had some campers who came from Little Burgundy a tough inner-city part of Montreal.

I was puzzled and disappointed when one of the campers from Little Burgundy went home because she was home sick. I thought she would really relish being out of the city into the countryside without the challenges and concerns she had at home. I had said and realized previously that she was uncomfortable in the country at the camp because she didn't know the rules of the game at the camp. She knew how to survive and protect herself at home, but this was too new and perhaps felt scarier than being at home.

Maybe if we don't feel safe behind the gate or the door then we're not about to step out beyond the gate or the door and feel safe. Feel safe enough to risk going beyond the door or the gate.

So it begins in the safety, hopefully, with the metaphor of the sheepfold. And feeling safe enough to want to risk stepping out beyond the sheepfold, beyond the door or the gate.

God in Christ is offering us safety and feeling safe enough to be willing to risk.

And the closing of the psalm brings it all together. And shows that they feel the full sense of what God has to offer them.

*Surely your goodness and mercy^{jd} shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD
for ever.*

Amen

May Jesus, The Good Shepherd
guide you safely
through the green pastures
and through the dark valleys.
And as the Resurrection
and the Life
raise you up to
newness of life.