



# The Shepherd's Peace

By Sheila Lutz

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” Luke 2:14 (ESV)\*

**Open with prayer:** Good Shepherd, open our eyes to see Your blessing. Open our ears to hear Your voice. Open our hearts that we may love You. Amen. (*Lutheran Study Bible*, Psalm 23, page 866.)

Shepherds of Jesus’ day herded flocks of as many as 1,000 sheep. Their job was to hunt for good food for the flock, keep a watchful eye for poisonous plants, and deter predators who wanted mutton for dinner. They were on call 24/7, caring for animals whose instinct was to follow each other and stick together. Some think sheep aren’t clueless. Sheep know their shepherd’s voice, know who feeds them and finds grazing ground for them, and know who cares for them when they’re sick. They’re meek — usually quiet and gentle — holding themselves aloof from the world. They listen to the leaders ... obediently. (Reading this makes me think I/we need to work on our sheep skills.)

But ... what of those who tended the flocks? What was the status of a shepherd throughout the ages of the Old Testament?

- Genesis 13:2–6** \_\_\_\_\_
- Genesis 24:34–36** \_\_\_\_\_
- Genesis 26:12–14** \_\_\_\_\_
- Genesis 30:37–43** \_\_\_\_\_
- Genesis 46:33–34** \_\_\_\_\_

What other examples in history can you think of that show how hundreds of years of prejudice change status and behavior? \_\_\_\_\_

Had things changed during the time of David?

**1 Samuel 16:11; 17:13–15** \_\_\_\_\_

How did King David change the status of a shepherd?

**1 Samuel 17:34–37a** \_\_\_\_\_

## Psalm 23

Some Google sites say the change in status was caused by the fact the Israelites were no longer nomadic. By the time Jesus was born, shepherds had fallen to the bottom rung of the social ladder. They were equated with tax collectors, thieves, and dung sweepers. They could not hold public office, and shepherding became a job for the laboring class. Some shepherds earned their bad reputations, but others were victims of stereotyping. Religious leaders maligned them, and flocks were exiled to desert areas. The Mishnah (Jewish Oral Law) refers to them in belittling terms: incompetent, ones from whom it was forbidden to purchase goods, and ones unworthy of being rescued when they fall.

Leader guide and Bible passages for this study are available online or by calling the LWML Office.

Considering the messy lives of these broken herders, why choose shepherds, of all people? Why were they the first to hear, "It's a boy! Go! See Him!"? Read **Luke 2:1–20**.

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Compare the call of the shepherds to the call of Levi in **Mark 2:13–17**.

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Some might say the shepherds faded into obscurity after that Christmas night, but, did they? Do you remember the name of the high priest at the time of Jesus' birth? Who remembers the names of Herod's wise men? Or, if we think about them, for what are they remembered?

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The shepherds on that hillside had a hard life. How did God elevate their lowly status?

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What were their other gifts of Christmas?

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How did God give peace to the shepherds?

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What does God want us to remember about shepherds? **John 10:7–18**

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**1 Peter 5:4**

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If you could summarize in one phrase or sentence, what would you say God is teaching you today?

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**Pray this benediction together:** *Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Hebrews 13:20–21)*

**Close with singing:** "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (LSB #388; LW #504) or "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night" (LW #70; TLH #109).

\*All Bible Passages ESV

Sheila loves delving into the background of the things she learns in the Bible and writing in various forms: journaling, poetry, Bible studies, and devotions. She currently serves as the LWML Central Illinois District President.