

May 11, 2025 – Fourth Sunday in Easter

***SAFE AND SECURE IN THE SHEPHERD'S HANDS* by Pastor Julio Romero**

Gospel: John 10:22-30

In the movie *Gods and Generals*, one of Stonewall Jackson's staff officers asked him how he could remain so peaceful and calm amid bullets, shells, and death all around him. Jackson replied, "Because my faith tells me that I am as safe on the battlefield as I am in bed."

To feel that kind of peace in such a dangerous moment requires faith—tremendous faith. It requires trust—trust that in our Lord's hands, we are safe.

This sense of safety under Jesus' care is one of the messages we receive from today's Gospel reading from John. It reassures us that those who follow the Lord Jesus, who know His voice, who belong to His fold, are safe in His hands.

"I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."

Today, we celebrate Good Shepherd Sunday. The Psalm for this Sunday is the beloved Psalm 23, written by King David centuries before the Lord Jesus was born. David clearly had that same faith and trust—that confidence that in God's hands, he was safe.

He expressed this in verse four:

"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff—they comfort me."

What a powerful statement of faith. The fear of death is one of humanity's greatest fears. Personally, I find it difficult not to worry—even when things are going well. I often wonder, "When is the bubble going to burst? How long will this peace last? When will my heart stop beating?"

The thought that I am walking in the valley of the shadow of death often follows me. And I know I'm not alone in feeling this way. How many others also carry this quiet fear?

Should it be this way? Do I lack faith? Am I not trusting the Lord the way He asks me to?

Remember that the Lord Jesus told His followers, “*Do not worry.*” Do not worry about what you will eat or what you will wear. He pointed to the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. He reminded them that the Lord takes care of these, and how much more will He care for us—His beloved children.

Jesus calls us to not worry, not to fear, but to have faith that God will provide, protect, and guide us. Just like the general in that movie, who said, “Because my faith tells me that I am as safe on the battlefield as I am in bed.”

I believe there is no better image for God than that of a shepherd. A shepherd cares for every sheep in his flock. He provides for them, protects them, and if even one goes missing, he leaves the others in safety to search for the lost one. That is the image captured in Psalm 23. The Shepherd is our Guardian, our Provider, our Companion, and our Healer.

But the Shepherd in Psalm 23 is more than that. He is also our Redeemer—the Giver of mercy, blessing, and life—eternal life.

King David understood this, and his final words in the Psalm confirm it:

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Like all of us, David knew fear, anxiety, and hardship. But his faith gave him courage to face evil, even death. And in the midst of life’s troubles, he could still see God’s blessings and mercy.

This is something we can all relate to. Faith does not mean we stop worrying or never feel afraid. But in moments of adversity—when we feel like we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death—we can hold tightly to the hand of our Shepherd, listen for His comforting voice, and remember His blessings and mercies that follow us all the days of our lives.

And when we say *all the days of our lives*, we truly mean it. Just think back to yesterday—can you see how the Lord has blessed you?

In today's Gospel, the Lord Jesus makes two promises: the first one is that He gives us eternal life, the second one is that no one, not a single member of His flock will be snatched out of His hand.

This assurance gives us hope. It brings peace. It assures us that we will dwell in His house forever.

I think of the parable of the 100 sheep, where the shepherd leaves the 99 to search for the one that is lost. That's who our Lord Jesus is—the Good Shepherd who is committed to finding us, pursuing us, and bringing us back into His care. No enemy, no danger, not even death can separate us from His love or His desire to bring us safely to the house that he has prepared for all His children in heaven.

What a beautiful promise Jesus gives us. Let us trust in that promise. Let us place our faith in Him. Faith may not take away all our fears or worries, but it assures us that we are secure in His hands. Nothing and no one can snatch us away. Even in the midst of trouble, His goodness and mercy follow us every day of our lives.

Amen.