



*Psalm 23*, John August Swanson, 2010

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Greetings!

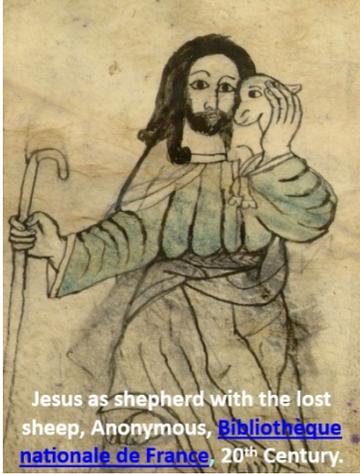
Please read [Psalm 23](#) and [John 10:22-30](#)

My wife, Patti, and I are hooked on the Magnolia Network's show *The Craftsman*. It is a program about Eric Hollenbeck, a master craftsman, woodworker and historic home preservationist in the Eureka, California area. His show this week titled "**Teaching a Trade**" which premiered on May 3, shows that he works with at-risk kids teaching them how to make paint and use power tools. The show offers the viewer spiritual overtones which are subtle, and yet, profound. What he presented connects so beautifully with the lectionary texts of this week where Jesus and the Psalmist speak of shepherding.



In the program where Eric is clearly playing the shepherd's roll with these young kids, he teaches them to use a restored Oliver scroll saw. He instructed the children to use their hands to allow the shape to be created. He emphasized that you cannot make turns and you cannot move the wood backwards – "you can only go forward." And that, he said, "is a good life lesson." Eric continued, "You can only go forward with the scroll saw. No matter what mistake gets made, it can only be repaired by going forward with the saw. Any bend, any going back to where you were before will bend the blade and break it."

So it is with the voice of the Shepherd. The *voice*, whether in the Psalm or the Gospel reading, is always calling followers forward. The voice that calls people from want and fear and anoints with oil and fills cups to overflowing, is always calling us forward.



Jesus as shepherd with the lost sheep, Anonymous, [Bibliothèque nationale de France](#), 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

This should be remembered in a world where tyrants rage, where the marginalized are terrorized: women, children, persons of color, the poor, lgbtqia+ persons, immigrants, refugees, returning citizens and others. The bending of the saw blade because of the attempt to move backwards is leading to cultural, personal and spiritual destruction – the blade is breaking! No matter how often we tell the old story of oppression, even from new voices – we are still stuck with the principle of the scroll saw. We cannot go backward because the result is always catastrophic! Lost time, lost momentum, lost artfulness and lost community. I'm reminded of Rev.

Theodore Parker's words –

***The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.***

This is exactly the work of Jesus and his followers in Jesus' quest for the restoration of Israel. It was the discipline of King David that he failed in. Jesus desired to throw off Roman domination and injustice and to proclaim the Kingdom of God. David had everything and gave it up by going backward. Both David and Jesus knew the principles of shepherding. For each, people knew their voice, and they followed.



The Psalm today shows the power of getting it right and knowing not only the voice, but the quiet power of the Shepherd. Prior to the resurrection in the Galilee, one of the first evangelists in the Jesus movement a woman who met Jesus at the well, was unable to go back and fix her past. Like Parker, as in Eric's teaching of the young people, and like you and like me, we cannot go back. There are no do-overs! We can only move forward. So despots and abusers of the world, you are finished, the Shepherd told you so.

And Beloved, there is plenty of *Living Water* if you are so inclined. The water never runs out, the cup always overflows.

### Prayer

God of comfort and compassion,  
through Jesus, your Son, you lead us  
to the water of life and table of your bounty.  
May we who have received  
the tender love of our Good Shepherd  
be strengthened by your grace  
to care for your flock. Amen.

Peace,

*Todd*

Rev. Dr. Todd D. Anderson, West Ohio Superintendent  
Ohio River Valley District, United Methodist Church

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