

Family Devotion Hour #3

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

A tender shepherd leads his sheep,
Where pastures green are growing,
And where his flock doth guard and keep,
Beside still waters flowing,
Thus Christ, my shepherd, leadeth me,
My soul and body feedeth he,
And for their wants provideth. L.H. 345, Verse 2

The sheep that follow the Good Shepherd and pass under the staff of the faithful keeper of the sheep will be led to *“the still waters.”* Sheep cannot satisfy their thirst in the rushing waters of the cataract or in the turbulent waters of the rapids or in the swirling eddies of the whirlpool, but must find the still clear waters, where they may drink in peace and quietly satisfy their thirst. So indeed, the thirsty soul cannot find the water of life in the violent thundering of the Law, but in the gentle and comforting word of the Gospel. What the heart, broken over sin, needs and reaches out for is the blessed assurance that there is peace and reconciliation. This is found only where Christ is

preached, who is the fountain of living water. In him we find the still waters and our soul is restored. We are uplifted and refreshed and we can go our way with joy, rejoicing in the Lord our Righteousness.

Those who drink of these still waters may have tribulation and hardship in the world, but the end is always peace and glory - “Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18

How different it is with those who find their highest joy and pleasure in earthly things. Though they may think that they have security, safety, joy, and contentment in the possession of earthly wealth, yet of them it is true: “Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.” Proverbs 14:13

When the Psalmist now says of the Shepherd “*He restoreth my soul,*” he thereby shows that he is not speaking of the Law with all its demands and

prohibitions, its threats and condemnations, its thundering and lightning. For this does not restore the soul but rather frightens and terrifies. Those who hear nothing but the Law are left in their sins to tremble and to shake. A chaplain in a prison once preached a sermon in two parts, the one delivered on one Sunday with the promise that the second would be delivered on the following Sunday. In the first sermon, the preacher thundered with the Law, giving full place to all of its curses and threats so that the hearers were left in a condition of terror and fright. The preacher ended his sermon by saying that he had proclaimed to them the Law in all of its severity and that the next Sunday he would preach to them the Gospel with all its sweetness and hope. Later he was criticized for preaching only Law in the first sermon. When he defended himself by saying that he had promised the Gospel for the next Sunday, he was asked: *“But what about those three prisoners who are to be hanged this week?”* We cannot wait with the message which alone restores the soul.

The Law indeed must be preached, but this must be followed by the Gospel which gives, bestows,

promises, and confers the precious gift of forgiveness, life, and salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. When a man hears “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Galatians 3:10 This person is left without hope unless he or she also hears that: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” Galatians 3:13 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.” Romans 10:4 “He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul.” Amen

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, God of mercy and grace, we come before you with thanksgiving for all the blessings of body and soul which you have abundantly poured out upon your unworthy servants. In spite of our many sins and transgressions, we ask you to remember us with gifts of loving kindness for all our days that we might enjoy all those good things which are at hand for your sheep. To this end bless the Word we have just heard. For Jesus' sake, Amen