The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Alleluia.

By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. Alleluia!

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous!

For praise from the upright is beautiful.

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him,
on those who hope in His mercy.

To deliver their soul from death,

and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord;

He is our help and our shield.

BLESS YOURSELF WITH THE HOLY CROSS AND SAY:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

PRAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name,
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;

and lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

PRAY THE MORNING OR EVENING PRAYER

Morning: I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Evening: I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that You would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Your hands, I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.
**SCRIPTURE:** Ezekiel 34:11-16 *I Seek Out My Sheep*

The false shepherds make prey of what’s been committed to their protection. They don’t fight and die to spare the sheep from the wolves. They feed their own bellies and tell the sheep what their itching ears desire. As the sheep get what they want, and not what they need, they grow fat, flop over on the ground, and let the wild beasts gorge themselves. The Lord cannot let this continue. God himself, bearing a real human nature, has come to shepherd His church with His Word. He doesn’t serve Himself. He serves His sheep with salvation and eternal life. He leads them often through rough and slippery paths, but He knows what’s best. He knows how to deliver from evil. **O Jesus, find me when lost, bind me when injured, and strengthen me when weak. Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** Hebrews 13:20, 21 *It is Finished*

St. Paul blesses his hearers at the end of his sweeping sermon to his countrymen. The benediction is founded on the sacrificial offering of Christ’s blood that has pacified God and secured a new and eternal testament. In this New Testament, men don’t have to earn or retain their salvation by works. God’s kindness has been secured by Christ. The old propitiatory sacrifices have come to an end having been perfected by Jesus’ cross, resurrection, and ascension. The new sacrifices of faith, thanksgiving, and praise have come. By the preaching and administration of this New Testament, God works in us to do what is pleasing in his sight. **Grant me faith to hear Your Word which carries from death to life, O Jesus. Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 23 *The Lord is My Shepherd*

This is a psalm for terrified sheep who are moments away from being torn to shreds by a pack of wolves. Some of the sheep have been given the gift of discerning true and false teachers, of telling good shepherds from the bad and sheep from wolves in sheep’s clothing. They hear the confusion of works with God’s kindness in Christ and they sound the alarm. Thanks be to God! But for many of us who struggle with the nuances of theological debate, it’s enough to be taught from the Scriptures that we have enemies who hate Jesus’ voice. That’s why the Holy Spirit, through this psalm, teaches us to confess the reality of the enemies’ attack and gives us words to use in prayer against them. **Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:21-25 *By His Wounds You are Healed*

St. Peter’s words are too high and lofty to be written by a man who knows nothing about despair in the face of sin and joy at hearing the Absolution. Even for saints who take comfort in the promise of forgiveness for Christ’s sake, St. Peter’s encouragement to suffer mingled together with the comfort of the atonement is more than flesh and blood can fathom. But it’s true! Don’t avoid the cross. Embrace it with faith. Keep from sin when enemies threaten to devour you. Entrust yourselves to Him who judges justly. What’s the worst that can happen? Your sins can’t damn you. By Jesus’ wounds you’ve been healed. Our Good Shepherd even knows the way through suffering and death to life. He will not lead his sheep astray. **Lead thou on, O Christ! Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** John 10:11-16 *Hired Hands*

“Hired hands” belong to one of two groups. The first consists of gurus and visionaries who vie for your sacrifices of attention, time, and money. If you pay, they promise pastures of sensual gratification and material abundance. They lie. A Christian who knows the catechism by heart sees these false shepherds from miles away and avoids them. The second and more dangerous group are men who claim to pastor Christ’s church, but, fearing rejection, won’t speak in the message of absolution and redemption. They want, and not what they need, they grow fat, flop over on the ground, and let the wild beasts gorge themselves. The Lord cannot let this continue. God himself, bearing a real human nature, has come to shepherd His church with His Word. He doesn’t serve Himself. He serves His sheep with salvation and eternal life. He leads them often through rough and slippery paths, but He knows what’s best. He knows how to deliver from evil. **O Jesus, find me when lost, bind me when injured, and strengthen me when weak. Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 70 *Make Haste to Deliver Me*

This is a psalm for terrified sheep who are moments away from being torn to shreds by a pack of wolves. Some of the sheep have been given the gift of discerning true and false teachers, of telling good shepherds from the bad and sheep from wolves in sheep’s clothing. They hear the confusion of works with God’s kindness in Christ and they sound the alarm. Thanks be to God! But for many of us who struggle with the nuances of theological debate, it’s enough to be taught from the Scriptures that we have enemies who hate Jesus’ voice. That’s why the Holy Spirit, through this psalm, teaches us to confess the reality of the enemies’ attack and gives us words to use in prayer against them. **Make haste, O God, to deliver me! Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** John 5:22-30 *My Judgment is Just*

All judgment has been given to the Son. But now, in this hour of grace, Jesus calls his sheep through sermons, baptism, and teaching. He extends His shepherding Word to the ends of the earth that “whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.” When the final day comes, and Jesus returns on a cloud in glory, the saints who have passed from death to life will hear not the voice of a terrible judge, but their Good Shepherd who has already promised eternal mercy and blessing. With their sins long since forgiven, their good works follow them, and they enter the resurrection of life. **Grant me faith to hear Your Word which carries from death to life, O Jesus. Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** 1 Peter 2:21-25 *By His Wounds You are Healed*

St. Peter’s words are too high and lofty to be written by a man who knows nothing about despair in the face of sin and joy at hearing the Absolution. Even for saints who take comfort in the promise of forgiveness for Christ’s sake, St. Peter’s encouragement to suffer mingled together with the comfort of the atonement is more than flesh and blood can fathom. But it’s true! Don’t avoid the cross. Embrace it with faith. Keep from sin when enemies threaten to devour you. Entrust yourselves to Him who judges justly. What’s the worst that can happen? Your sins can’t damn you. By Jesus’ wounds you’ve been healed. Our Good Shepherd even knows the way through suffering and death to life. He will not lead his sheep astray. **Lead thou on, O Christ! Amen.**

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**SCRIPTURE:** Psalm 23 *The Lord is My Shepherd*

David sings a hymn to Jesus. That’s what I would title this hymn if they let me near the sub-heading machine at the Bible-publisher’s office. David, being a prophet, saw Jesus’ compassion in forgiving the sins of conscience-stricken men, men like himself. He saw his Lord lead His flock through death, having entered into Himself, so He might lead them back out to resurrected life where evil can no longer touch them. He saw how Jesus’ shepherding Word held forth in and out of season, no matter how demons and false teachers raged. In this church and with this hope, David saw how goodness and mercy follow him and all the saints. This is how they know they shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. **Shepherd me by Your Word, O Jesus. Amen.**