

Gathering Music:

Sheep May Safely Graze – from *Was mir behagt, ist nur die muntre Jagd*, BWV 208
- J. S. Bach. Recording by The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra,
<https://www.rpo.co.uk>

The cantata was written to celebrate the birthday of Christian, Duke of Saxe-Weissenfels in 1713. The text of this soprano aria is as follows:

Sheep may safely graze and pasture
In a watchful Shepherd's sight.

Those who rule with wisdom guiding
Bring to hearts a peace abiding
Bless a land with joy made bright.

He Shall Feed His Flock, from The Longest Night, by Joseph M. Martin, Shawnee Press, publisher's promotional recording.

Sacred Story: John 10:11-21a

11-13 "I am the Good Shepherd. The Good Shepherd puts the sheep first, sacrifices for them if necessary. A hired hand is not a real shepherd. The sheep mean nothing to the hired hand, who sees a wolf come and runs for it, leaving the sheep to be ravaged and scattered by the wolf. The sheep don't matter to the hired hand.

14-18 "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own sheep know me. ¹⁵ In the same way, the One who gives me life knows me and I know the One who gives me life. I put the sheep before myself, giving my life if necessary.

¹⁶ You need to know that I have other sheep in addition to those in this pen. I need to gather and bring them, too. They'll also recognize my voice. Then there will be one flock, one Shepherd. ¹⁷ This is why the One who gives me life loves me: because I freely lay down my life. And so, I am free to take it up again. ¹⁸ No one takes it from me. I lay it down of my own free will. I have the right to lay it down; I also have the right to take it up again. I received this authority personally from the One who gives me life."

19-21a This kind of talk caused another split in the Jewish ranks. A lot of them were saying, "He's crazy, a maniac—out of his head completely. Why bother listening to him?" But others weren't so sure: "These aren't the words of a crazy man."