

You Are in the Valley with Jesus

Psalm 23 is a very personal Scripture. There is no "we" or "our" or "us" in this Psalm. Rather, there is only "I" and "my" and "me". "The Lord is "my" shepherd, "I" shall not want."

This is because when David, the King of Israel, wrote this Psalm, he was talking about the way he had personally experienced God, the way he had personally experienced God's love and care.

You see, King David personally experienced God as the provider of his every need, as the guide leading him through his life, and as the protector who would guard him amidst every hardship.

As you read and re-read Psalm 23, I invite you to understand this Psalm in the same personal way. God is your provider, your guide, and your protector, because God loves and cares about you.

This is so important as you face this coronavirus pandemic. That as you are isolated in your home, wondering if you will get sick, the God who made heaven and earth has his eye on you.

The centerpiece of this Psalm is verse 4, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me."

I've been thinking about the phrase "shadow of death". In the Bible this is metaphor for thick, deep darkness. The idea is that sometimes in life, you are overshadowed by dark, dark days.

This coronavirus pandemic is such a time. You are right now being overshadowed by some very dark days, isolated at home, maybe laid off your job, hoping and praying you won't get sick.

Many years ago, I was reading this Psalm to a man named Myron. Myron had severe kidney disease, and he had decided after many years, to stop dialysis, which would mean he would die.

After we read this Psalm, he looked at me and said, "I'm definitely in that valley, aren't I, Pastor Tom?" I might even be afraid if I were there all by myself, so thanks for being here with me."

However, Myron and I talked about someone more important than me, who was with him in that valley, the Lord Jesus, the good Shepherd himself, was there with him to guide him through it.

I sincerely encourage you, my friends in Christ, to think similarly about yourself today. As you face the coronavirus, or any other dark challenge in your life, notice who's in the valley with you.

Even as you are surrounded by thick, deep darkness, even as you are overshadowed by the coronavirus and all the personal, social and economic trouble it is causing, you are not alone.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd himself, is with you, he is leading you, and he knows his way around and through a dark valley or two. So, let him lead you through this one.

In the Psalm it says, "I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff – they comfort me." I will admit to you, there are times in my life when it was hard for me to not fear evil.

Both of my children were born through emergency C-sections. In each case, doctors and nurses were moving quickly and obviously were anxious to remove the baby, and so I was afraid.

I was afraid for my wife, afraid for my children, and afraid for myself. I was afraid, but not alone. It was my confidence in the presence of Jesus Christ with me that comforted me.

So, maybe you do feel anxious, even a little afraid, this morning, about the coronavirus, about getting sick, about unknown days ahead, about lack of money, or about something else.

If are anxious and afraid about anything, do not feel bad, do not feel alone, because even as you face dark difficult days, the Lord Jesus, your provider, your guide, your protector, is with you.

He has had his eye on you since the day you were born. He has had his Holy Spirit living in you since the day you were baptized. And he has a right path, to lead you through these dark days.

God personally loves and cares about you. "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'."

That "I" and that "me" is you. In fact, "Right now you're in that valley", and Jesus is there too. Jesus who is "Good Shepherd" and who is also "Light of the World" is there with you too.

And He will use his rod and staff to protect you, his light to guide you, and his love to save you from the coronavirus, and to save you from whatever else in the world is troubling you.

So, stay close to Jesus. He's already closer than you think. Do you hear your breath? Can you feel your heartbeat? He's that close to you in every dark valley, saving you in every way.

Amen.