

“Reflection on Psalm 23”

A sermon by the Rev. Frances Savill
Sunday, March 22, 2020 / 4th Sunday in Lent

Psalm 23

A psalm of David.

¹The Lord is my shepherd. He gives me everything I need.

² He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.

He leads me beside quiet waters.

³ He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths
for the honor of his name.

⁴Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,

I will not be afraid.

You are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff
comfort me.

⁵You prepare a feast for me
right in front of my enemies.

You pour oil on my head.

My cup runs over.

⁶I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life.

And I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.

New International Reader's Version (NIRV)

Message: Reflection on Psalm 23

We read these words at many difficult times of our lives.

You might have memorized these words at school or Sunday School.

They are wonderful words to pray and reflect on.

The *Lord* is my shepherd.

The *Lord* who is my Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, the *Lord* who is my rock and refuge, who has been with me in every trial and storm, my Saviour, my King, the one who is enthroned over all things, *is* my shepherd in this trial and storm today.

The Lord *is* my shepherd. He is a very present help in every time of trouble.
He *is* the reigning Lord over all, today.
He is the good Shepherd.
The one who laid down his life for us, shepherds and cares for us today.
Shepherds know about foolish, wondering sheep.
Shepherds know each sheep by name, and the needs of each one.

The Lord is my Shepherd, *there is nothing more I need.*
There may be things I would like, but there is nothing more I need.

*He lets me lie down in fields of green grass.
He leads me beside quiet waters.*

There is much chaos, and things are changing, swirling around us moment to moment.
But in turning to God in prayer, in faith, we find the quiet centre again.
The noise continues, there are still demands, problems to be solved, but there is also
peace because we are held in the arms of love.

He gives me new strength.

I still like the old words for this line “He restores my soul.”
In days of confusion and anxiety, my soul often needs restoring.
And I certainly do need new God given strength.

As I rest in the arms of God, as I trust in the Good Shepherd, that he will provide what
is needful, I find peace, restoration and new strength.

*The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing more I need,
he makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters,
he restores my soul.*

*He guides me in the right paths
for the honor of his name.*

How often do we wonder if we are doing the right thing these days?
But our Shepherd will guide us, he will show us how to live rightly in *these* days.

*Even though I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid.
You are with me.*

*Your shepherd's rod and staff
comfort me.*

Walking *through* this dark valley isn't easy.
We'd like to get through it quickly, we'd like to know what is going to happen, we'd like to be out at the other end where we know all is well and the warm sun is on our backs, but there is only one way *through* the way and that is one step at a time, one day at a time.

But our gracious, great, loving Shepherd walks with us.

I found a short poem to share:

There is a path
that we're called to walk on,
but it requires holding onto God's hand.
So you'll have to let go
of the struggles you're carrying,
and let Jesus lead you as only He can.

The path before you
is topsy and turvy,
with mountaintops high
and valleys so low,
so lean only on God:
not your own understanding,
and you can trust Him to never let go.

Special Blessing for you Today by Karla Dornacher

The reminder is that God holds our hand as we walk each step through this valley, and so we do not need to fear.
There is nothing in life, nothing in death that can separate us from the steadfast love of God, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

*You prepare a feast for me
right in front of my enemies.
You pour oil on my head.
My cup runs over.*

The image of the Psalm changes, and it always startles me.

How is it that God prepares a feast for us, and at this feast we are vindicated in front of our enemies?

What *enemies* are you fighting with these days?

We have many enemies; fear, depression, anxiety, people, situations, addictions, sickness, discouragement.

Can you imagine God preparing a feast for you, you are the guest of honour, God anoints you with the oil of gladness and healing, your cup is overflowing with blessings, and your *enemies*, whatever/whoever they are, see it all?

God is going to see us through this trial.

God is going to see you through this struggle.

As we allow God to shepherd us through these days, as he guides us along the right paths, as we place our hand in His, we will find ourselves at the banquet table, with cup overflowing.

*I am sure that your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life.*

*And I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.*

I pray that you will know the goodness and love of God following and upholding you today.

May God give you strength and peace.

May God bless you that you may share those blessings, especially with those who are most in need around us.

Please pray for each other, and for the whole church.

Please pray for our community and our world.

Please continue to encourage and build each other up through phone conversations, cards, letters, and social media.

We are part of the body of Christ- may Christ be seen in us today.

Amen.

Rev. Frances