

Good Shepherd/Confirmation

Grace and Peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My brothers and my sisters in Christ Jesus, on this Good Shepherd Sunday, which also happens to be the weekend that 7 young men and women will be confirmed, we are going to meditate on one of the most well-known portions in all of Scripture. The 23rd Psalm. We read:

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

I am going to read for you a few statements entitled: "What people don't know about you."

- They don't know just how hard you try.
- They don't know just how much it hurts.
- They don't know just how much you are carrying.
- They don't know just how brave you are being.
- They don't know just how tired you are.
- They don't know how much you long for a break in the clouds.

But we know, we all know. Not because we know you, but because we know ourselves. There is a great push in our minds to pretend that everything in this life is all going to go pleasantly, or if you just make the right choices and work hard enough, you can make it so. But that really isn't the reality. This life is hard. This life is devastating. You will not make it through this life unscathed. If you are a human. At least one of those hits home for you. It

might be one, it might be all of them. And if it is none of them, I can guarantee that at one point in time, it was true. There will be a time when it is true.

An interesting point is that this concept is most certainly shown in Scripture. Even in one of the most well-known sections of the Bible, suffering, hardship, death, are all present. Ever since the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden, sin has corrupted every facet of our existence on this planet, and you have felt it so well.

We, as humans, are placed in the picture as sheep. As sheep who are living on a plane of existence with needs. Food and water that need to be found, found to stay our hunger and quench our thirst. Paths that must be trodden. The deepest and darkest of valleys, valleys of the shadow of death that will darken our road. Enemies that sit near to us. Even at the end, there is the acknowledgment that one day this life will end.

But if all of this is in here, why are these such comforting words? Hunger and thirst, enemies and shadows, even death itself? But there is a reason that when all else seems to be crumbling, this Psalm speaks peace to a pierced heart. There is a reason that this section is so often bookmarked, and printed, and selected for occasions like a funeral of a dear loved one.

God doesn't say in our Psalm that there will never be hardships, and challenges, or difficulties in this life. He does say that he will be there for you. He does say that he will get you through. Furthermore, he does say that whatever might come your way that he will be able to bring consolation and his power to go through to bear up under those difficulties. He does say that he will lead you through those dark valleys. Lead you to the green pastures where you will be fed. To the quiet and gentle streams where your soul is restored. He will feed you in the presence of your enemies.

When there seems to be nothing there. No hope, no consolation, no comfort, there is something that is always there. Your loving Savior, your Good Shepherd, your Jesus is there. He is always there.

God does that in the ways that he always has. Your Good shepherd leads you, hungry and dying of thirst, to his Gospel. The green pastures and life – giving waters of his Word, where you are fed and refreshed and are assured of the forgiveness of sins.

Your Good Shepherd, when you are walking through the darkest of valleys, valleys that you might not know how you will get through, valleys that might include death, is there to calm your fears. In God's Word you are convinced that even though I might not know how this will end, my Jesus does, and he promises that he will bring me through in the way that is best for me. Even in the presence of my enemies, of people who wish me harm and pain, my Good Shepherd, my Savior is there to feed me, to protect me, to bless me.

And even when all else fails. When your body itself fails. When the effects of the sinful world claim you. When you close your eyes in death. Your Savior does not fail you. Even at the moment of death, you will go to be with your Savior in heaven. Jesus, who has always been there, will still be there. He will take you to dwell in his house forever. His pasture where we will be shielded and protected from any effects of the sinful world. A place where we will never hunger nor thirst, feel alone or rejected, hurt or harmed, or tired.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this is why you need your Savior. You will always need him. You will always need the comfort that he alone provides. Likewise, you will always need his Word and his promises and his grace, and he will always provide it to you.

In any crisis, in any hardship, continue to go back to where your Savior goes to feed you. When those times come, when the clouds roll in, when pain is a constant companion, when even death is lurking around the corner. Look to your Jesus. He will always be there. Be regular in his Gospel, to feed your faith and trust in him, and he will always give you the strength you need to keep going. Continue to go back to his Sacraments, remembering your Baptisms and going to our Lord's Supper, there your sins forgiven, your Saviors love proven and given.

This life is hard. Your Savior is always there. This life is hard. You need your Saviors help. Jesus knows how much it hurts, and he is there to take that pain away. Jesus knows just how much you are carrying, he is there to lighten your burdens. Jesus knows how brave you are

trying to be, he is there to give you strength to continue to be brave. Jesus knows how tired you are, he is there to give you rest for your soul.

Jesus knows how much you long for a break in the clouds. He knows. Jesus is there. And one day Jesus will give you a break that will last for all eternity.

To all of you gathered here today, and especially to you young men and women making your promises before God, there may come a day when you are in the presence of your enemies, there may come a day when the green pastures seem oh so far away, there may come a day when you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. There may come a day when you have nothing. When Jesus is all that you have. And that will be all that you need. Amen.