

Series: Psalm 23

Sermon: The Lord Is Our Comfort

Scripture: Psalm 23:4

Teacher: Jeff Norris

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Psalm 23 (ESV)

¹ *The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.*

² *He makes me lie down in green pastures.*

He leads me beside still waters.

³ *He restores my soul.*

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

⁴ ***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.

⁵ *You prepare a table before me*

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

⁶ *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me*

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD

forever.

The valley ...

Why a valley?

1. A valley is the gentlest grade to higher places
2. A valley is the most-well watered landscape
3. A valley contains the richest and greenest grass

The valley of **deep darkness** ...

"Pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world." - C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

"The will of God, I have discovered, will never take me where the grace of God cannot keep me, protect me, sustain me, calm my fears and teach me." Christopher Parkening, *Grace Like a River*

I will fear no evil, for **you are with me** ...

He said to Jacob, "I am with you and will keep you wherever you go..." (Gen. 28:15)

He said to Moses, "My Presence will go with you and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14)

He said to Joshua, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:5)

He said to Israel, "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand ... when you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not consume you." (Isaiah 41:10; 43:2)

And the last thing Jesus said before ascending into heaven: "Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)

Your **rod** and your **staff**, they **comfort** me ...

The Rod

1. Power and Authority
2. Discipline
3. Examine and count the sheep
4. Protection

The Staff

1. To draw the sheep together
2. To guide the sheep
3. To rescue the sheep

Why? Why so much suffering with so little respite? Lord, you say let the little children come to me ... why do so many of them – so many of us -- walk such treacherous paths to get there? This morning I sat with the question, "Who do you say I am?" I thought about my experience of Jesus in the darkest valleys of evil and death. I can authentically say He has been the following: steadfast. Non-judgmental at every turn. Non-explanatory for His ways yet confident in them. Fully, unconditionally loving. A very present I Am with you. Vulnerably unapologetic in His radical love for me and others. Powerful. Mysterious yet constant. Simply who He is – I Am who I Am. There are so many things that religion and systems and society have portrayed as Jesus – and I don't claim to have some special connection available to me and not others. But what I have found is that if you simply sit with Him in the silence – if you come as you really are, not as you think you should be – and you just let Him love you, you will find rest for your weary soul. You will get to know Jesus as He is, not as a rule-obsessed, record-keeping, fun-hating, cheesy dictator; but a freedom-giving, fully present, completely understanding, wholly forgiving and unconditionally loving friend who has no intention or desire of leaving you, even when it's messy – maybe especially then. He is Immanuel – the God who is with us. – Moran Cheek, Instagram: @seedsandleaven

Romans 8:35-39

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, not anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Purchase the book Jeff mentioned

[A Sheep Remembers, David Calhoun](#)