

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

The Lord makes me lie down / in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

You restore my soul, O Lord,

and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall 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, and my cup is running over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

There was once a Shakespearean actor who was known everywhere for his one-man shows of readings and recitations from the classics.

He would always end his performance with a dramatic reading of Psalm 23.

Each night, without exception, as the actor began his recitation

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. The crowd would listen attentively.

And then, at the conclusion of the Psalm, they would rise in thunderous applause in appreciation of the actor's incredible ability to bring the verse to life.

But one night, just before the actor was to offer his customary recital of Psalm 23, a young man from the audience spoke up. *Sir, do you mind I recite the psalm?"*

The actor was quite taken back by this unusual request,

but he allowed the young man to come forward and stand front and center

on the stage to recite the Psalm, knowing that the ability of this unskilled youth would be no match for his own talent.

With a soft voice, the young man began to recite the words of the Psalm.

When he was finished, there was no applause.

There was no standing ovation as on other nights.

All that could be heard was the sound of weeping.

The audience had been so moved by the young man's recitation,

That every eye was full of tears.

Amazed by what he had heard, the actor said to the youth,

I don't understand. I have been performing Psalm 23 for years.

I have a lifetime of experience and training - but I have never been able to move an audience as you have tonight. Tell me, what is your secret?"

The young man quietly replied, *Well sir, you know the Psalm...*

I know the Shepherd.

I want us to know the shepherd, my friends, not just the psalm.

So, invite you to go through the psalm with me

in such a way that these words become your words this day and every day.

This psalm is our psalm, our promise from God, our help and comfort in life.

Let's go through the psalm as a way to remind ourselves

all that God has done for us.

This is grace, free and underserved grace, goodness freely given.

And as we read each phrase,

we will give pause for you to thank God for that particular grace.

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

You restore my soul, O Lord,

and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil;

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

In this verse I hear.../ What do you hear?/...Thank you God

Let's all say it together, shall we?

Or what you can recall or what you need to hear.

Stand up. Go ahead, I'll wait.

Stand up, and together we will say the same like we mean it

Like we need to hear it. *Psalm 23*

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Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Let us pray:

Jesus, you're my Good Shepherd

You know and call me by name.

I hear your voice and know you are near.

Bless me.

Care for me.

Be my guide.

Protect me.

Comfort me.

Stay by my side.

Lord, your love holds me close

And leads me day by day.

Let me always hear your voice

And follow it, I pray.

Amen.