

“Learning To Trust the Good Shepherd”

Message by DD Adams
Kemptown Providence U.M. Church
Holy Communion Sunday
Pack 369 Sunday @ 9:30AM
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The Old Testament lesson is 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 refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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. This is God’s word for God’s people.

Let’s pray. Father God, we’ve all been afraid so many times. But after we’re safe, and there’s no more cause for fear, we may wonder why we even had fear because it doesn’t help us. God, how can we keep our head calm in times when we feel you’ve left us? We’ve been told you never leave us, but still our feelings of fear persist. During these next few minutes Good Shepherd, open our hearts and minds to listen and learn. Amen.

Now that we've read Psalm 23, let's listen to verse 4 again; this is the verse I want to focus on. Here's verse 4, "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for *you* are with me."

Fear is something we all deal with, and I know lots of you [scouts] have already been in plenty of situations that would cause you to be afraid. [If you haven't then I'm sure those situations are coming.] So, the million dollar question is this. How do you learn and what do you do to conquer your fears?

Let's take Psalm 23 verse 4 as an example. The psalmist says, "**You** are with me." Who is the psalmist speaking of? God right? Or the Good Shepherd. Now—pretend you take the Shepherd or God out of your life, what happens? Well...all you've got is you then right? No one else to lean on and cry out to.

Taking a look at verse 1, when we take out the word *Shepherd*, the Psalm reads like this, I shall be in want or I'll lack. So what happens? Well, you're in need right? There's no one else to help you. In fact, *all through the entire Psalm*, when the Shepherd is taken out all that's left is *you or me*. There's no one else to help.

In verse 4, we walk through the darkest valley and we're afraid, all we have is *me, ourselves*, and it's so easy to only focus on the deep darkness when that's all we have. Now when you leave the word *Shepherd* in Psalm 23, it's not just you. You're not alone. You have a Protector and Provider right with you. You're safe.

There's no need to worry or fear, because the Good Shepherd is trustworthy and always has your best interest in mind. And those deep dark valleys—there's always plenty of shadows. But the question is this. Who do I have right by my side that will help lead me, protect me, and guide me?

As human beings, that's what we all have in common; it's part of our human experience—going through those deep dark valleys. But we're all so unique in who we are, we call the dark valleys different things. For example, it might be failure that is our dark valley, or being sick, or divorce, or losing a job or being betrayed by a friend, or worrying about how we might handle that bully that keeps threatening us. Or maybe we're afraid of a parent dying or a grandparent or a child. Whatever it is, all of us suffer dark valleys in our lives.

And past experiences can trigger fear. We can get scared because we've never done something before, and ignorance is our fear. But think about this, *can - you - imagine* - being a superhero and look fear right in the face and not be afraid in the least?

To walk through the deepest darkest valley, whatever that is for you, you can learn and know that God is with you. Whatever fear you've gone through and will go through in your life, the good news is that you can ask the Good Shepherd into your life and learn to trust him no matter who you are. But how do you learn to trust?

I'll tell right now, it's real easy to forget that we have a Good Shepherd who never leaves our side. But if we can just remember, to always trust Him. Let our fearful thoughts always go to Him first—in a time of danger and fear. But the learning comes in this. To make sure we've been including Him in our lives so we can remember that He's always there for us. To remember and practice that mindset regularly and daily in our lives.

Every time you have a thought that brings on the fear, pray silently to your Shepherd. Let your thoughts go first to Him. Ask Him to lead you to know what to do. Don't be in a hurry, He never is, and then allow your Shepherd to lead you. Every time a fearful thought or worry captures you, say a prayer, give it to your Good Shepherd, and ask for guidance. Allow yourself to learn by experience and practice, and keep practicing. Don't stop...then it becomes a lifestyle.

Now I know that most people would never want to tell anyone that fear is a problem they have.....but you can tell your Shepherd. He already knows it anyway. And sometimes, it just feels good to say it, out loud, with no secrets between you and Him.

More than anything today remember this. Psalm 23 is a personal song. It's for you and you alone. This life you're living...this is your story...nobody else's. And this Psalm; this is *your Psalm*.

The Lord is *my* shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes *me* lie down in green pastures, he leads *me* beside quiet waters, he refreshes *my* soul. He guides *me* along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, 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.

Let's pray. Lord you are my shield and protector. In a time of fear, help me to remember you're there beside me. Remind me to pray so I might learn how to trust you. Help us to remember that you are at work, but help us trust you in the midst of our questions, fears, and doubts. Amen.