



This Week's Message
January 28, 2024

Psalm 23:6

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 23:6
(New International Version)

Sunday's Scripture Reading ***Psalm 23***

¹*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.*
²*He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.*
³*He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.*
⁴*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*
⁵*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.*
⁶*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

—King James Version.

¹The Eternal is my shepherd, He cares for me always.
²He provides me rest in rich, green fields beside streams of refreshing water. *He soothes my fears;*
³He makes me whole again, steering me *off worn, hard paths* to roads where *truth and* righteousness echo His name.
⁴Even in the *unending* shadows of death's darkness, I am not overcome by fear. Because You are with me *in those dark moments*, near with Your protection and guidance, I am comforted.
⁵You spread out a table before me, *provisions* in the midst of *attack* from my enemies; You *care for all my needs*, anointing my head with *soothing, fragrant* oil, filling my cup again and again *with Your grace*.
⁶Certainly Your faithful protection and loving provision will pursue me where I go, always, everywhere, I will always be with the Eternal, in Your house forever.

—The Voice

On Sunday, I will conclude the series of messages from the 23rd psalm, as we study the final verse – *surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

There are a couple of words in that verse that I think are worth considering. The first is the beginning word, *surely*. The word *surely* is used in the 23rd psalm as a connecting word. It takes all that David has said in the previous verses and connects them to what he offers in the final verse.

Now, I should add that the word *surely* can be interpreted in more than one way. I will talk about this more on Sunday morning, but I will say here that *surely* is used here to affirm the promises in the psalm. It is David's way of saying, *because the Lord is my shepherd, because the Lord has led me beside the still waters and because the Lord has restored my soul, we can depend upon God to be with us, and especially trust that God will see us through the realities of life.*

David was well acquainted with many of the harsher realities of life. As I have mentioned in the course of this series, David's family had not been spared from tragedy. His

Questions to Consider –

* What makes it difficult for you to have hope in our present time? How does faith help you to maintain hope?

* How has this series of messages helped you to better understand and appreciate the 23rd psalm? What do you know about it now that you did not know previously?

* The 23rd psalm is not long, as it contains only 6 verses. But it certainly packs a lot into those 6 verses. What is your favorite verse of the psalm, and why?

* Each week, I have offered the 23rd psalm in 2 different versions – the King James Version and then another one. Have any of those other versions resonated with you in particular ways? Which one, or ones, and why? Which is your favorite translation in which to read the psalm?

* The 23rd psalm is much like the hymn, *Amazing Grace*, in that it is universally beloved. Why do you think that is so? What is it about the 23rd psalm that draws people to it?

* What other of the psalms are favorites of yours? Is the 23rd your favorite of all the psalms?

son, Absalom, lost his life in the course of a rebellion he had led against his father. That was a devastating loss for David, as you can imagine. David also survived assassination attempts and dealt with other tragedies that came to him. Sadly, many of those difficulties and tragedies were a result of David's actions, or lack of action in some circumstances. But what David always held to was hope. Even when, as he says in the 23rd psalm, he walks *through the valley of the shadow of death*, he will not fear. David is able to have that confidence because he has anchored his life in the loving, caring hands of God. The final verse of the psalm, then, is a declaration of hope. David was well aware of the realities of life, but hope always carried

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the day for him.

Sometimes – quite often actually – we find ourselves overwhelmed by the struggles and difficulties of life. There are some harsh realities that we face, and it doesn't take traveling very far down the road of life before we find this to be the case. In those moments, that is when we have a decision to make, and it can, at times, be a very difficult one. Will we be overcome by the struggles and the difficulties, or will we hold to hope, a hope that will pull us through and keep us strong? In my opinion, that's not much of a choice. I will choose hope over despair every time. I will always take the path of hope rather than the path of resignation. The 23rd psalm speaks powerfully to our age precisely because of this emphasis on hope. There are some very harsh realities in our world today, and those realities have resulted in many people giving up hope.

Another word worth considering is that of *forever*. I haven't left much space for writing about that word, so let me simply say that in this very impermanent world, the idea of *forever* is one that is quite comforting. Our world has become so temporary, and so transient, that we could probably strike the word *forever* from our collective vocabularies and it would not be replaced.

I look forward to seeing you on Sunday – God bless you!