

Learning Together Easter 4 Covid-19 Psalm 23

Have a cup, a small stack of paper and a pencil ready.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.

Psalm 23 is one of those passages in the Bible that is worth memorizing. Aside from being beautiful ancient poetry, which it is, the words of the 23rd Psalm can be very comforting when hard times come. And hard times do come, as we are all keenly aware right now. It is a hard thing to have to stay away from friends and family who we love, to not be able to hug them, even on their birthday or when they are feeling sad. It is a hard thing to have parades and trips and graduations cancelled or postponed. This time we are in now can sometimes feel like, as the Psalmist says, we are walking “through the darkest valley.” The next words of the Psalm are:

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff—
they comfort me.

What this Psalm reminds us, is that God is with us, even in these tough times. We do not need to be afraid or spend our time worrying, because God walks with us, just like shepherds walk alongside their sheep, leading them to green grass and fresh water, especially when the sheep are unsure which way to go. The shepherd protects them when the way is dangerous and takes care of the sheep. They are not alone. We are not alone, either. We can walk with each other through this dark time, too, even if that “walking” is done at a distance, experienced through videos, calls, and notes, rather than real walks and in-person visits.

The end of the Psalm reassures us that things will get better:

You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

This week, I have two challenges for you. The first, as I suggested earlier, is that you memorize Psalm 23, in whatever Bible version or song you like best. There are lots of good songs and videos on YouTube that might help you do that, or you can just look it up in your Bible at home.

My other challenge is to get a cup and make it overflow with blessings. Get or cut some small pieces of paper and put them with a pen or pencil next to a cup. Every time you pass by the cup, write or draw a picture of something in your life that is good – something you are grateful for – and put it in your cup. (*Demonstrate by adding a blessing or two you can quickly draw and/or write and adding them to the cup*) See how long it takes before your cup is overflowing with the blessings in your life!

Say this echo prayer with me.

Loving God...thank you for walking with us...like a shepherd...walks with sheep...leading us to good places...even when the way is scary....Help us to walk...with each other,...to be kind,...and to trust in your love...Amen