

### Goodness & Mercy Shall Follow Me

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

Grace & Peace to you, Dear Friends,

Well here we are in the midst of the 3<sup>rd</sup> wave of this Pandemic! We had really hoped that this would not be the case. However, here we are!

God calls us. Yes, God calls us to give thanks and count our blessings. Some days it is hard to do that and we seek shelter “under God’s wings”. Today, the sun is shining—and that makes all the difference. On the more gloomy days, we phone a friend, go for a walk, breathe deeply and carry on. **“Stay calm and carry on.” is truly good advice.**

One thing that sustains me greatly is to daily pray and read scripture. This week the lectionary scriptures are 1 John 3:16-24, John 10:11-18 and **PSALM 23**

**Please READ** now that page of scripture that is in the *attachment Scripture*.

Our main focus will be on the **PSALM 23**. Underline phrases that speak to you. Now, say that phrase 3 or 4 times—like a mantra.

This time I picked “He restores my soul.” Just saying it gives me comfort. When I have trouble falling asleep, often I try to say the whole psalm by heart. A big part of it is merely feeling God with me. Before I know it, I’m in “never, never land”. And many hours later wake up refreshed. I must admit, sometimes I have to say the psalm 3 or even 4 times before I let go and let God give me peace—“the peace that passes all understanding”.

The Lord is my shepherd—the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm –the best-known & the best-loved of all the 150 Psalms.

**“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”**

The Psalm speaks of the comfort that comes from an intimate relationship with God, the Almighty, especially in the midst of death and fear. For many people, the pastoral imagery, which has both wilderness and civilization, speaks to experiences of comfort and healing in our daily living. The psalmist knows of “want” (v. 2), deep valleys with “evil” (v. 4), and the “presence of enemies” (v. 5).

We can relate to this in this COVID time. I met 2 people in the grocery store this week. One woman was very angry. “I want to see my Mom & my grand kids. It’s been such a long time. She blamed the politicians & was so angry with them. Another said how he missed the seniors gatherings & seeing his friends. He was so sad. There is no denying that many of us are struggling with isolation & loneliness.

However, there is always safety in the presence of God. Let us look again at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm: There is an interesting shift from addressing God in the third person – “he” –(he leads me to still waters) to the second person – “you,” –you restore my soul—the second half is much more personal--the relationship is like that of a friend, a brother—all the days of my life, I will dwell in the house of God—even as I walk in the darkest valley. God is with me—I am not alone.

As I meditated--& prayed about the scriptures this week, it seemed there were 3 themes coming out of the main theme-of being upheld by God.—Our God is constant—always present. Our G is strong—our our protector—powerful against evil and our weakness & our G is loving—ever compassionate—slow to anger.—not jealous or rude.

The following story serves as an illustration.

It is from Vonnie from Florida. She begins with this scripture from Matthew 28:20 :

Jesus said, **“Remember I am with you always, to the end of the age.”**

Vonnie says, “ When I took my 2 year old grandson Sam to a preschool playground for the first time, he loved it! Sam was enjoying himself until he realized he could not see me. He ran to the center of the room with a look of panic on his face as he scanned the room, searching. I called to him, but in the busyness of the room, he couldn’t find me. Anxiously, Sam called out, “Grandma!” Immediately I went up and hugged him, reassuring him that I hadn’t left him. Comforted, Sam was soon off playing happily again.

Later as I reflected on Sam’s moment of panic, I realized that I also get overwhelmed at times. I can be too distracted by circumstances to recognize God’s presence. In those moments I look around wondering where God is, when in reality God is right there with me.

When Jesus gave the disciples the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), he reassured them saying, “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” That promise holds true for us today. What a comfort to know that no matter what happens or how bleak life may seem, we are safe under the Lord’s care.

**Let us pray:** Life-giving God, thank you for keeping us company during this now long pandemic. You never leave us alone. You are always with us, especially when life feels scary.

**“You restore my soul and my cup overflows.” AMEN.**

### **For the Merry Heart:**

1. Ships don't sink because of the water around them;  
ships sink because of the water that gets in them.  
Don't let what's happening around you get inside you  
and weigh you down.

2. Alice was sitting in the waiting room to see the new dentist. She noticed his DDS diploma which showed his full name and remembered a tall, handsome, dark-haired boy with the same name who had been in her high school class some 20-odd years ago. Could this be the same guy that she had a secret crush on, way back then?

Upon seeing him, however, she quickly discarded any such thought. This balding, gray-haired man with the deeply lined face was way too old to have been her classmate.

After he examined her teeth, she asked him if he had attended Morgan Park High School.

"Yes. Yes, I did. I'm a Mustang," he beamed with pride. I graduated in 1999. Why do you ask?"

"You were in my class!" She exclaimed.

He looked at her closely. Then, that ugly, old, bald wrinkled, fat, gray, decrepit son-of-a-gun asked, "What did you teach?"

My friends,

I hope you are doing well and staying safe. It was wonderful to have in-church services (Feb. 21 to April 18). Unfortunately, now we are limited to only 10 for worship—so we are doing emails & Canada Post to keep in touch. We follow the COVID rules as we did last fall. Hopefully the COVID numbers will continue to go down & the vaccinations will continue to increase.

Stay well.

Be at Peace.

Shalom, Annalee

P.S. **The Upper Rooms** for May/June have arrived. WABASH pick-up at the back door of the church.  
BOTHWELL come to the office Tuesdays 9:30-1:30