

Psalm 23

*Read Responsively; Congregation reads **highlighted words**.

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 paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **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 goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and **I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

Psalm 23:4

Even though I walk through **the valley** of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are **with** me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

We like **explanations** → *power & meaning; connection & purpose*

Psalm 23:4

- Middle of the psalm = *You are with me.*

{one slide; come up one at a time}

Explanation: God is the **explanation for me.**

Defiance: The **valley** will not be **my explanation.**

Invitation: *Would we allow God—the valley—to be the explanation for our lives?*

Mistakes Made in the Valley:

- A) Believing it is the **destination**
- B) Misunderstanding **God's place** in the valley
- C) Misunderstanding the valley's place **in our lives**

1) We must recognize that **God leads us** into the valley.

Revelation 13:8b (NKJV)

... the Lamb slain **from** the foundation of the world.

2) In the valley, we must not make **agreements** with our reasons **for fear**.

Agreement:

- **Passive to active: *He leads* → *I walk* ...**

Amos 3:3 (NKJV)

Can two **walk** together, unless they are **agreed**?

Three Facts About Fear & the Enemy:

- a) The enemy will **magnify the valley** (the reason to fear)
- b) The enemy will never **magnify God's presence**
- c) The enemy is **fearful**.

Revelation 12:12

"... the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that **his time is short!**"

2 Timothy 1:7-8a

for God gave us a spirit **not of fear** but of power and love and self-control. ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the **testimony about our Lord** ...

3) In the valley, we must **personally appropriate** God's presence by **confident trust**

- **How God is addressed: He to you**
- **Faith: in His Word and in the ministry of His Holy Spirit.**

Psalms 119:89 (NKJV)

Forever, O Lord, Your word is **settled** in heaven.

Valley & Our Feelings:

- **Feel like God is absent (When life is easy, feels like God is affirming us).**
 - *The first is wrong; the second might be.*
- **We must **prioritize** what God has put in **writing** over our **feelings**.**

Valley & Our Vindication:

1 Timothy 3:16

... [Jesus] was manifested in the flesh, **vindicated by the Spirit** ... taken up in glory.

Matthew 27:46

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying ... "My God, my God, why have you **forsaken** me?"

Luke 23:46

Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!” And having said this he breathed his last.

Valley & Our Vindication:

→ **Internal vindication** of the Holy Spirit

Romans 8:15-17

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to **fall back into fear**, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”¹⁶ The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**,¹⁷ and if children, then **heirs**—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we **suffer with him** in order that we may also be **glorified with him**.

The **with-ness** of God is our highest possible **good**.

4) In the valley, we must accept **the full reality** of His presence (*how He is with us*)

- Staff = **correction**
- Rod = **protection & possession**

John 10:14-15

I am the **good shepherd**. **I know my own** and **my own know me**,¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and **I lay down my life** for the sheep.