

Sermon - **Solace from the Psalm** - Mar 22, 20  
Palmyra Moravian Church



**A sense of calm.**

The Palmyra Moravian Church Chancel is dominated by the above painting of the Good Shepherd. It is so soothing.... One can imagine being seated in church, perhaps alone, gazing at the painting and allowing it to soothe oneself as one recalls the opening words of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm.

<sup>1</sup> *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.*

A wonderful solace it is.

I remember the old days in the city where I grew up, the two large cathedrals in the center of the city were open 24/7 and people could go in at any time to kneel and pray. One was able to experience a feeling of solemnity in the quietness of the cavernous cathedral with its vaulted arches and ceiling while the traffic outside tried to pierce the calmness with which the sanctuary surrounded one. Let us at this time seek to blot out the noises and experience that calm.

**Experiencing the presence of the Lord**

An interesting thing about the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm is that it moves from a conversation about the Lord to a conversation with the Lord.

In verses 2 to 3 the Psalmist refers to the Lord in the third person and is therefore speaking about the Lord as he continues-

<sup>2</sup> **He** makes me lie down in green pastures;

**he** leads me beside still waters;

<sup>3</sup> **he** restores my soul.

**He** leads me in right paths  
for his name's sake.

Whether the Psalmist is reminiscing or speaking to someone, it is not possible to say, but one can definitely say that in verses 1 to 3, the Psalmist is speaking **about** the Lord because he refers to the Lord by the third person pronoun '**he**'.

However, in verses 4 & 5 the Psalmist shifts to the second person as he refers to the Lord by the second person pronoun '**you**'. The Psalmist continues -

<sup>4</sup> *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.*

<sup>5</sup> ***You** prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
**you** anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*

The psalmist is now speaking directly to the Lord. The Psalmist is having a conversation with the Lord. The Psalmist is in the Lord's presence. Wow!

It is significant that the Psalmist has this experience of the presence of the lord when walking through the *darkest valley* or as the KJV puts it, through *the valley of the shadow of death*. It suggests that at this time in the life of our nation and of the nations of the world, we need to experience the presence of the Lord so that we fear no evil.

Let me give a word of caution, however. To experience the presence of the Lord is likely to be a mind-blowing experience. It was for Saul, who became Paul, because it was such a blinding experience.

It challenges us to rise to a higher level of spirituality so that while we may talk to others about the Lord, we in our prayers and in our life experiences, talk to the Lord and He to us.

### **Confidence in the Lord**

The result for us can be no less than it was for the writer/singer of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. He sang -

<sup>6</sup> *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.*

It is good to note that the Psalmist is assured of a blessed future, be it long life on earth or be the life after. As he sings of 'all the days of my life' he appears to be giving recognition to the fact that his time on earth may be three score and ten or more but it will be limited. But by his affirmation that he will dwell in the house of the Lord his whole life long, he appears to be referring to the life which will be experienced after death.

We must come to the point where we make that affirmation.

Allow me to close with a story.

Many, many years ago, one Sunday morning, I drove 65 miles to a rural area in Guyana to preach and serve Holy Communion at two village churches. Before heading home, I visited a parishioner who was said to be dying. As he lay in bed, he told me that he thanked God for the life he had and he was ready to go. I prayed with him and gave him the sacrament of Holy Communion. One month later I revisited the two churches and then went to the home of that man because I had heard nothing more. I met him in the yard, sitting in a chair, feeding chickens! It has always been my belief that his remarkable recovery was aided by his state of mind. He knew that he had served the Lord all the days of his life and that he was going to dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

### **Conclusion**

As we go through time which might be described as '*the valley of the shadow of death*'

- may we have the calmness which comes from knowing the Lord as our shepherd and have the confidence that the Lord will take care of us.
- may we have such intimacy with the Lord that we not only talk about the Lord but we have conversation with the Lord.
- then may we have the confidence that that no matter what the outcome, we will always be with the Lord, at his table, in his house.

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