

WELCOME TO...
The Presbyterian Church of
Saint David
EASTER May 07, 2017



Jesus as Shepherd, Ethiopian, Bibliotheque national de France, Paris, 20th century.

Hymn: Lead me Jesus I will follow

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In the darkest valley, at the banquet table; in the hard work of life, at the moments of ease; in our day-to-day reality, at times set aside - like this time, now- for worship, for listening, for paying attention; with every step we take: goodness and mercy follow us; our cups overflow.

Prayer of Confession: *Lord, we would follow you wherever you might lead. Lord, we would follow you. Forgive us when we stumble and when we stray. Forgive us when, distracted we lose our way. Be the one to whom we turn, whose hand we hold, the Shepherd who leads us safely to the fold. Lord, we would follow you wherever you might lead. Lord, we would follow you.*

Hymn: Follow me the Master said

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Psalm 23

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. 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. 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.

Hymn: All the way my Saviour leads me (1-2)

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The journey of the Psalmist

The pastoral images that dominate the beginning of the psalm (shepherd, the verdant fields, and the waters of repose) actually work together to describe a *journey* that Yahweh oversees and guides. The rest in green pastures is in fact but a temporary repose (v. 2a). This psalmist is on the go, walking beside the water, along

paths, and through valleys (vv. 2-4).

After the description the blessing that awaits the psalmist in the house of the Lord (v. 5), the text again pictures the psalmist in motion: "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life" (KJV). The word "follow" here (*radaph*) is better translated "pursue," a surprising verb given that it is usually the *enemies* that are pursuing the psalmist with an intent to overtake and destroy (e.g., Psalms 7:1; 35:3; 143:3). Furthermore, in this same verse, the word "surely" (*ʿaq*) is better translated "only." Thus it's not the enemies in hot pursuit. Instead, "*only* goodness and mercy will be chasing me down."

For consideration: "All the questions and concerns in Psalm 22 are answered and affirmed in Psalm 23."

The two psalms share vocabulary and concepts, thus strengthening an argument for connecting them. Psalm 23 expresses confidence in God as shepherd to the psalmist. In Psalm 22, however, the psalmist accuses God of being far away and not answering the psalmist's cry for help; of being silent when those around mock and shake their heads; of paying no heed when bulls and lions and dogs and evildoers surround; and of ignoring the fact that the psalmist's body is shriveled and emaciated.

Indeed, in Psalm 22, God lays the psalmist in "the dust of *death*" (verse 15), "*because*" (verse 16), "a band of *evildoers* surround" (verse 16). The singer cries out, "but *you*, O LORD, *do not be far from me*" (verses 11, 19), for "*trouble* is nearby" (verse 11).

In contrast, in Psalm 23, even while walking through "the valley of the shadow of *death*" (verse 4), the psalmist will fear no "*evil*" (verse 4), "*because*" (verse 4), "*you are with me*" (verse 4). In fact, God prepares a table for the psalmist "in front of my *troublers*" (verse 5). Reading Psalm 23 as a word of trust in answer to the heartfelt lament of Psalm 22 may add a new dimension of understanding to both psalms. Connecting them does not diminish the individual poetic and theological character of either, but rather creates a powerful statement of trust in the Lord.

Nancy deClaisse-Walford

Hymn: All the way my Saviour leads me (3)

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Invitation:

Jesus invites us into an unique community founded on teaching, praying, breaking bread and coming together in a unique relationship with God and one another called *koinonia* – a community created and founded on Jesus Christ who meets us as we sit at table together. **At this table we come together as the guests of Jesus.**

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

The Lord is here. God's spirit is with us.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise. (Continue in thanksgiving)

O God, giver of all that is good,

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. May we know you in the teaching, praying, breaking of bread and especially in the communion we share with one another. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other.

Hymn: You satisfy the hungry heart (verses 1 -3)

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Communion

Prayer after Holy Communion

We have been fed at the banqueting table prepared for us in love and sacrifice.

Nourished, we go out into our daily lives to share the blessings of God.

Hymn: You satisfy the hungry heart (verses 4-5)

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Through each day's living as it unfolds, may goodness and mercy make their way into every moment. At the doorway to the house of the Lord of life, may we recognise your home and your hearth. And in the song that makes a dwelling-place in your heart, may its music rise in our soul.