



## Wednesday Prayer

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost – Death and Life

### 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.**

This Psalm always reminds me of death. It is often read to those who are dying, or woven into funeral services. In reading this Psalm today, I feel overwhelmed by the many things that we face in our own personal or collective dark valleys. In these dark valleys, it may feel like a “death by a thousand cuts.” It’s not always just one thing, but rather the culmination of many bad things. Historically, this form of torture was meant not only to cause pain, but also to leave one’s body broken in the afterlife, eliminating hope in this life and the next.

That’s what dark valleys can feel like. It can be hard to find comfort. Sexual abuse and exploitation do so much damage to God’s children. We need to share the deep love of this Psalm that is there for all to receive. Prevention is key, but healing and hope are crucial as well. Our Lord is the shepherd who cares for each and every one of us! When we care and pray for the youth in our congregations, when we support the youth in our communities through prevention and healing programs, when we commit to doing the work to keep them safe and educated, and when we are there to support them in the inevitable dark valleys – then we are living out our calling to be disciples of Christ.

**Loving Creator God, restore our souls. Lead us on right and safe paths, and cry out alongside us when we do encounter evil. In the midst of every challenge, remind us we are not alone. Shepherd of all, defend your children from predators and keep them close. May your goodness and mercy support us in this lifetime, and reassure us of the safe and loving place where we will also dwell in your eternal home. Amen.**

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Written by Nancy Rogness, former member of the Cherish All Children Bishop’s Task Force, team leader at Valley of Peace Lutheran Church, Golden Valley, MN, and survivor.