

Does it seem like you're down in a valley?

Last Sunday, the Choir sang a choir version of “The 23rd Psalm;” one chorus of the song says “Even when I walk through the *valley of the shadow of death*, I will fear no evil... (for) You are on my side...” (“...for You are *with me*...” NKJV). We are living in fearful and uncertain times! A new Covid variant is rearing its ugly head, reigniting fear and uncertainty, sickness and death, and division as well. It might seem that *we as a church* have walked through the valley of the shadow of death this past year, looking at the number of deaths we've had within our congregation.

The two Hebrew words that make up *the shadow of death* can mean death, close to death, a physical or spiritual darkness, or a gloomy countenance. When we feel like we're in a deep dark valley, we might want to pick up our Bible and actually *read* Psalm 23. When we do, we will discover that our *valley* (v. 4) is sandwiched between green pastures and still waters in vs. 1-2 above, a feast in front of our enemies, God's anointing, *and* goodness and mercy in vs. 5-6 below, and everlasting life with Him at the end of the psalm! Wow!

“God on the Mountain” is a song that talks about how easy things are when we're up on the *mountains* in life, but when things change and we drop into a *valley*, our faith can be put to the test. The song goes on to say that we're *not alone*, that the God of the mountains, is still God in the valleys, and when things do go wrong, He will make them right. The God of the good times is still God in the bad times.

That's something the enemy of our souls wants us to forget; Satan has come to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10a), and he delights in stealing our joy, killing our faith, and destroying our hope when we're down in one of those dark valleys, wanting us to forget we are meant to walk in victory, not defeat! We need to remind ourselves that Jesus has come to not just give us life, but *abundant life!* (John 10:10b)

We will only live abundant, victorious lives when we read and believe what Psalm 23:1 says: “The Lord *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.” What do you lack in your valley? What do you want? Want faith? Want strength? Want peace? Want comfort? Want encouragement? Want company? **Look to the Shepherd!** John 10:11 says: “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.” Jesus is waiting and watching and over His sheep. When we don't know what to do, and our heart cries out to Him, He will rush to our side to rescue and comfort us, and we will lack nothing we have need of; His Presence will bring us fullness of joy! Amen!