

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
June 17, 2020

“WALK WITH JESUS”

“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.” Psalm 23:4

I want to recommend a portion of Scripture to you. Perhaps you're already familiar with it. I'm talking (writing) about the 23rd Psalm. Right in the middle of it is a verse that I find particularly encouraging in troubled times, and aren't these days "troubled times"? I remember times when I had the opportunity to minister to members of my previous congregation, and some here too, who had experienced losses, heartaches, and suffering way beyond anything that I believe I could endure. This particular verse became my regular starting point in pointing out the enduring presence of Jesus even in our darkest times. King David writes, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God; *“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.* (Psalm 23:4) The word that JUMPS OFF the page here for me is "through". I, we, you, will at times walk THROUGH this terrible dark valley, this place where death seems to hover all around us, but the word through tells me that we won't be in this valley forever. We will indeed come out the other side, delivered by God's love and compassion, His providence and protection. Life on the other side of this valley very likely won't be the same as it was, but the darkness, fear and pain will subside. The light in our mind, soul and spirit will shine brighter once again. Just before verse 4, David reminds us that the Lord, our Good Shepherd, "Leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The paths of righteousness, or right paths, are safe routes to the proper destination that God is leading us to. Jesus Himself is that way, the righteous path. (John 14:6). In a world broken by sin and its effects that very path will at times lead through some of life's most frightening situations. Even on these stretches of roadway we have the promise of God's guiding presence, that He is with us even in the valley of the shadow of death. The Good Shepherd doesn't send His sheep into places He will not go, places that He has not already been. Jesus Himself walked through this very valley, not only a valley where death is a dark shadow but where death was an agonizing reality. He willingly went into this valley alone, abandoned even by His Father, to take on the powers of death and hell and destroy them for us. He knows, even more than we do, just what this valley is all about. Fear is one of, if not the, strongest of all our emotions. Jesus, being fully human as well as fully God, knows exactly what this emotion is all about too. In our dark times He walks with us. He continually guides us on the path that He wants us to travel, and even carries us in the times when we're too paralyzed by the evil all around us to continue to move forward on our own. A man named Martin Luther, a pastor and professor of theology (maybe you've heard of him too) said this, "Of whom shall I be afraid? One with God is a majority." In the Apostle's Creed, right at the very beginning we emphatically state..."I believe...in God the Father almighty." If we're truly being honest in this confession we take the almighty part to heart. We believe that there is not only no being with greater power than God, but none can come anywhere close. God has authority over all things through that almighty power so everything that can and does happen to us is under His control. He most certainly allows difficult and painful circumstances into our lives, but always with the purpose of leading us on our own personal path to righteousness, to the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, in whom we are made righteous (right) before God. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, *“We know that in all things God works together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.”* (Romans 8:28). The ultimate good that God is working for is our life; our eternal life with Him in His Kingdom. He uses all of the circumstances of this life, good, bad, and everything in between, to bring us to Himself and to keep us in His loving hands forever.