

Memorial Day and the 23rd Psalm

By Elise L. Moore, C.S.

On this Memorial Day we remember those faithful men and women who have given their lives in defending the right of freedom. In praying about them, the 23rd Psalm is so comforting.

In one sense we can view the 23rd Psalm in three parts. The first part or verses 1-3 refer to those of us who are left behind when a loved one has gone on. “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name’s sake.”

God is comforting us. He is assuring us that our needs, for love, companionship, guidance will be met. We shall not lack the blessings which our loved one provided for us.

God is guiding us. He is restoring our sense of peace, happiness and purpose. His path not only meets our daily human needs, but our emotional and spiritual needs as well. It is through divine Love that we regain our faith in good. It is through divine Spirit that our spirit is strengthened and nourished.

We are not alone. God, our heavenly Shepherd, is present. He is supplying our every human need through His gentle inspiration and through the Holy Spirit. When we turn to God as our Shepherd we cease wandering aimlessly and feeling depressed. “Divine Love always has met and always will meet every human need.” (Science and Health by Mrs. Eddy).

The second part is verse 4. “Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” How better could the Psalmist have said that there is no end to life than “walking through.” And it’s not even death itself but the “shadow.”

Even in this experience God is with us. There is never a moment when God is not caring for His children or when we could be separated from Him. The rod is used to protect the sheep by beating off wild animals. The staff supports the shepherd. So our loved one is protected from harm and supported by the heavenly Shepherd.

The third part describes our loved one's experience after they have walked through this valley experience. "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies; thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." Isn't it encouraging to know that God prepares a welcoming party for them? Wouldn't one imagine that those who they have loved and known would be present? What a joyous experience running over with blessings!

The Psalm ends with a blessing for each one of us. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." We do not have to wait to dwell with God. Forever includes now. Let us dwell in the consciousness of God and follow our Shepherd daily. We can rest assured that our loved ones are right now doing the same.

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