



June 21, 2026
Series: Week 3
Pastor Josh
www.lebefree.org

...Through the Valley...You are With Me... – Psalm 23:4

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...”

1.) We will be led into, and through, dark valleys.

-The Hebrew word is “*sal-ma-wet*” (pronounced sal-mā-vet). It is translated as *deep darkness, thick darkness, black night, utter gloom, shadow of death*.

-*Let’s remember a few things before we continue...*

- Brokenness, pain, suffering, and death are consequences of humanity’s choice to sin against God. (Gen. 3)
- Immediately following the fallout of sin, God promised One who would come to conquer it. (Gen. 3:15)
- Our Good Shepherd sees the fullness of our life’s journey. He knows every pasture and valley and leads us into and through each one. (Psalm 23:3)

Consider:

-When was the last time that you felt you were in a “*sal-ma-wet*”?

-David uses poetic language to describe this feeling/experience that we have all had. What creative language, imagery, music, etc., would you use to describe this to someone?

2.) There are timeless truths to learn, and be changed by, while we are there.

-“Even though.” Yes, we will all walk into and through these dark valleys, but David is claiming from the beginning of this phrase that we can go with confidence, with purpose, and with an established plan.

-*Our life will have hard seasons that happen to us, but we can train for them by practicing the doing of hard things:*

- Physical training **strengthens** our bodies.
- Fasting, abstaining, **strengthens** our willpower.
- Studying, intentional learning, **strengthens** our minds.
- Prayer, meditation on God’s Word, **strengthens** our spirit.
- Service, hospitality, fellowship **strengthens** our relationships.

-Followers of Jesus do what is right, even when it is hard. And we often must go where the hard is to do what is right.

Consider:

-What lessons have you learned from walking through hard times?

-Have you gained strength in key areas by choosing to do hard, but healthy things?

-What challenges have you been facing that require you to declare “Even though...” before stepping into it with faith?

“...I will fear no evil, for You are with me...”

1.) The Good Shepherd is our compassionate companion.

-“You are with me”, in Hebrew, “*ki atah imadi*”, is the phrase built to be at the exact center of this Psalm. There are 26 Hebrew words beforehand and 26 afterward.

-*“It is a beautiful truth that the message of the whole Bible can be summarized in four simple words, “You are with me.”*

-David Gibson

-One of our enemy’s greatest weapons is isolation. When he has convinced us that we are alone, his

chaos and confusion sound louder, his lies more convincing, his temptations seem more enticing and consequence-free.

-But when we remember the ever-presence of our God, all voices of evil can be put in their rightful place, small, temporary, already-defeated. (Romans 8:31-39)

2.) He is personal, relational, available.

-The Psalmist switches his references to the Shepherd from “He” (v. 2-3) to “You” (v. 4), during his time in the valley.

-Jesus invites us to pray to God, the Father. (Matt. 6:9-13)

-He also helped His disciples, and us, to know the interactive, interceding, counseling, clarifying, empowering work of the God, the Holy Spirit. (John 14:15-31, 16:5-15)

-Jesus promises His presence (Matt. 18:15-20, 28:20) and is our sympathetic advocate in Heaven. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

-Finally, Jesus prays for all of us, that we would experience the supernatural unity that He and the Father experience as we love, serve, and care for one another. (John 17:20-24)

Consider:

- How often are you aware of Jesus truly being “With” you? What confirms His presence for you? (Peace beyond understanding? Hope in the midst of grieving? Healing of any kind? His “still small voice” pointing you to His truth?)
- Have you experienced His love through the kindness delivered by other believers?

“...Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”

1.) The Good Shepherd is our protector and wise guide.

-Historians report that a *shepherd’s rod* was a short, strong club-like stick **used to defend against attackers and to keep count of the sheep**. The *shepherd’s staff* was a longer curved stick **used for guiding the flock along the right path, and for rescuing fallen or lost sheep who wandered away**.

-Jesus calls Himself the Good Shepherd, and says that He leads them confidently, does not run away from attackers, but instead lays His life down so that they may be saved. (John 10:11-18)

How does our Good Shepherd protect us and guide us today?

- Through the truth found in His Word. (Psalm 119:105, 2 Tim. 3:16)
- Through the finished work of the cross and empty tomb, He breaks the power of sin, death, and the enemy. (1 John 3:8, Col. 2:13-15)
- Through the Holy Spirit’s ongoing work of guiding, empowering, inspiring hope. (John 14:15-31, 16:5-15, Acts 1:8, Romans 15:13)
- Through the assigned work of His angel armies. (Matt. 18:10, Acts 10:1-6, 12:6-19)

Consider:

- Does the protection and guidance of the Shepherd give you comfort, as the Psalm says?
- Have you had the experience of knowing the active work of His “rod and staff” while you were in a dark valley?

2.) We are called to pass on what we have received from the Good Shepherd to others.

Here are a few examples of where this idea is instructed to us:

- We are to freely give as we have freely received. (Matt. 10:8)
- We are to teach others everything He has taught us. (Matt. 28:18-20)
- We are to know that God uses even the hardest events of our lives for our good and for a purposeful calling. (Rom. 8:28)
- We are to see the compassion He shows, and like the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are to “go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:25-37)
- We are to generously share our time, treasure, and talents in order to encourage those in need. (Acts 2:42-47, Rom. 12:3-13)

Consider:

- What lessons have you learned in the hardships and painful times that might be able to protect or guide some else?

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

² He makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters.

³ He restores my soul.
He leads me in paths of righteousness
for His Name’s sake.

**⁴ 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.**

⁵ You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.

⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.