



Wayne's Words

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A Mother's Day Psalm

How apt that our reading for Mothers' Day is the 23rd Psalm!

For though the image of a shepherd in scripture is mainly presumed to be male (though there are female shepherds: Rachel and Jethro's daughters and others) the attributes of the shepherd, of protection and provision, are also those behind the imagery used by Jesus of a mother hen gathering her chicks under her wings as he grieved over Jerusalem and its rebellious ways.

Psalm 23 has brought such comfort and hope to people in all situations. It speaks to the stressed and overwhelmed of an oasis of green pastures and quiet waters where rest and restoration is provided. Of the beauty and restfulness of nature and God's presence in the pause and stillness from the hectic drain of ceaseless activity and pressure. It is the Lord who takes the initiative to bring us into this place. Sometimes it seems we must be led kicking and screaming, unaware of our own deep need for soul healing.

It is the Lord who steers us to do what is right for the sake of his honour and reputation, as well as for the good of others.

The psalm becomes more personal and intimate in speaking directly to God when in the dark valley – 'I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and staff, they comfort me.'

The image then switches from a shepherd to a generous host. There is favour, vindication, honour and abundance. The picture is here one of being pursued by goodness and mercy that one could not escape from if they wanted to, for all their days. It concludes with the overarching theme of scripture which is at the same time what the human heart most longs for – God's presence! 'I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'

Is this your experience of God? Regardless of what we have been through, even the darkest valley, this is the psalmist's testimony. And it is cause for thanksgiving and continual hope and trust.

The Lord is with you,

Wayne