

Let's PRAY

Are **PEOPLE** around you asking,

“Where is God in the midst of this Corona Virus Pandemic?”

& maybe **YOU** are asking,

“Where is God in midst of all of this?”

We are in an **extremely trying time**
with this **Flu Pandemic**

There are **people** around the **world**
FIGHTING for their **lives**

& they're **FIGHTING** an **unknown enemy**
that seems to have the **upper hand** – ***at the moment***

& **Many people** who are **NOT FIGHTING** for their lives
are **FIGHTING** FOR their **loved one's** lives

& **Many people** are **AFRAID** – some, **VERY AFRAID**

& **so** – if **you** are **asking** - ***“WHERE Is GOD in all this?”***

& **The answer is** – ***God is right where he has ALWAYS BEEN***

He is right in the Middle of the SUFFERING - & PAIN - & FEAR
that we may be experiencing today

& can you hear me carefully please –

God DOESN'T HAVE to be – right in the middle of our Suffering

God CHOSE to be – right in the middle of our Suffering

God COULD HAVE separated himself from us – Permanently
way back – at the fall of man – in the Garden of Eden

When the Curse of SIN was brought
into this world

BUT – God DID NOT separate himself from us

instead, God CAME to us - He JOINED us –
Right - in the Middle of our Suffering

God CAME into this Fallen World – AS a MAN – in Jesus Christ
& he JOINED us – IN our Suffering

<p><u>Right</u> in the <u>middle</u> - of Every <u>CRISIS</u>, Every <u>TRIAL</u> - Every <u>DIFFICULTY</u> that we could <u>Ever Experience</u> - in this <u>fallen</u> world – <u>God JOINED US</u></p>

& not only Did **God Join** us **IN IT**

But he **TOOK all** that **suffering**
brought on by the **curse** of **sin**

& he **TOOK ALL** the **CONSEQUENCES** of Sin

UPON Himself

in the **person** of **Jesus Christ**

& he **paid** the **full** & **complete price**
For IT ALL – **in your place**

& in **doing that** –
the **God** of **Creation** - **Made a WAY**

to **LIVE** - **Right** into the **Middle** of your **LIFE**

to **STEP** - **Right** into the **Middle** of Your **SUFFERING**

to **WALK** - **Right** in Your **FEAR** & **UNCERTAINTY** – **With You**

WHERE IS GOD?

God **COULD BE** – **Rightfully** – **FAR AWAY** in the **Heavens**

in the **Throne Room**
of his **Perfect Holiness** & **Glory**

**BUT – because of his
INDESCRIBABLE LOVE for US**

God has made a way – thru Jesus Christ

to **WALK - RIGHT** in the **middle**
of the **Difficulties** of **this world** – **WITH YOU**

**The LORD has Made a Way – to BE your Shepherd
Right Now – Right Where You're AT**

**No matter WHAT your Situation
No matter WHAT your Circumstances are today**

The LORD – WILL BE – Your Shepherd

He will CARE for you – & HE will CARRY You

& **HE will LEAD & GUIDE you - THRU this difficult time**

Right in the Middle of it – WITH YOU – AS your Shepherd

Let's turn over to Psalm 23

I'm **going** to use the **ESV** - for **Psalm 23** today

Because it's **closer** to what **many** us have **memorized** here

Psalm 23:1 (ESV)

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

The Lord is my shepherd - He is my **caregiver**

The **Lord God Almighty** –

He **CARES** - **FOR me** - & for **YOU**

& **because** of **WHO it IS** – that is **caring** for **me**

I shall not want

the **wording** there **means**

I Can Be Totally CONTENT

in the CARE of the Good Shepherd

A **Good Sheep** – is **CONTENT**

Because they **know** they are in the **Good Shepherd's Care**

They **don't TELL** the **Shepherd** what **TO DO**

Or **HOW** he should **Provide** for them

They **TRUST** - & **REST IN**

the **CARE** of the **Good Shepherd**

Because they **KNOW**

the **Good Shepherd WILL** - **CARE for them BEST**

Sheep **BELONG** to a **Shepherd** because of the **PRICE**

The **Shepherd** has **PAID** for them

& the **greater the price** a **Shepherd** pays

the **more DEAR** the **sheep** are - to the **Shepherd**

& **ALL** of the **Bible** **CONVEYS** the **incredible price**

God has PAID – in **Adopt** us – into his **Family**

But **Isaiah 53** especially **SHOWS** – the **Depth** of **What it COST**

the **Lord Jesus** – to **PURCHASE US** as His Own

Isaiah 53:3–11 (NLT)

3 He (our Good Shepherd) was despised and rejected . . . acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him . . . and we did not care.

4 Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down . . .

5 . . . he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed.

6 All of us, like sheep, have strayed away . . . Yet the Lord laid on him the sins of us all.

7 He was oppressed and treated harshly . . . He was led like a lamb to the slaughter . . .

10 . . . Yet when his life is made an offering for sin, he will have many descendants . . .

11 [He] will make it possible for many to be counted righteous, for he will bear all their sins.

Jesus says – in John 10:11 (NLT)

11 “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd sacrifices his life for the sheep.

& **After** the **Immeasurable Price** – that **Jesus** has **paid for us**

We can **be sure** – **His CARE** for us – **Will be GOOD**

*(which is exactly what **Rom 8:32** says)*

But **listen** guys – **here** is **where** we **struggle**

We’ve GOT to **learn to TRUST** the **Good Shepherd**

We’ve GOT to **learn to TRUST**

that the **Good Shepherd** has a **Good Plan**

We’ve GOT to **learn to REST** in the **knowledge**

that Our **Good Shepherd**

is the **Sovereign God** of the **Universe**

Meaning - His **PLAN** goes **WAY** beyond this **Temporal Life**

& **God’s Plan** . . . is **ULTIMATELY GOOD**

He **knows** what he’s **doing**

The Lord is my shepherd

I Can Be CONTENT in His CARE

Psalm 23:2 (ESV)

2 He makes me (causes me to) *lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*

The Lord CAUSES me to REST

He leads me beside still waters

BUT – Listen, please – In the LIGHT of the WHOLE Bible

God is NOT talking here

About making your Circumstances EASY

Nowhere in the Bible – Does God promise us

EASY or PEACEFUL circumstances – In THIS life

In fact – the Bible is clear

in JOHN 16:33 (ESV) . . . (Jesus says) *in me you MAY have peace. In the world you WILL have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.*

This is the PEACE

the Good Shepherd is promising in Psalm 23:2

It is the Peace that Comes

from a VITAL - RELATIONAL Connection

With our Good Shepherd – *(In ME, I have overcome)*

& In the Craziness of this World – right now

We've GOT to start LONGING

for the Peace that comes from God alone

Psalm 42:1–2 (NLT)

*1 As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
2 I thirst for God, the living God. When can I go and stand before him?*

There is NO Social Distancing Requirement – with God

LONG for God - & GET to Him

& HE will Provide

the REST & the PEACE - that you need

& THAT is Exactly WHAT we SEE in V.3

Psalm 23:3(a) (ESV)

3 He restores my soul . . .

Your Circumstances - CAN'T Restore Your SOUL

Only the LORD can - Restore My Soul

Jesus says *“In ME you may have peace”*

& *“take heart; I have overcome the world”*

It is the Good Shepherd – Who RESTORES Your Soul

When a sheep is CAST

it **means** they have **ROLLED OVER** onto their **Back**

& **they** – Are **Helpless** at **that point** -

They **CANNOT Restore Themselves**

& **so** – the **Shepherd COMES**

& he **PICKS them Up**

But the **sheep** can't **walk**

Because all the **blood** has **run out** of its **legs**

& so - the **Shepherd Puts the Sheep** over his **NECK**

& **Carries** that **Sheep** – until **they** can **WALK again**

Only The **Good Shepherd** - can **Restore our Soul**

& **We NEED** - to **LONG for him** to **do that**

& **we NEED** to **GET** into **His Presence**

So that HE CAN

Then - Psalm 23:3(b) continues (ESV)

3 . . . He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Simply Put - **He leads me on the RIGHT Path**

On the Hills that **surround Jerusalem**

you see **dozens** and **dozens** of **paths** - **circling the hills**

But there may only be ONE path – that is RIGHT

& the Good Shepherd leads his sheep
ON that Right Path

In John 10:4 – Jesus is speaking of himself
AS the Good Shepherd

& he says – *My sheep hear my voice, & they follow me*

& The Good Shepherd WILL LEAD US – on the Right Path
IF we will HEAR his Voice - & Follow Him

Next – Psalm 23:4

Which is NOT primarily - about DEATH

Psalm 23:4 (ESV)

*4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
(NLT – the darkest valley) , I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

In the Summer – a Good Shepherd
will take his sheep UP to - “The Tablelands”

which are the HIGH Elevation Plateaus

The problem is

the **ONLY way** to **get** to those "**Higher Places**"

is to **go up** the **STEEP, DARK VALLEYS**

& - there is Nothing but DANGER in those valleys

Predators

Rock Slides

Dangerous footing for the sheep

& it is there – in the Dark Valley

that the **Good Shepherd**

PROVES himself – to his **sheep**

It is there – in the Dark Valley

that the **Sheep learn** to **TRUST the Shepherd**

& so – **if YOU** are in a **Dark Valley** today

LET the Good Shepherd PROVE Himself to you

Right There

Right where You are AT

TRUST him – to **be there** with you

& **TRUST** Him – to **lead you** thru it

You **LEARN** to **Trust** Him – **By walking** thru the **Dark Valley** With Him

The 2nd half of V.4 says - ***I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me***

The ROD – is a **symbol**
of the Shepherd's **AUTHORITY & STRENGTH**

& **This** is the **WORD OF GOD** in our Lives

From Which we **Get** - **God's Authority & His Strength**

The **STAFF** is a **symbol**
Of the **Shepherd's COMFORT**

& **This** is the **Holy Spirit** in our **lives**

The **Shepherd** would **use** the **STAFF**
to **COMMUNICATE** & **CARE** for the **sheep**

Just as the **Lord uses** the **Holy Spirit**
To **COMMUNICATE** & care for us

With the **STRENGTH** of The **Word of God**
& **COMFORT** of the **Holy Spirit**

The **Good Shepherd**
will **lead us** thru the **Darkest of Valleys**

To bring us – to The '**Higher Places**' - **The Table Lands**

Which is what we see in Psalm 23:5(a) (ESV)

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies . . .

This is referring to *The Table-Lands*

**That the Shepherd - leads his sheep to
After bringing them *THRU the Dark Valleys***

**& the Shepherd PREPARES - the *Blessing* of The Table Lands
BEFORE he brings the sheep there**

**So OUR Good Shepherd has gone thru
the *Darkest Valleys* – *BEFORE US***

**To Prepare the Blessing – he has for us
On the other side**

**Hebrews 4:15 says – *Jesus, our High Priest, understands our*
*weaknesses, for he has faced all the same testings we face . . .***

& so – we can Walk thru the Darkest Valleys – with Him

**& we can allow him to LEAD us
to the Blessings he has Prepared for us**

Even in the Presence of our Enemies

& then - Psalm 23:5(b) (ESV)

5 . . . you anoint my head with oil . . .

The Anointing of the Shepherd

is an **Anointing** for - **PEACE**

The Shepherd would actually

anoint the Sheep's head with OIL

in order to keep the pesky GNATS away

- to **give** the **sheep PEACE** – from **the GNATS**

& can I tell you please

God wants to Anoint your Head (your Mind)

with the **PEACE** - & the **COMFORT** - of **the Holy Spirit**

You **just need** to **Come to him** - & **Ask him**

Lord – would you please

pour the ANOINTING of the Holy Spirit over my head

Because the Pesky GNATS of this world

Are driving my CRAZY

& Your Good Shepherd

WILL - Anoint your head with OIL

Put yourself in the Presence of the Lord

& **ask** for his **anointing** - **DAILY**

& **he will cover you** – with the **Holy Spirit**

& **he will** give you **PEACE**

From the **annoying GNATS** of this **World**

& **now** – **all of a sudden**

David just **BURSTS** into **JOY & PRAISE**

Psalms 23:5(c) (ESV)

5 . . . my cup overflows.

Thru it ALL – **My Cup OVERFLOWS** with **BLESSING**

Ephesians 3:19 (NLT)

***19 May you experience the love of Christ (your Good Shepherd),
though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made
complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from
God.***

[REPEAT]

THIS – is **your cup running over** – with **BLESSING**

No MATTER what your **Present Circumstances** may **be**

& then – V.6 is a continuation of the Joy
that is now flowing out of the Psalmist

Psalm 23:6 (ESV)

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.

***Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me all the days of my life***

<p><u>NOT</u> because <u>MY CIRCUMSTANCES</u> - will Always <u>BE GOOD</u> <u>BUT</u> Because <u>MY GOD</u> – will Always <u>BE GOOD</u></p>
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The more you **PERSONALLY KNOW** – your **Good Shepherd**
The **More** you will **understand**

That there is **NO Circumstance**
There **is NO Situation**

That God is **Not Following you**
With **GOODNESS** & **MERCY** IN

IF YOU BELONG to the **Lord** today
Thru FAITH in **Jesus Christ** . . . **THEN**

Because of **WHO** - your **Good Shepherd IS**
Because of his **INDESCRIBABLE LOVE** for you
Because of the **INCOMPREHENSIBLE PRICE** he Paid for you

Because of His PROMISES - & His PRESENCE in your life

YOU CAN KNOW – *that surely goodness and mercy*
Will follow you all the days of my life

& BEST of All – BEST of All

THRU it ALL – ABOVE it ALL – AFTER it ALL

YOU will DWELL – in the House of the Lord – FOREVER

Because the ULTIMATE VICTORY

That your Good Shepherd has WON for you

Is the FREE GIFT of Eternal Life

Thru Faith in Jesus Christ

& so - If you have NOT put your Faith in Jesus Christ

As your SAVIOR & your LORD

I want to give you a chance to do that – NOW

Let's Pray