

TEST, TEST, THIS IS ONLY A TEST

May 13, 2020

We are planning to hold a test of in-person worship procedures and policies. We would like to have 28 households participate in an in-person worship service test on Saturday, May 23rd at 5:30pm. If you are willing to be a participant, please call the church office to express an interest in participating. We suggest that participants are younger than 65 and have no pre-existing conditions. You will have to follow the laid out procedures which include arriving at a particular time, wearing a mask during worship, and remaining in your seating area. Please call the church Monday if you are willing to participate.

Psalm 23:4

“You are with Me!”

5th Midweek of Easter

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Pastor Hartwig

Grace, mercy, and peace from God, our Heavenly Father, and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen! Dear brothers and sisters in Christ –

[Introduction]

Sometimes we are afraid.

Some people are afraid of being alone.

Others are afraid of the big C: COVID-19. Oh? You were thinking I meant cancer.

Still others are afraid of getting the pink slip on Friday afternoon

or losing their life’s savings.

Children are afraid of being in the dark.

And still others are afraid of spending eternity in hell.

But the greatest fear that people face ... is death.

These fears are real.

They terrorize us, consume us, and cause us to worry and lose hope and sleep.

If any of you have these fears,

I am glad that you have God’s Word—

the Word that will give you comfort,

encourage you in your walk of faith,

and proclaim to you the truth

that you will not be abandoned or forsaken by God.

David, the shepherd boy who became king over Israel,
tells you a promise that you should know, believe, and trust in:
***“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.”***

David is saying that no matter what I am going through, I know that,
God is with Me!
You Are with Me!

[You are With Me]

I am certain that you have heard the old saying:
“A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.”

A journey does begin with one step, yet with every step we take, we are not alone.
Yet every step we take is fraught with danger and fear.
Every move we make, we are attacked by an enemy —
an enemy who wants to destroy us and separate us from God.

BUT we have a companion along life’s highway—
he is our faithful Good Shepherd, Jesus.

No matter what steps we take, we are never alone nor will we ever be alone.
Therefore, we take comfort in the words of the psalmist,
who teaches us this golden truth: “You [Jesus] are with me.”

David tells us that God is present with us,
in all our dangers and troubles.
His presence gives us confidence and hope.

Hear me well.
This does not mean that we will not
experience and go through evil things;
but rather because he is with us, we don’t have to fear evil.

Evil is all around us.
We see it on our television screens,
AND we read about it on the Internet.

Indeed, evil is all around us.

But we don’t need to be afraid of any evil.
Because David, tells us that Yahweh, the caring Shepherd:
Jesus is with you and me.

“*You are with me.*”

[*You are with Me*]

In the previous verses, David tells us that God would do these things:

“*He makes me lie down . . . he leads me . . . he restores my soul.*”

But now the pronoun is changed from “he” to “you.”

“*You are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*”

This is the foundation of our faith,

the presence of the faithful and caring Shepherd.

He will not permit anyone to eternally hurt us.

They may hurt our bodies, but they can’t hurt our souls.

David as a shepherd boy valued the rod and the staff,

because they were the tools of the trade.

These items—rod and staff—emphasize the power the shepherd has

to defend his little lambs

and strike down the enemy.

The rod is the powerful instrument the shepherd uses

to clobber anything that will endanger the life of his lambs.

Likewise,

the staff is used to hook the sheep as they wander away

or pull them out of a hole that they have fallen into.

He also uses it as each sheep passes beneath it,

and he counts them one by one.

These tools are used by the shepherd

to stop the sheep from wandering and

to bring them closer to him;

but he also corrects them when they are disobedient.

That is precisely the picture David paints for us of our faithful Shepherd, Jesus.

No matter what our journey is like, our Shepherd cares for our needs—*all* of them.

[*Jesus is with You*]

David, the great theologian, says, “You are with me” (Ps 23:4).

We take comfort

that he of whom David is speaking is faithful.

In the Book of Joshua, it says:

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (1:9).

Isaiah also says:

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (41:10).

And Jesus, our Immanuel, said:

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Mt 28:20).

Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is our Immanuel, God with us—and so it is.

The light has come into the darkness;

God was made flesh to dwell among us—tabernacle with us
—to accomplish our salvation.

Christ is Risen! ***He is Risen, Indeed. Alleluia!***

Therefore, we rejoice in his presence

for God is with us, our Immanuel.

“You are with me,” David said, and he is.

So today, we join David by saying, “[Jesus Christ] You *are with me.*” Amen!

As followers of Christ, “Keep loving one another earnestly
And show hospitality to one another without grumbling.” AMEN! (1 Pt 4:8-9)
