

*Lord God, who calms the troubled waters, we bless you for your presence in the midst of all our fears, all our trials, all our worries. We release to you the things we hold too tightly, and we trust your words of peace. Be among us in this hour and may we lean into your everlasting arms of love, secure that we are yours, now and always. ... May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing and of you, who are ROCK, REDEEMER, and COMFORTER of us all. Amen.*

Psalm 23... This is such a familiar text... a text frequently called upon as we gather to celebrate a life that has passed from earthly life to eternal glory. For me, it is a true way of life... having witnessed Bedouin shepherds herding their flocks on the hillsides of Jordan, Israel & Palestine

I have felt the solace of these verses in this season of separateness... this season of COVID19. Even more so of late, I have sought solace in these verses as our nation grieves the virus of racism... the tragic use of force, loss of life, undue violence and 'in your face' coverage of reaction to 'yet another' engagement gone wrong.

This 'song' of David captures the beauty and the multidimensional relationship the believer has with God. First, we hear of the Lord as a Shepherd, then as attentive 'host' of the house. We hear of the care that is provided for the sheepfold, green pastures... still waters... paths of righteousness. It's quite lovely.

And then the lament begins... walking through valley, shadows, evil, even death. It is so real for what we are experiencing in these days.

And then the shift... the all-important shift... from lament to trust, confidence and faith. And so the psalm of lament becomes a psalm of Trust (of confidence). In fact, this psalm is an expression of trust and belief that God is with God's people, very present, very much a helper.

So, Friends, it is my prayer that, as we begin to gather, carefully, this psalm will be an anchor for us. Let this psalm be as a rock in your pocket to remind you of God's presence in the midst of the concern, the angst, the confusion, the ugliness of the birth pangs of new life swirling all around.

Let's pray... Thank you for loving me, God. I trust this. Thank you for always being with me. Help me remember that. Help me love you, help me seek you, help me know you & share your love with others.

I pray for this faith community... that we love not only in words, but in actions. I pray we love those we know AND especially reach out to those we don't know so that they may know the love of God. I pray this in the name of the One True God who stands by us and Lifts us and love us all... Amen. Amen. Amen.

PLAY... Surely Goodness, Surely Mercy... by Shane & Shane (youtube)