

Give Up Ten

Week 6 - Shirley's Story

The Lord is my Shepherd



Reading - 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 right paths
for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I 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
my whole life long.

Reflection

Favourite Bible passage? The Lord's my Shepherd. And The Good Samaritan. Helping others; that's how I have always tried to live my life.

The Lord's my Shepherd. I like a version we do with the band - I'm a singer - with lots of harmonies in it. It gives you a nice feeling.

I wish I could say that it was a reminder that all is well with my soul, but right now it isn't really. At the moment I don't know whether I feel abandoned by God or I have removed myself from God. There's a 98-year-old woman at work (I work in a care home). We pray together. She's good for me.

One of the things of the Psalms is that they deal with reality. And there is a lot of reality going on at the moment. For me and for others.

People often say that God never gives us more than we can deal with. But I sometimes think, "Is it not someone else's turn?"

"Lying down in green pastures." It's a comfort thing, just very comforting. But it doesn't sugar coat what's real. "Walking through the valley of death." Life can be tough. There's bad stuff going on. Going on everywhere. Nationally and internationally. But also in my own back yard.

And sometimes trusting is hard. Sometimes I just was to scream out: “God, where are you?” And I wonder if maybe I’m not asking the right things.

Asking can be difficult for me. When life is difficult for a lot of people, it is difficult to ask for help. I find it hard to ask for help, and when you are in a dark place it is even harder. It is really scary to fear rejection. What if people don’t say “Yes.” What if God doesn’t say “Yes.”

Green pastures. Dark valleys. The Lord’s my Shepherd. Life can be tough. Oh, and the Good Samaritan. I like the fact that there is a good person in the story. I’ve tried to be that person. I try to share just so I can help folks.

Questions

What struck you about Shirley’s reflection on The Lord’s My Shepherd?

How honest are we with ourselves and others that life can be more of a ‘dark valley’ than a ‘green pasture’?

Prayer

At times God,
life is more of a deep valley
than a green pasture.

At times God,
you feel more absent
than present.

At times God,
when I say that you never give me more than I can bear,
it doesn’t feel that way.

God,
in the darkness,
help us still to glimpse hope,
and to be sustained by it.

God,
help us not just to say that you are always there,
but to know it,
and feel it.

God,
help me to be the person you know I can be,
and to forgive myself,
as you have forgiven me,
when,
some days,
I manage better than others.

Amen.

Do you need to ask for help? Do you find it scary, like Shirley, to ask for help in case you are rejected? During this week ask God to help you find the courage to ask for help. Remember the disciples often had to ask for help if they couldn't understand something or couldn't do something. It's great to be caring and generous like the Good Samaritan but sometimes we need to admit that we are the one who is wounded and exhausted by the side of the road. When we ask for help, it lets someone else express their love and generosity and can really deepen our relationships. Give it a go this week - it could as simple as help with DIY or it may be a theological question, a spiritual issue or just time to talk about your feelings.