

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house
of the Lord for ever.

Psalm 23:6

Opening Song: 'Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me' (A Pilgrim was I)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Y3qllrTgdc>

Psalm 23, Scripture read and interpreted by young children

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMyYuYMck98>

Call to worship

Leader: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs.

All: **Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.**

Leader: Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise His name.

All: **For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

Opening Prayer

Father in heaven, thank You for Your goodness and faithfulness in my life. Thank You for all You've done for me in my past and for what You are preparing for my future. Help me keep my eyes on You. Help me stand strong in You and look for Your goodness all the days of my life. In Jesus' Name. Amen. Psalm 23:6

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THE LORD'S PRAYER:
OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN

Psalm 23 - 'A Reflection on Coronavirus, the Bible, and Our Response'

Coronavirus (Covid-19) is impacting all of us a great deal - both as individuals and as communities. The very fabric of everyday life is changing before us. Undoubtedly, these are unprecedented times. During this time, we're invited to find God. I hope and pray you've been blessed by Donnie Thomson's reflections on Psalms 23 and their implications for our live - now, more than ever.

After listening to this passage - especially the words, the valley of the shadow of death, it is easy to feel that we are now indeed walking through the "darkest valley" and that there is no end in sight. But, as everything with God, we are invited towards greater trust - and, in the process, to experience more hope, peace, and beauty amid suffering.

Dr Walter Brueggemann, in his book, 'The Message of The Psalms', categorizes all the 150 Psalms into one of three movements; orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. He argues that each of these movements exemplifies a fragment of the human experience.

- Orientation: when everything feels right and comfortable in our lives.
- Disorientation: when life feels difficult, dark, and broken. There is lament. There is despair.

- Re-Orientation: when God pulls us out of the brokenness of life and we are brought to a deeper sense of awareness and gratitude.

Dr Brueggemann suggests that people go through rhythms of orientation to disorientation to re-orientation. This is part of the natural human experience.

This is the beauty of Psalms 23, and perhaps why it has become one of the most famous passages in human history. In this single passage all the three movements exist. Psalms 23 is a compilation of the entire rhythm of the human experience.

The first three verses are of orientation: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want." Life is good, happy, blessed. The Lord provides us with lush green pastures and refreshing waters. God is known to be reliable and a source of all our needs.

Verse four suggests disorientation—the "darkest valley"—a description of the trauma and suffering we go through as humans and communities. And, later in verse four, there is re-orientation. The psalmist declares, "for you are with me". There is an expression of trust and confidence in the presence of God in spite of suffering.

These are uncertain times. The future feels out of our control. In many ways, we have just moved from orientation to disorientation. But, as a community, we are invited towards re-orientation. We are invited into the natural rhythm of the human experience—to move from disorientation to re-orientation and to declare unequivocally, "for you are with me". We also called upon to do our part in our communities, to practice social distancing, wash our hands, but also to pray and recall "surely your goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life." May it be so. Amen.

Loving Father,
may we who are merely inconvenienced in many ways remember those whose lives are at stake.
May we who have no risk

factors remember those most vulnerable. **May we** who have the luxury of working from home remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent. **May we** who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools, clubs or play areas close remember those who have no options. **May we** who have had to cancel our trips remember those that have no safe place to go. **May we** who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market remember those who have no margin at all. **May we** who settle in for a quarantine at home remember those who have no home.

As fear continues to grip our country, let us choose love. During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbours.

Father, You are so faithful to promise us goodness and mercy in this life and the life to come. Help us to see Your constant presence even as we see so much messiness around us and in our own life at times.

Thank You that You aren't repelled by the mess! Again, we want to pray for those we know really struggling financially, emotionally and physically right now. May they experience Your love and mercy wherever they are. And we want to experience the depth of Your love even more today. Thank You for Your amazing promises of a forever home with You! We put our trust in You. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Saviour, like a shepherd lead us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTuwAObuQVQ>

Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
 much we need Thy tender care;
 In Thy pleasant pastures feed us,
 for our use Thy folds prepare.

Final blessings

May the Lord, mighty God
 Bless you and keep you forever
 Grant you peace, perfect peace
 Courage in every endeavour.

Lift up your eyes and see His face
 And His grace forever
 May the Lord, mighty God
 Bless you and keep you forever. Amen

