

March 22, 2020

CALL TO WORSHIP (Psalm 121: 1-2)

I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?
My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

HYMN "Precious Lord, Take My Hand"

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn,
Through the storm, through the night
Lead me on through the light
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home

When my way grows drear precious Lord linger near
When my light is almost gone
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home

When the darkness appears and the night draws near
And the day is past and gone
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand
Take my hand precious Lord, lead me home

PRAYER (from Holy Land Prayer)

When I feel crushed by my own worries and anxiety, lift my mind and help me to see the truth in all that You are. When fear grips me tight and I feel I cannot move, please free my heart and help me to take things one-step at a time with you by my side. When I can't express the turmoil inside my heart and mind, calm me with Your quiet words of love and devotion. I choose to trust in You, each day, each hour, each moment of my life. I know deep down that I can cast these cares on You, and that you have taken these anxious thoughts, and by giving your life on the cross, You have set me free. I choose to trust in You, each day, each hour, each

moment of my life. I know deep down that I live in Your grace, forgiven, and restored by Your sacrifice. Amen.

SCRIPTURE Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake. 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. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 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

MESSAGE See the following page.

HYMN "Trust in You" by Lauren Daigle
<https://youtu.be/1W5ViDDcapg>
or "Trust and Obey" # 467

When we walk with the Lord In the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way;
While we do His good will, He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.

(Refrain)
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do; where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey.
(Refrain)

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Message

“MY CUP OVERFLOWS”

In 1986 Natan Sharansky, the prominent Soviet dissident and activist, described his release from a Soviet labor camp. When he was in that camp, his wife sent him a copy of the book of Psalms. He didn't know whether he would ever get out of that labor camp, but during his years of imprisonment, he read the psalms every day. He found comfort and strength from the insights in the psalms. When the time finally came for him to be released, guards took away everything that belonged to him, including the book of psalms, which had been so helpful during his imprisonment. Sharansky describes what happened: “I said I would not leave the country without the Psalms which helped me so much. I lay down in the snow and said, ‘Not another step.’” He refused to go until they returned his book of Psalms, which they did.

The psalms have offered precious assurance to most every one of us in time of trouble. We can easily imagine Sharansky deriving strength from the lines that have inspired us all. Like the Soviet prisoner, we have come to trust and love particular verses. No lines are more beloved than those in the twenty-third psalm. I couldn't imagine how many people who went through the valley of the shadow of death relied on this psalm and got strength and comfort from it.

We are living in unpredictable and anxious times and we fear. We fear of getting this virus. We fear of having not enough food. We fear of death. So we need to read this Psalm again. The Psalmist confesses that even though he walks through the valley of the shadow of death, he fears no evil, because God is with him.

Now we couldn't gather together at the church, but that doesn't destroy or weaken the community of faith. We can worship wherever we are, and God is there and accept our worship. Also we can have fellowship through showing care and love - praying for one another and calling or sending cards to other members. When we trust in the Lord, when we care for one another, we can overcome all fears and walk through the valley of the shadow of death. When we do it, we can rediscover why we as a church are here. It can be the opportunity to rediscover our faith and love. Though there seems to be no way, though we could not see, God is with us and works for us.

I pray that the confession of the psalmist is ours, too: “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me.” “You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.”