

Psalm 23

March 22, 2020

“God is Good!” “All the times!” “All the times!” “God is God.”

“Good morning, Fairfield Grace!” “Good morning, Kun Sam (or Pastor Cho)!”

How much I miss you here at our beautiful Sanctuary on Sunday morning! It is not same here without you and your presence. All of you are greatly missed on Sundays. I look forward to worshipping together with you soon here.

Larry Campana, one of us emailed me the other day, saying, “Our church lives outside the church building.” How true it is. Our church is not a building. “I am the church. You are the church. We are the church together.” Our church lives wherever we are and whatever we do.

Opening

May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer. (Psalm 19:14)

The Psalm 23 is the Word of God for the people of God for today.

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;[a]

3

he restor.es my soul.[b]

He leads me in right paths[c]

for his name's sake.

4

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,[d]

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[e] goodness and mercy[f] shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord

my whole life long.[g]

1

It is one of the most well-known bible passages for us. Isn't it? It is so well-received among Christians that it has been one of the most popular

bible passage to use for the funeral service. It is, however not for the dead, but for the living.

“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want” (NRSV)

“The Lord is my shepherd. I lack nothing” (NIV)

“God, my Shepherd. I don’t need a thing.” (The Message)

“Because the Lord is my Shepherd, I have everything I need!” (the Living Bible)

What a timely it is to receive Psalm 23 in the turbulent and tough pandemic crisis. I am thankful that the Psalm 23 comes to us today.

Yes, the whole world is panic now. We don’t know when this global crisis would end and we return to our normal living. Uncertainty is certain and growing, for sure. It creates fear, anxiety and even despair among us.

Yes, it is natural to have fear when our security is in danger and our lives are threatened. Fear is normal. Fear enables us to get ready and be cautious. We all ought to follow the order and instruction well in order to keep the virus from spreading more among us.

But fear can grip us so overwhelmingly that we are tempted to raise a doubt, asking, “Is God in our midst or not?” or “Does God really care about us?” Fear can keep us from living and loving as people of God in this world.

The Psalm 23 reminds us today once again of who God is and whose we are. God is the Shepherd and we are the people of His pasture.

2

Let me paraphrase the first verse of the Psalm 23: “The Lord is my Caregiver. I lack nothing.” “God cares about me and provides me all I need at the right time. I do have everything I need”

John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

What Jesus says is that 16 “For God so *cared about the world, all the people in the world*, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

God cares about us. God has done a great saving work for us. God the Savior is not sitting up there with both arms crossed. God Emmanuel is the Caregiver who takes care of us, day and night.

Jesus once said, “Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ Indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (Matthew 6:28-32)

God is the Divine Caregiver. God cares about us.

3

Have you ever received care at a hospital? I did. As you might recall, I had a surgery to mend my torn Achilles tendon on my right leg about 7 years ago. I had to stay overnight at Bridgeport Hospital after the surgery. It was the first time for me to stay overnight at a hospital room.

I remember still what happened the following morning. I was still in pain and felt hazy when a nurse came to me with a big “Good morning, Kun Sam” and checked my vitals and adjusted my bed and pillow.

Her brief but kind and gentle caring with morning greetings touched my heart immensely. What a comfort I experienced. I thought I had a visit from an angel from heaven. It was like meeting with my Divine Caregiver. You know what? I felt so good and happy that I wished I had stayed more days there at the hospital.

God is the Divine Caregiver and we are Care-Receiver. Are you ready to receive God's care?

We have been brainwashed that we must be strong and independent. So many of us feel offended or even humiliated when we are offered help. We rather wrestle alone with all the problems and troubles and worries.

So we say, "I don't need God. I am okay" "I am independent. I don't want to depend on God." "I am strong. I can handle things by myself. I am smart enough to solve all the problems."

To us, Peter the apostle who knew the Divine Caregiver says, "Cast all your cares upon Him, for he cares about you." (1 Peter 5:7) Paul the Apostle also knew the Divine Caregiver well and encouraged his Christian sisters and brothers, "Do not worry about anything and in every situation let your request be known to God, then the peace of God that transcends all the understandings will guard your minds and hearts in Jesus Christ" (Philippian 4:6-7).

It is okay to say to God, "I am weak. I need help." and ask God's help. It is okay to say, "I am broken, I am worn out, I am tired, I am lost, I do not know what to do, I am in troubles, I need help" and come to God the Divine Caregiver. God knows and God cares. God the Divine Caregiver will take care of you.

The Lord says, "Come unto me, all you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28) All we need to do is simply "Come unto Jesus"

Yes, going to Jesus as we are, weak, tired and broken is the beginning of a new life with God who cares about us.

4

"You've Got A Friend" Sung by James Taylor is one of my favorite songs. It goes:

When you're down and troubled and you need a helping hand

And nothing, whoa, nothing is going right

Close your eyes and think of me and soon I will be there

To brighten up even your darkest nights

You just call out my name, and you know wherever I am

I'll come running, oh yeah baby, to see you again

Winter, spring, summer, or fall

All you got to do is call and I'll be there, yeah, yeah, yeah

You've got a friend.

You've got a friend, our Divine Caregiver. Amen.

5

A conversation between God and one who have a lot of questions about God. "God, I heard that you love everybody in this world. How can you love everybody at the same time?" God replies after a short pause, saying, "That is why I create mothers." It is a mother's day story.

I twist this story as follows. “God, you are the Caregiver.” We ask, “How can you care everybody in this world? God replies, “That is why I sent you to the world.”

“Why so many homeless people? Why so many people starving? Why so many children going to bed without food? Why so many people suffering from wars, poverty, separation, discrimination? Why?” “That is why I sent you to the world.”

God the Divine Caregiver has sent you and me to this world, because God cares about the world.

I John 4:9-11:

God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. 10 In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.

Let me read these verses again, replacing the word, love with the word, care.

Verse 9 - God’s care was revealed among us in this way: Verse 10, In this is care, not that we cared God but that God cared us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Vs 11 - Beloved, since God cared us so much, we also ought to care for one another.

We, people of God are not only care-receivers, but also care-givers. We receive care from the Divine Caregiver and we give care to our FRANs. friends, relatives, associates and neighbors.

Last week I received several calls from our church family members. “Please let me know any ones who might need help. I can give them a ride. I can shop for them.” I was moved by their caring heart.

CET ministry. C-Calling, E-Emailing, T-Texting. Let’s do this ministry proactively and intentionally as we journey together through the global crisis. Social distancing? Yes. We do strengthen social connecting more proactively now, because we are called to care for each other.

Closing

I saw the other day CNN news to hear a CNN correspondent who offers his perspective on Covid-10 pandemic. He worked for many years as a reporter in Syria and Iraq where bombings occurred constantly and civilians, young and old suffered due to destruction and separation from their beloved ones.

But to his surprise, he saw the resilient power among people in the middle of and in spite of the desperate circumstances. He said he saw a new beginning springing and unfolding out of destruction.

Based on his long time experiences and observations in the war zone, he offered the following tips to ease a pandemic panic.

1. There will always be food.
2. You don’t need toilet paper.
3. Don’t worry about things you cannot change.
4. Be nice.
5. Thing get better often much faster than you expect.

What an encouraging and timely tips we all need to keep in mind. I was greatly moved and even empowered by his words.

I would add one more tip on top of the 5 tips. That is “Know and trust in God the Divine Caregiver. And care for one another.”

Fairfield Grace!

Let us sing to our FRANs, “You've Got A Friend” once again.

“When you're down and troubled and you need a helping hand

And nothing, whoa, nothing is going right

Close your eyes and think of me and soon I will be there

To brighten up even your darkest nights

You just call out my name, and you know wherever I am

I'll come running, oh yeah baby, to see you again

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You've got a friend!