



FROM THE CHAPLAIN

As we mourn the passing of Yvonne Khoury's funeral, God's word brings much comfort and hope in our time of need. The sermon text at Yvonne's funeral was based on Psalm 23 and is included below.

Psalm 23 - Comfort for now, hope for the future.

I'm sure you'd agree, music has the power to speak to and soothe our soul, particularly in times of great distress, as we have seen today.

The Psalm just read was an ancient song for God's people in their time of need and over centuries has provided comfort and hope to countless people.

May you find both comfort and hope in these words today.

You may be wondering right now; where is the comfort, where is the hope?

This famous Psalm of King David offers us God's perspective as we mourn, but it is a mourning that has deep hope.

It reminds us that if we have God, we lack nothing.

What does it mean today, to know the Lord as our Shepherd?

As a boy, David was a shepherd who tended his sheep, protecting them from the savage attacks of wild animals. In doing this, he pointed to God's great shepherd king, Jesus, who was willing to lay down his life for his sheep, his people, on the very first Easter.

We can find great comfort in the words of this Psalm when we read that the Lord:

"makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake."

That same God, whom we meet fully in Jesus, satisfies our physical hunger and thirst, and he satisfies the needs of our soul. He points us in the direction we should live. He meets us at our deepest spiritual need which is to know and enjoy God, not just what he provides for us.

Today, we reflect on Yvonne's death, and even consider our own mortality – not an easy thing to do at all. We seek consolation, we may demand answers. Where are you Jesus in the midst of our grief and mourning?

David encourages us to remember that: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, even death itself, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

The presence of a shepherd would have brought security and protection to sheep on a hillside. The reminder for us all is that Jesus is present with us this very day. We don't have to face death alone.

God is a God of compassion and he himself knows what it is to lose a loved one, as he witnessed his own son, Jesus, die for our sin. We are not alone in our grief.

Elsewhere in the Psalms we are reminded that: *"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."* (Psalm 34:18)

With this knowledge, we can trust Jesus and his goodness, rather than fear the devastation of death. Yvonne's husband Raf himself shared *"God has never failed me. That's what you are all here with me today."* Today we too can trust the Good Shepherd Jesus and his unfailing love.

Finally, we read that death need not be the end. The Psalm points to an eternity with God:

"You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

What does it mean to have the goodness and love of Jesus, to dwell in the house of the Lord forever? Jesus, the Good Shepherd explained this himself to his disciples, as the time for his own death drew near. He said:

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."

You know the way to the place where I am going.

Thomas said to him, *"Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?"*

Jesus answered, *"I am the way.... and the truth and the life..... No one comes to the Father except through me."*

The matter of where we find our final resting place is what matters most.

While Jesus cares for us in this world, his care for us in the next is what gives us deep and lasting peace for our soul.

And today, we commit Yvonne into Jesus' perfect, unfailing, loving care.

To Him, our great Shepherd, be the glory, now and forever. Amen

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