**May 26 Psalm 23:4 “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.”**

**Getting to Know You:**

Do you think it is harder to walk up a mountain or down? Why?

**Read: *Psalm 23:1-6*** *(NIV)* ***A psalm of David.***

***1*** *“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

***2*** *He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,*

***3*** *he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name’s sake.*

***4*** *Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will 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 your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”*

1. Last week, we looked at Psalm 23:3 in which we are told that God guides us along right paths or paths of righteousness. Today, we are looking at Psalm 23:4. Is it possible for righteous paths to still have valleys? Do we need to question the state of our faith if we go through a difficult time or are valleys inevitable to everyone in life?

2. Psalm 23:4 starts by saying, “Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil…” Why is it that David chose valleys for this image and not someplace else? What is it about a valley that can lead to a feeling of fear?

3. Psalm 23:4 says, “Even though I walk THROUGH the darkest valley…” How is the word “through” hopeful? Are you walking or camping through the valley?

4. David said that he would “fear no evil.” What are some things that you fear or cause you to be anxious?

5. Philippians 4:6 says, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” When you present your anxieties to God, what is the difference between telling God your anxieties and telling your anxieties about God?

6. How do the pronouns change in verse 4 from the first three verses of Psalm 23? How does time in the valley draw us closer to the Shepherd?

7. Psalm 23:4 ends by saying, “... for You are with me, Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.” How could a rod and staff bring comfort? Is it the tool or the One holding the tool that brings comfort?

8. Jesus says in John 10: 27-28, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.” When you walk through the valley, how does it help to know that the Shepherd counts you as one of His own?

**Watch:** When You are Going Through A Lot -- Priscilla Shirer (6:02)

[*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqxm89y8NIM*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqxm89y8NIM)

1. Shirer said several times that Jesus did not get mad at John the Baptist for asking if He was the messiah, but that Jesus looked at John with grace. What is a question that you have for Jesus?
2. Shirer said that “our faith is sometimes best built in the gymnasium of obscurity… it is the wrestling that strengthens us.” What is a difficult thing that God has gotten you through? Did it make your faith stronger? Is there a difficult thing you are going through right now?

**Application:** This week, if you are able, try to do one of the following.

Pray for someone you who know is “walking through the valley”.

Visit a cemetery. Notice the headstones and see if you can find some recent dates and some dates from long ago. Pray and thank God for relationships you had with people that have passed away.

If you have an opportunity, read one of the following books that talks about faith in the midst of hard times: When God Doesn’t Fix It by Laura Story, Disappointment with God by Philip Yancy, or Unshakeable Hope by Max Lucado.

Watch: *Psalm 23 -- Shift Worship* [*https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlQ2eMpw2hE*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BlQ2eMpw2hE)and meditate on Jesus as our Good Shepherd.