

Deaconess Intern Dispatch



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Shadows

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”

Psalm 23:4 (ESV)

One of the wonderful things about living in Oregon, on the 45th Parallel, is the early arrival of daylight in Spring. Yes, our winters are very dark, but because of the tilt of the Earth and our latitude, once it starts getting lighter, the transition to more daylight is quickly noticeable. With the increased sunlight, I’ve begun paying attention to the long shadows of late winter. During the midst of winter when clouds and rain fill most every day here, I hardly notice shadows. It’s interesting how shadows are only present when there is light.

In the Twenty-third Psalm King David, inspired by the Holy Spirit, writes about the life of faith from the perspective of the Lord being the Shepherd and us being the sheep. It is a beautiful Psalm that we likely learned

as children and have loved throughout our lives.

While I was in class at the Seminary last month studying psalms, I read the 23rd Psalm with new eyes, especially verse 4 about “the shadow of death.”

First, I learned, shadows cannot hurt you.

Hmm. Why had I not thought of that before? In Christ, death is a shadow. It cannot harm us, for in baptism we already died. St. Paul writes to the Romans, “*We were buried therefore with [Jesus] by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.*” (Romans 6:4 ESV)

Secondly, in Hebrew, the verse can also read, “the valley of deep darkness.” A Hebrew scholar taught us that the valley is not only death, but also the times of our lives that are the darkest. Perhaps you, too, have had some of those. Whether in our death or a different dark night of the soul, Jesus is with us, walking us through the valley. Jesus never asks us to go where He has not gone before. With His abiding presence we will come out on the other side.

Lastly, David says that he will fear no evil. **With the Lord’s presence, evil is a defeated foe.** The Lord loves David and all His sheep, so much so that He laid down His life to preserve the life of His sheep. Evil

may nip at our heels and cause us distress, but we need not fear evil. By faith, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we trust Jesus to help us and stay with us. In His nail-pierced hands, we are safe no matter what evil harasses us.

As the sun shines its cheerful light more and more each day, look at the shadows. Remember the Lord, the Light of the world, is with you. With Him, you will walk *through* every day whether through the darkest dark or through passing shadows. Thanks be to God for His love and kindness toward us and His promise to be with us always! (Matthew 28:20)

With love in Christ,
your Deaconess Intern and fellow sheep,

Lisa Mai

Seminary Update

Thank you for your continued generous support for me financially and through your prayers and friendship. I am blessed beyond measure and my heart is full! Thank you for your encouragement, kindness, and partnership with me in my deaconess formation.

Currently I am finishing up my course work from Winter Intensive. This week I am writing a paper and separate Bible study about Psalm 4. My Practicum class, "Ministry to the Sick and Dying" continues with readings and projects which are challenging emotionally but are necessary for my growth in this area which will be a part of my work as a deaconess. Spring Quarter starts up in early March with "Catechetics" for 8 weeks, then "Lutheran Confessions in Today's World" for the next eight weeks.

Prayers

+Strength and peace for pastors and other church workers to serve the Lord with gladness, especially during the Lenten season when their workload increases

+Rest and healing for those who are sick with illness or disease

+Jobs and meaningful labor for those who are or who will be unemployed, that the Lord will meet their needs and their families' needs

+Comfort for those who grieve in our congregation that they may know the Lord's abiding presence and mercy

+Spiritual growth and renewed fellowship during Lent