**Daily Prayer & Encouragement - Tuesday 15th December**

(Psalms 23:4)

“even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will not fear no evil because he is with me.”

There are places in Scripture that are powerful, so deep, that to recite them is to experience them. Psalm 23 is one of those places. As one scholar said, "The psalm itself is green pasture; the psalm itself is still water; the psalm itself restores my soul."

Psalm 23 is very personal. There are no references to "we" or "us" or "they," but only "my" and "me" and "I" and "You." This is David's testimony, his personal experience with God. I and other clergy have come to this passage in almost every funeral preached. It is precious to us, a balm to our wounded souls. And what makes this a constant friend is that it covers all of life. With simple beauty, it speaks of green pastures and still waters as well as dark valleys and enemies and adversities.

But what comforts us and helps us is the psalmist confidence. David really believes this about God. We realize as we linger over these words that what David writes is not poetic exaggeration. He has experienced God in these ways, heard His voice, followed His lead, felt His care. Beneath the beauty of his words there are solid convictions, formed in the crucible of crisis. We too are in a crisis of Covid 19 that limited us in so many ways.

David speaks of the valley he had walked. He felt the shadows closing in. Verse 4 describes the crisis points in his life. And in those times, something deep happened between him and God.

You've noticed it too, haven't you? that sometimes we are not prone to talk about God when we are in the green pastures but more prone to talk to God when we are in difficult seasons. In the light, we are prone to wander off in pursuit of greener grass. But in the dark, we sometimes hug God's knee.

David communed with God during his valley time, he stayed ever so close to the Shepherd, never taking his eyes off Him. He had experienced God in a way that had ushered him toward intimacy with the Almighty Shepherd.

***“The Lord indeed is my shepherd, that even though I walk through difficult times, I will not fear no evil because he is with me.” says David***.

My prayer for you is that God so imprint His truth in your heart that you will find your confidence in Him rise above the storm clouds in your life, even as David did.

And whenever you find yourself weak, in the dark, uncertain of the future. When all has drained out of your life, and your soul is downcast, look up! Fix your eyes on Jesus, your Good Shepherd. Stick close to Him. Trust that He knows the way through this valley and will see you safely through. Believe that God has great plans for your life even though your journey at present is hard and unfamiliar. Hold on to the truth that there is something better waiting for you on the other side of this valley.

*May the Lord bless you and keep you. May He grant you grace as you make your ambition to keep the faith no matter what life brings your way. Amen*

Patches Chabala,