

SERIES: STILL WATERS

TITLE: Down in the Valley

SPEAKER: Bob Marvel

DATE: May 9-10, 2020

“When you are walking with God, whatever darkness you are going through is always a tunnel not a cave. You will come out the other side.” – Juan Carlos Ortiz

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. This weekend’s message opened with a heart-warming montage of the pastors sharing stories with their mom. Please share one of your favorite stories with your mom or the mother figure in your life.
2. BONUS QUESTION: Any guesses as to why a young Pastor Bryon was mysteriously standing in front of a curtain in a classy powder blue suit and sporting a timeless bowl cut hairstyle?

DOWN IN THE VALLEY

“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

1. TEMPATURE CHECK - The message opened with a lively medley of “happy, clappy” church songs, which can give the impression that life as a Christian is always “happy, clappy.” When under the Shepherd’s care, it’s easy to rationalize that there will be no hardships in life. What is your current reality? A “happy, clappy” life? Or, is life currently filled with songs of sorry? Somewhere in between?
2. In 10 words or less, summarize how you would define the phrase “the valley of the shadow of death” prior to this weekend’s message.

“In Psalm 23:4, three key words – through, shadow and with – are the grace notes that bring beauty and life to the valley of the shadow of death.” – Bob Marvel

Grace Note #1 – “Through”

1. In Psalm 23:4, the psalmist is not saying “what if” or “even if,” but he is saying “especially when.” You will go through valleys. They will happen. What are some of David’s life experiences that qualified him to talk about valleys?

2. If willing, share a past valley you've walked through. How did you react? How did you go through the valley? Aside from no longer being in a valley, what are some possible collateral benefits of negotiating your way through that valley on your life and the life of others?
3. David knew first-hand, both literally and figuratively, what it meant to walk through valleys. Why was he not afraid?
4. What is your reaction to the speculation that as Jesus walked through the Kidron Valley to be tried and crucified that he may have been quoting Psalm 23:4 as He was both literally and figuratively going through the "valley of the shadow of death?"

"When the psalmist talks about the valley, it isn't Whatcom County's Welcome Valley, where Harry Gates set up his homestead. We don't settle in the valley. We walk through the valley. Don't settle here. Don't camp here. You won't be here forever." – Bob Marvel

Grace Note #2 – "Shadow"

1. Can you remember a time that you were "hit" by a shadow? What was its impact?
2. Read Psalm 91:1. What other "shadow" allows us to confront the "valley of the shadow of death?" Why/how does this other "shadow" dispel fear when facing the "valley of the shadow of death?" Does this knowledge comfort you, encourage you, or something else?

"The real pandemic in our world is sin and the result of sin is death. That's our reality. But, because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, even death is just a shadow." – Bob Marvel

Grace Note #3 – "With"

1. Reread Psalm 23:4 as well as Psalm 118:6 and Matthew 28:20. "With" is used as a function word to indicate a participant in action, transaction, or arrangement. God is with you. What does it mean to you knowing that you are never alone, that you can walk through the shadow with the Shepherd?

"The key remains – MY shepherd. God is with us. End of story. Always. Right now. I is His. He be with me." – Bob Marvel

MISCELLANEOUS

1. What is one significant truth from Psalm 23:4 that you will take away this week from Pastor Bob's message?
2. What would you like to discuss from this message that hasn't already been discussed?

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

1. Challenge #1 - Continue immersing yourself in the truth that the Lord is your Shepherd. Read aloud or quote daily.
2. Challenge #2 – Stand defiant against the lies that fear speak. Stand on the truth that is our Good Shepherd, our Great Shepherd and our Gentle Shepherd. Remember, hold tightly to the truths that counter the lies:
 - a. The Lie – ALWAYS The Truth – THROUGH (The promise of our Good Shepherd)
 - b. The Lie – ABSOLUTE The Truth – SHADOW (The perspective of our Great Shepherd)
 - c. The Lie – ALONE The Truth – WITH (The presence of our Gentle Shepherd)
3. Challenge #3 – Throughout the week as you reflect on the truths of Psalm 23:4, the “nightingale of the Psalms. A bird that sings in the darkness of night, in the middle of the night” according to Henry Ward Beecher, spend time with this poem by Annie Johnson Flint:

GOD HATH NOT PROMISED

*God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.*

*But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.*

*God hath not promised we shall not know
Toil and temptation, trouble and woe;
He hath not told us we shall not bear
Many a burden, many a care.*

*God hath not promised smooth roads and wide,
Swift, easy travel, needing no guide;
Never a mountain, rocky and steep,
Never a river, turbid and deep.*

-Annie Johnson Flint

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