

4th Sunday in Lent, March 19, 2023

Psalm 23

My Life, He Brings Back

Like music and hymnody, the Psalms contain and preserve the breadth of human emotion and the range of the human experience of the divine. The Psalms challenge. The Psalms comfort. The Psalms inspire. The Psalms engage. They encourage wrestling with God and with the realities of real lived life. The Psalms both utter feelings of God forsakenness and trust that those feelings can never turn God away.

This Sunday, Psalm 23 is the appointed Psalm. My favorite translation of the Psalm comes from Robert Alter in his book *The Book of Psalms: A Translation with Commentary*. He has this way of being accurate with his translations while keeping the feel of the Hebrew. One of the shifts he makes in translation is instead of “He restores my soul,” he renders it as “my life, He brings back.”

In this text, I find a God who has this stubborn will for life. God brings back life even when all around us looks like death. God desires for goodness and kindness that pursues us all the days of our lives. In becoming human, in living, in dying, in rising, God doubles down on this desire for life for us and all creation in the person of Jesus.

We stand in the shadow of the cross trusting that because in Jesus, God has been there, because in Jesus, God uttered the words “my God my God, why have you forsaken me” we are not alone. We have the promise that God is with us as God self-experiences the vale of death’s shadow on the cross.

Living on this side of Easter, we also stand at the empty tomb. In the resurrection, we have the promise that the worst thing isn’t the last thing. We have the promise with the God made known in Jesus that not even the vale of death’s shadow will have the final word. The life God brings back will always have the final word.

Gracious God,

Your desire is for us to have life and have it abundantly. You meet us where we are – in our joys and sorrows, in our struggles and triumphs. As we turn toward spring, you remind us of your life-giving ways in the buds of the trees and the daffodils that pop up out of the ground. Keep us steadfast in your love and your grace, trusting in the life only you can give. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



Pastor Alex Sheppard-Witt is serving as pastor at Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Norge, Virginia. She is a graduate of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (’18) and the University of Richmond (’14). Pastor Alex has a love for wrestling with the Biblical text, until God grants a blessing.

Recently married, she has made a home with her wife, Caitlin, and her pup, Ginger.

Outside of church work, Pastor Alex enjoys ballroom dancing, playing video games, and enjoying time with family and friends.