

Katie Langston 00:16

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Linda Booth 01:00

Welcome Coffee Connect listeners. My name is Linda Booth. I'm a retired Community of Christ apostle and longtime minister, wife, mother and grandmother. And I've always loved stories, especially those tell by my grandmother Tim. She was an incredible storyteller, sharing stories about Jesus and how she experienced God in our everyday life. I guess I kind of take after her, because I also enjoy telling stories, especially those about how God continues to interact with people. During the last four months of Coronavirus, I found peace and comfort insane and reading the 23rd Psalm every morning. Often during the day I find myself spontaneously saying, "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want." Of course, that's the familiar line that begin Psalm 23. We've heard and repeated this Psalm and worship services and heard it read at countless funerals to offer comfort to grieving families as well as hope for all who listen. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. I can easily proclaim that the Lord is my shepherd. But to say "I shall not want" is another matter. There's a lot of things I want, especially during Coronavirus, times and following George Floyd's death, I want this pandemic to be over. In this precarious time. I want everyone's finances to be secure, jobs to be safe, my health and the health of my family and friends to be okay. And I really want that vaccine to be available soon. I want to know that life will return to what it was before. And I want justice for our Black sisters and brothers in peace in our streets. In these uncertain and chaotic times. I also want to know that God is near. Several years ago, a woman who worked in the auditorium at Community of Christ international headquarters in Independence, Missouri, called me one morning to ask if I would provide the sacrament of laying on of hands for over the lunch hour. I asked her if she wanted to assist and she replied, "I don't care. Just ask someone." I said I would but the morning got away from me. As the lunch hour came around. I hadn't stopped call anyone. I walked around the Council of 12 apostles suite and all my colleagues were on ministry trips are out for lunch. I sat at my desk and I prayed for guidance on who to ask. A woman who worked in another office suite came to mind. I didn't know if she was an elder but I called her anyway, she agreed to meet us and participate. As we prepare for this sacrament. I asked Connie about her needs and what she wanted me to focus on in the prayer. She said that everything was going wrong in her life. She was the primary caregiver for her aging parents, which caused emotional stress. Several major appliances needed repairs, which was causing financial stress. She told us, the stress is so bad that I've developed a skin condition that makes me feel like ants are biting me. The doctor has given

me some cream but it doesn't seem to work. I'm desperate for relief. The woman who agreed to assist gave a tender prayer. And then I pray for our friend. The gentle spirit was there. When the prayer was completed, Connie said "When my life gets back to normal, I'm going to praise God." The woman who assisted told us she needed to share a personal experience. She said when she was a teenager she sank into a deep dark depression because her parents were afraid she would harm herself. They had admitted her to a hospital psychiatric ward. She was angry with her parents angry with God and angry with everyone. Early one morning in the hospital, she said she woke up because she thought she heard a voice saying, praise me for all things. "I had nothing to praise God about" she said. But that day, and every day thereafter, she found herself praising God for the smallest of things for the sun shining through her hospital window for the nurse who cared for her, and for the food brought to her on a tray. She said that as she praise God for each thing and everything, the darkness in her heart began to go away. And slowly she was healed. Don't wait to praise God until everything's good in your life. She cautioned us, praise God. Now, even in the midst of your stress, because you'll gradually become aware of God is with you. Sometimes it's really hard to praise God, especially these days. It feels like we're walking through a dark valley. That's what the psalmist David described. And he said, even though I walk through the darkest Valley, I fear no evil. Today, we're hiding in our homes afraid of an invisible enemy that can kill. And we're in a dark valley, I think. But we've been in valleys before. All of us have right. Being followers of Jesus Christ does not exempt us from pain and sorrow from dark valleys. When our grandsons Brock and Corbin were five and six years old, our daughter in law went into a two month drug rehab program for her addiction to crystal meth. When she returned home, nothing was the same. She would disappear for a night and had violent outbursts. tensions were high the summer before Brock enter third grade. My husband Doug and I were on vacation in Crested Butte, Colorado. When our son called and told us that his wife had disappeared with the boys. Her cell phone had been disconnected. He didn't know where to find them. We immediately packed up and drove home, crying and praying. The next three months were the hardest our family has ever experienced. Not knowing where they were or if the boys were safe, was excruciating. One evening Bart called me he was crying. On the news that day was a story of a woman who drove her car into a lake with her three children in the backseat. All four had drowned. Bart spoke the fear that I was feeling. What if she does that too? We were desperate to find Brock and Corbin we felt helplessness We searched for them. I even hired a private detective who couldn't find a trace, but remembered his wife's friend who lived in St. Joseph, Missouri. He located her address, and I offered to drive the two hour trip to investigate and persuaded my husband Doug to go with me. When we arrived at the three storey brick apartment building, we searched the parking lot for her van. Doug drove up and down the streets around the building looking in the van wasn't there. Finally, Doug said this is senseless. We're not going to find her here. So we drove home, a long tearful ride. That night, I told doc that we needed to get up early the next morning and drive to St. Joseph apartment. I reasoned that perhaps our daughter in law was out that day. And if we got up there really early, she and the boys would be sleeping in the van would be in the parking lot. Well, Doug refused to go. And after a sleepless night, I got up before dawn

and I drove the two hours reached the apartment before the sun came up. But there was no van. No daughter in law. No boys. Devastated I drove home crying and praying. And in my pain, I spontaneously began to sing. "I love you Lord. And I lift by voice to worship you, oh my soul. Rejoice. Take joy, my king. And what you hear may be a sweet, sweet sound in your ear." I sang that praise him over and over until my voice was hoarse. In that darkest of valleys. God's presence was tangible. I realized that God had been with us as we cried out on behalf of our beloved grandsons God was now with our son, daughter in law and grandson and God would continue to be with them no matter what happened. After three months, they finally returned. After a year of counseling, my son and daughter in law were divorced. The promise of the 23rd Psalm is not that we won't ever be in dark valleys, but that God is always with us. And Coronavirus and writing times and all times God is with us. The living Christ still comes to us. For After all, if a tomb cannot hold Jesus in our closed doors cannot keep him out. The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. Today God and Jesus Christ urges us to lie down in green pastures to receive the peace that Christ freely offers. And even though we're fighting an invisible enemy, the Coronavirus God does bring comfort and assurance. The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He restores my soul. He leaves me and right pass for his namesake. Even though I walk through the darkest Valley, I fear no evil, for you are with me and your rod and your staff. they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil my cup run for flows. Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever. The 23rd Psalm brings me comfort. I hope it does for you, too.

Josh Mangelson 12:02

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