

Family Devotion Hour #5

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

Why should I ever fear, O Lord,
 Whilst Thee I have beside me?
Thou by thy Spirit and thy Word
 Dost comfort and dost guide me;
In death's dark vale I'll fear no ill,
 For thou, O Lord art with me still,
Thy rod and staff shall stay me. L.H. 345, Verse 4

Under the guidance of the Good Shepherd, we have reclined upon the green pastures and have been led to the still waters. Every need of body and soul has been provided for in abundant measure, sufficient and enough for each day. In due time, the hand of the Lord has been opened to satisfy the longing soul and the yearning spirit, as we have been shepherded along paths of righteousness. The time comes when we must turn our steps upward and homeward. But before the time of fulfillment, we must pass through the valley – the valley of the shadow of death. Through this valley we must all walk. It is quite common that the heart of a person should turn to thoughts of death as he or she considers the pattern of this earthly pilgrimage. Many visions may come and go as we wonder how soon it will be, where it

will take place, and how. Will we have a long and painful and lingering illness, with the body wasting away as the heart becomes weary of performing its lifelong tasks, or will the flame of life be quickly extinguished? Will we die a natural death, or will we become the victims of some accident? Will we be alone when we die, or will it be with loved ones gathered around? These are questions which may come and go, but there is no answer; for the answers to these questions are hidden in the counsel of God who knows our day. The measure of life is carefully laid out by him who gives life and takes it again.

There is, however, an answer to the most important question of all: *“Where is the Shepherd when the sheep must pass through the valley on its way to the heavenly land?”* God is with us. God’s rod and staff, they comfort us; and so we will fear no evil. Though wolves and beasts of prey infest the depths of the valley, some of them hidden and some of them coming into the open to threaten the weak and the frail, yet the evil will not come near them. Though they may be limping home and walking at the end of the line, they all walk under the rod and the staff. Their way is upward and onward, and every step is guarded and shielded by the one who knows his sheep and is known of them. He will not leave

them or forsake them in the crucial hour. We may wonder about many things in connection with our death, but this one thing we will be assured of and that is that neither life nor death will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Neither things present nor things to come, neither height nor depth, will come between the Shepherd and his sheep.

You have no reason to fear or to tremble at the thought of this valley, for though it be deep and dark for the moment, it is but a shadow and, with the Sun of Righteousness shining, it banished; and the shadow blends into the light as the believers are one by one welcomed home by God, who chose them for this very purpose in eternity. With Jesus as our Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep and daily pardons them, we may know that no trial or tribulation becomes so great or grievous that it stands in the way of victory. There is no other solution or help but to depend upon the Lord our Righteousness and take our refuge in his Word and in his promises of grace and truth. For indeed, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation for everyone that believes. Apart from this Word there is no comfort or peace. This is the rod and staff. The Gospel preaching, which brings good tidings, will comfort us.

We will remember him as the one who takes away the sin of the world and through whose blood all our sins have been cleansed away. With the Psalmist we say: “Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked. For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless. O Lord Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in you.” Psalm 84: 10-12

PRAYER: Heavenly Father, we thank you for your gentle guidance in our journey through this life on earth. Be with us when we reach the end of this pilgrimage, and take us safely home to the mansions that you have prepared for us through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen