

WELCOME

Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Pastor Yadi is unable to join us. In their absence, I invite you into a contemporary time of meditation, music, scripture, and reflection.

Our service will be shared through text, but please make sure your sound is turned on so you can hear the music through the media viewer.

As we begin, I invite you to become present in this moment.

Take a slow, deep breath in.

And gently let it go.

Release what you have been carrying.

Allow your mind, body, and spirit to settle.

Scripture reminds us that wherever two or three are gathered, the Holy One is present among us.

Across distance and through technology, we gather as one community—and the Sacred meets us here.

Today's scripture comes from Psalm 23.

Our reflection is inspired by *A Beautiful Year: 52 Meditations on Faith, Wisdom, and Perseverance* by Diana Butler Bass.

Come as you are.

Breathe deeply.

Listen openly.

Let us enter this sacred time together.

Let us open our hearts to God.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

In the scriptures of Psalm 23, right and righteousness are interchangeable with justice.

But in North America?

Well, not so much.

In cultural parlance, right means "correct" (versus "wrong") and righteousness means "good behavior" (versus "naughtiness").

Very few middle-class church people would ever think of substituting justice for either word.

Alter's version, however, thunders justice as the pivotal word in the psalm. When you read the prelude, listen as it builds toward pathways of justice.

Psalm 23 -

"The Holy One is my shepherd, I shall not want.

In grass meadows The Holy One makes me lie down, by quiet waters guides me.

My life is led me on pathways of justice for God's name's sake."

The Lord is the authority here, not a corrupt government or unjust ruler.

And God's shepherding "rule" is that of abundance and generosity in a world shaped by sabbath rest, not a power motivated by greed or zero-sum economics.

The psalmist proclaims, This is the reality of the Lord's government, the beloved community over and against all oppression and exploitation.

Through it, we humans are restored to what was always intended:
My life God brings back; Our lives God brings back.

The renewed life, however, does not remain content in grass meadows or by quiet waters.

The world is that which God intended, but the wounded world does not recognize it. Instead, those who are citizens of this sacred realm are called forth on pathways of justice to make God's name—name—God's sabbath reign—known throughout the world.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

John Mayer - Waiting On The World To Change

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oBIxScJ5rly&list=PLIdtFdnWKX_E-kBEK4ZPo3s3VjzxXqYq5

The second section of psalm reads like this:
He leads me on pathways of justice for His name's sake.
Though I walk in the valley of death's shadow, I fear no harm, for You are with me.
Your rod and Your staff— it is they that console me.
You set out a table before me in the face of my foes.”

Although Westerners usually think of it as a restful psalm, from this perspective, Psalm 23 is an active one.
Doing justice will not be easy. Indeed, if you travel the “pathways of justice,” you come face-to-face with sin, evil, and death.
Yet God's people “fear no harm” confronting the powers of this world because God is with them.
God's rod and God's staff—and not the instruments of torture and violence used by brutal states—console the faithful.
Even in the worst of circumstances, when surrounded by enemies who wish nothing but harm,
God makes a place for us at the feast, providing sustenance and abundance in the wilderness.

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Ben Fuller - Wilderness (Lyric Video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1NoyVx9U7E&list=RDU1NoyVx9U7E&start_radio=1

“The final section is a prayer for faithfulness that those pursuing the pathways of

justice will remain steadfast to the sabbath reign until the end of life:
Let but goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life.
And I shall dwell in the house of the LORD for many long days.”

When read politically, the funeral psalm is transformed into a protest anthem.
It still comforts, yes.
It reminds those abused, on the margins, forgotten, and poor that they are, indeed,
citizens of a more just realm:
Blessed are the poor; blessed are those who mourn; blessed are the hungry; blessed
are the persecuted.

The Lord of generosity and justice is with us.
But it also calls God’s people to stay on the pathway of justice, assuring us that
injustice, oppression, and death can and will be overcome.
The sabbath world is here; the sabbath world is on the horizon. Keep on the path.

Meditation by: Bass, Diana Butler. A Beautiful Year: 52 Meditations on Faith,
Wisdom, and Perseverance

Jamie MacDonald - Desperate (with Lauren Daigle) (Official Performance Video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QnsS61YQxWg&list=RDU1NoyVx9U7E&index=2>

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

In the silence of our hearts or in words typed in Nearby Chat
let us give thanks for the gift of this day
and pray for the life of the world ...

if you have a prayer of joy or concern that you wish to lift to God, and have
supported by the energy of those gathered here, type it in Nearby Chat at this time.
Please conclude your prayer with the words, "Lord, in your mercy" so we know you are
finished.

When you see "Lord, in your mercy," you may wish to respond with "hear our prayers."
Lord, in your mercy,

Lord hear our prayers
those voiced here today
those spoken only in the depths of our hearts
those for which we have no words,
we lift them all up to you
with faith that you know, better than we,
what is needed.

Amen

Thank you for coming!