

Still Waters

We are familiar with the phrase 'still waters' in Hebrew Mai Menochot it means restful water. Either phrase conveys a similar meaning, in Psalm 23:2 we read:

*He makes me to lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside the still waters.*

Those words create the image of a restful place, a place where you can rest in confidence and feel secure.

"He leadeth me beside the still waters" Date - early to mid-20th century - From the Eric and Edith Matson Photograph Collection Public domain



I spent some summers with my aunt and uncle in the Ribble Valley on the Lancashire Yorkshire border. My tom-boy cousin was full of adventure. I probably was about 10 years old and she a few year older and we would play in the countryside and the brooks and streams that ran near to where they lived. The stream was a favourite place, we would paddle and look for wildlife in the water and on the banks. In the summer it was often slow flowing with pools where brown trout swam in the shallows. She even taught me how to tickle a trout and get it to the bank. I did manage to land a trout on just one occasion but did return it to the water. It was a peaceful carefree time, except for the water bailiff but he became part of our play. He never caught us. We were just too fast for him; we had youth on our side.

It is not surprising that this Psalm is probably the best known of all the psalms. There are words of comfort set within the realities that life can be hard, *'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.*

The still, resting water is essential, it quenches our thirst, it cleanses and refreshes us. My cousin and I would use the water from the brook and its pools to rinse our hands and to drink and literally to chill. I probably did know the psalm. I regularly went to church and during by summers with my cousin I was enrolled in the church choir, but its meaning had not registered with me.

Ian Adams in 'Reflections on the Psalms' writes:

The pastoral setting for Psalm 23 with its metaphor of shepherd and sheep can sometimes belie its strength, and there's a poetic softness to the text – all 'green pastures' and 'still waters' – which may lull us into imagining it to be a gentle, even innocuous thing. But this is a strong psalm for lean times.



Rest a while!

In these moments we will rest in the 'poetic softness of these words' and the resting waters.

He leads me beside the still waters.

Slowly pour out a glass of water

Hear the water as it flows into the glass.

Find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection

Place the glass of water on a table and light a candle.

Slow down, breathe calmly, be comfortable and relax.

Psalm 23 New King James Version

The LORD the Shepherd of His People

The LORD *is* my shepherd;
I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down
in¹green pastures;

**He leads me beside
the still waters.**

He restores my soul;
He leads me in the paths of
righteousness

For His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of
death,

I will fear no evil;

For You *are* with me;

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 runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy
shall follow me

All the days of my life;

And I will dwell in the house
of the LORD Forever.

The 23rd Psalm has inspired hymn writers and composers across the centuries.

In these restful moments we will hear the psalm sung the Crimond, probably the first tune we heard the psalm set to. We will close with the setting composed by Stuart Townend.

The words of the psalm appear on the screen via the YouTube link.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/-Msh0PAJfPU?si=7D8iISS8i103uVj6>

Read through the words of the psalm, prayerfully, laying one side those things that shadow your thoughts.

In the stillness let the waters, metaphorically, flow over you and refresh you, so your cup is full to overflowing.

Prayer

Let me be silent enough today
to find a moment to be still
and in that stillness
descend into the silent waters
of your grace,
be submerged in your peace
and step down again
into the eternal waters of your love.
(Barbara Glasson Reflections on the Water 2020)

When asked about how to pray Jesus gave these simple but profound words, so let them be our prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil. Amen

Our closing hymn / song

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/pN4tPkX0MG0?si=ZwkG30yKOV53WJFm>

Fr Derek Akker

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(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James. Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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Image - Impact of a drop of water. Featured picture, Picture of the year, Picture of the day
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