

Easter 4 5/3/20
Psalm 23:6a

SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ALL THE DAYS OF MY LIFE

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”
Sounds good. Sounds wonderful. We all have days. We all have a life.
And goodness and mercy will follow us from womb to tomb. What’s not to like and rejoice and be happy about that?

As you look back at the days of your life and look forward to the days to come, you realize there are a lot of days when goodness and mercy are following you. Like the day of your Baptism, when you were delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and you were made Jesus’ little lamb. Like the day of your confirmation. Before heaven and earth, you confessed the faith as you had learned it in the Apostles’ Creed; the gifts God had given you in your Baptism; and your intention to suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Or, the day you brought your new child to the font to be born again in Baptism. The first time you held that newborn grandchild. Getting that new job. Or, maybe the day of your retirement after working at that job for decades and decades.

I think it's fair to say that we all look forward to the day when social-distancing and shelter in place are over. But, even now, we can see God’s goodness and mercy following us through these days. You didn’t lose your job or income; you are not sick; no one you personally know is sick with Covid-19, and that is news of great joy because it means not one of your loved ones has died from it.

All these are great days of joy and happiness. Days like these cause you to say, yes, most surely, goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. You ever thought about all that? David says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." All means ALL, each and every day, without exception. Really?

David had some awesome days, days when goodness and mercy followed him. Like the day he was anointed to be Saul's successor as king of Israel. Most certainly, goodness and mercy followed him the day he slayed the giant Goliath. Goodness and mercy followed him when he would play his lyre for the king and his music would refresh him. It followed him the day he married Saul's daughter; after all, kinda cool to marry the king's daughter.

But, not all of David's days were like that. He had some pretty sad and dark days, as well. Like when Saul grew jealous of him, he had to flee, and he was hunted like an animal. His wife was given to another man. Like the day when he was king, his own son, Absalom, rose up against him and he had to run for his life. And don't forget the day he saw Bathsheba bathing and took her to his bedroom, which meant days of plotting and killing her husband; and the day when the child he conceived with Bathsheba died and the days of mourning that followed the child's death.

Oh sure, you've had wonderful, great, happy days. But, you also have had some pretty bad days; some downright awful days, quite honestly. Like the day you or your wife suffered a miscarriage, which means you never had the opportunity to bring your child to the font of Baptism. The day you were laid off from your job and you lost your income. The day your marriage became a curse because of physical abuse or your spouse ran off with someone new. Then, there are those people who will

hate you as much as Saul hated David, and they will stab you in the back; no, maybe not with a real sword, but with their wagging tongues; they will steal from you and cheat you.

You will have days like that. Days when you will wonder: Where is this goodness and mercy David says will follow me all the days of my life? I look around, and I don't see any goodness, any mercy, at all.

On those days, you will live the truth of Isaiah's words, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way (Is 53:6)." Which is a nice, poetic way of saying on those dark, horrible, awful days, it is super easy to give up on God. Days when you have no hope. Days when we just have to take matters into our own hands, so we drown our sorrows; we bad mouth the boss or the coach because we didn't get our way. We are angry and hate. We are jealous and envious. So, we comfort ourselves, we try to ease our conscience by saying to ourselves, "I had to do evil to my neighbor, because they did evil to me."

Here's the GOOD NEWS in all of this -- Just because you can't see goodness and mercy following you, doesn't mean it isn't there. Goodness and mercy are not some emotions. You know, when you are happy and jolly, you believe goodness and mercy are following you, because you "feel" it. But, sad and dark days, you don't think goodness and mercy are following you, because you cannot "feel" it.

Goodness and mercy are incarnate in the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He showed you goodness and mercy by taking all your sins upon Himself. As the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for you, His sheep who love to wander, upon the altar of the cross. He bled, He suffered, He died for you to forgive you all your sins; to save you from sin, death, and

the power of the devil. Three days later, He rose again to bring you forgiveness, life, and salvation.

And that's exactly what happened at the font of Baptism. There in water and Word, your Good Shepherd did what the Good Shepherd does -- He called you by name. He claimed you as His own. He gives you a wonderful promise He never breaks, "Lo, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Mt 28:20)."

Which means goodness and mercy are following you all the days of your life. How wonderful that is! On those dark, sad, lonely days -- when you lose your child in miscarriage; when you lose your job; when that child you brought to the font of Baptism and confessed the Christian faith at his/her Confirmation says, loudly, in anger that they hate you; when your mom or dad or loved one dies, your Good Shepherd is with you, to protect, guide, strengthen, comfort you, to give you the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

No matter if your day be happy and bright, or sad and dark, things remain the same for you, Dear Little Lamb. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow you all the days of your life.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.