

# THE FIRST 15

Thursday, July 25, 2024

Today is Thursday, July 25 and we are studying what the Bible says about dark valleys.

## OPENING PRAYER

*I pause in the quiet stillness at the dawn of another day. There is rhythm to my life. The sun sets and rises, my heart beats within my chest, and my breath moves in and out of my body. Hours turn to days and days turn to weeks. In every season and circumstance, I am not alone. God is with me. I seek Him in the mountaintops and in the dark valleys. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***“Do you now believe?” Jesus replied. “A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” John 16:31-33***

## REFLECTION

Jesus told His disciples that in this world they would have trouble. He included this promise in his farewell words spoken at the Last Supper. The hour of his betrayal had arrived. He knew that Judas would betray him, Peter would disown him and the rest of his faithful followers would scatter in fear. The prophecy of Zechariah would be fulfilled, “Strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7). Trouble was standing outside the door. They were all about to trek through the darkest valley.

Even though all his friends would soon leave him alone and scatter out of sight, even though Jesus knew he would be left all alone to walk the solitary path to Golgotha, he also knew his Father was with him. He was not alone. Nor am I. There are times in my life when trouble comes. There are dark valleys to walk through. There are trials, difficulties, challenges and struggles. There will be suffering and pain. Yet I am not alone, my Father is with me. Jesus’ words to his disciples on the night he was betrayed are words for me. He told me these things so that I may have peace.

Jesus promises me that in this world I will have trouble. Trouble comes to everyone. Trouble arrives at our doorstep unannounced, leaving us surprised and unprepared. All sorts of trouble arrives in packages large and small even when we didn’t ask for any of it. I consider what sorts of trouble I am currently coping with. I name my troubles. I lift up my worries and concerns before God. Perhaps I brought these troubles on myself by poor choices or wrong decisions. Maybe these troubles came of their own accord and I could not have anticipated them nor prevented them. Whatever troubles I am dealing with today, I hear the promise of Jesus. “In this world you will have trouble, but take heart,” he says, “I have overcome the world.” If Jesus overcame the world, overcame death, overcame evil, vanquished sin, was victorious on the cross, then Jesus can overcome my troubles. I am not alone. I have a powerful Savior on my side. A Good Shepherd to walk me through this valley of trouble. I have the Light of the World to

lovingly guide me through the places of darkness. He even walks me through the valley of the shadow of death.

**Ask:** When trouble comes my way, how quickly do I turn to my Lord and Shepherd Jesus? Do I believe He has overcome the world and trust Him to overcome my troubles?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed Lord Jesus, thank You for being with me in my times of trouble. I trust You to walk with me through every dark valley. Shine Your light on my path and remind me that I am not alone. When trouble comes, help me remember to turn to You first, in prayerful confidence and enduring hope. You overcame the cross. You vanquished sin and death. You know this world is full of trouble, yet You already overcame the world. Whatever troubles the world brings are no match for You, my Living Savior. Amen.*