

“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.” These are the words that open up what is probably the most-beloved of all 150 psalms. As short as it is, it’s powerful, and for two reasons. Firstly, it assures us that God is guiding us throughout our lives, in both the good times and in our trials, be it through the Commandments handed down to us through Moses, the teachings handed down to us through Jesus Christ and the Apostles, or the movements of the Holy Spirit within and around us all. No matter who we are, where we are in space or time, what we are doing, what we are enduring, we rest assured that God is with us, guiding us, even in our valleys of the Shadow of Death. Secondly, this line tells us that God provides for our every need and that we are never truly left to our own defenses. When our lives are tumultuous and we want only to find those greener pastures, this psalm is an assurance that God is leading us there, filling our cups all along the way. This is no less true for our beloved brother, Clarence.

From a young age, God has been a shepherd and provider for Clarence. He guided Clarence to Jean over 67 years ago, providing not just a wife but a loving, lifelong companion. God provided Clarence with two sons, for both of whom Clarence has been a shepherd and provider in his own right, and both of whom have gone before him to prepare a place for him. God inspired and guided Clarence, along with others, to found the church in which we are presently worshipping. When this church faced a need to expand its building, the Spirit guided and inspired Clarence and Jean to anonymously donate quite a large sum of money that the church might be able to not only afford its monthly mortgage payments, pay off that mortgage in a rather timely fashion. In return for such generosity, God has provided for them through this church family. Whenever he and Jean had needs, God provided for him and her through neighbors, friends, church families, and others. Therefore, we rest assured that, to this point, God has been a very real guide and provider for Clarence, and that God’s guidance and providing has not ended.

Amidst an illness that none of us can know the fear, confusion, other powerful emotions he may have felt day-in and day-out, Clarence is at peace. God has guided him to the greener pastures and the calmer waters of which this psalm speaks, that he might finally be at peace. God has guided him to “the house of the Lord,” that, just as Daniel and Guy have gone before him to prepare a place for him, he now can go to prepare a place for others.

By the same token, God is our provider and shepherd now. While we have assurance that Clarence is at peace, this does not stop us from walking what feels a lonesome valley, a valley we are all well-acquainted with at this point, with the shadow of Death hanging over us once again. However, this pain we feel is a sign: a sign that we have had so many fond memories with Clarence. Just as God has brought us to Clarence in the unique ways we have all come to know him, God brings us together now, providing support and comfort for us through the presence of one another, that we might know we do not walk this valley alone, that goodness and mercy are ours as well, and that, when our times come, we shall see Clarence again as we all dwell in the house of the Lord forever. To that, let all God’s children say, “Amen.”