<https://youtu.be/S2eKsFLAbMM>

Let’s do a quick refresher of a bit of Jewish history. We remember that David was king, but that he sinned by taking Bethsheba, making her pregnant, then having her husband killed and marrying her. One of the consequences of that sin that God said would happen is that David’s family would always have infighting. One way that played out was that David’s son Absalom betrayed David and set himself up as king and sent armies to kill David. One of the places David fled was known as the Valley of the Shadow of Death, which is a burial place in the Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem. Let’s take a look at it in this excerpt from the series Sergio and Rhoda in Jerusalem. (beginning at 6:59 and going to 9:21)

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When David walked through that valley, God was with him. Absalom was defeated and killed. David was safe. As Jesus walked through the valley, God was with Him and in Him and, of course, He was God. And God was with us as Jesus walked through that valley because through that walk and the events following, Jesus, in his love, saved us. Jesus made it so that nothing could ever separate us from the love of God – nothing we can do, nothing that can be done to us.

Sometimes we, like David, flee bad things. We may have been betrayed by a friend or family member. We may be in the midst of tough financial times. Most of us are fleeing (in a manner of speaking) the coronavirus now by staying in our homes and not going to places where it might lurk. We are anxious and we feel isolated.

We may be walking that valley ourselves because we are sad or lonely or because we ourselves are sick. We may be walking that valley because we have done something wrong and regret it. We are afraid.

Some of us may feel that we are walking that valley now with someone else who is ill in body, mind and spirit and for whom we pray for recovery. We are afraid and anxious. We may have walked that valley with someone who did not recover. We are sad.

No matter what makes us walk that valley, God walks it with us. When God is with us everything turns out OK. Sometimes things turn out as we hope in the short term (as they did when David’s life was spared). We are surviving our time indoors and, perhaps, God is renewing us during this time. Those who are suffering employment losses are receiving help or are finding that they have enough to eat. We’ve been able to get toilet paper and protein, despite shortages. Most of us and our families are still well. In times like this, when everything turns out as we hope it will in the short term, we thank God for being with us and giving us this outcome.

But we also know that sometimes things turn out differently from what we hoped in the short term. Absalom died in the battle, even though David had prayed that wouldn’t be necessary. Jesus died after he walked that valley, even though he had prayed that there might be a different way. Maybe we do suffer significant loss during this time. Perhaps the meat shortage becomes worse or we find we can’t pay our mortgage or our rent. Perhaps we or a family member contracts the virus.

But even in these times, God is with us. Absalom is buried in the Valley, near the East Gate of Jerusalem. In Jewish theology, this means he’ll be one of the first people to rise and enter the new kingdom that Jesus creates when He returns by the East Gate. Jesus conquered death and rose again. That means that whatever bad happens to us or our families, even if it is death, Jesus ultimately gives us victory.

No matter what happens that causes us to walk through frightening valley, God goes before us and God goes with us. God keeps us safe. God makes that walk victorious.