

25th July 2021 – Morning Service

Rev Helen Croft

God is enough

Call to Worship

This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it.

StF 15 – The splendour of the king

1) The splendour of the King,
Clothed in majesty
Let all the earth rejoice
Let all the earth rejoice
He wraps himself in Light,
And darkness tries to hide
And trembles at His voice
And trembles at His voice

2) Age to age He stands
And time is in His hands
Beginning and the end
Beginning and the end
The Godhead Three in One
Father Spirit Son
The Lion and the Lamb
The Lion and the Lamb

*Ch) How great is our God, sing with me
How great is our God, and all will see
How great, how great is our God*

*B) Name above all names, worthy of all praise
My heart will sing how great is our God*

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Prayers of Praise & Confession

What a generous God we worship! What an extravagant Creator, what a Source of abundance! God has filled the universe with stars and galaxies beyond number, has filled the world with creatures and objects, colours and shapes, types and varieties, more than we can apprehend, has built it all on atoms and molecules, too small to see, too many to imagine!

We thank You, gracious and giving God, and we praise You.

What a vibrant life this is! What an amazing array of experiences, relationships and opportunities! God has provided us with minds and bodies, hearts and souls to perceive and enjoy all that life contains, has called us to appreciate each unique moment, each special gift!

We thank You, gracious and giving God, and we praise You.

What an amazing Saviour is ours! What a self-giving, compassionate Lord! God has entered our world and shared its challenges, has lived and died as one of us, has risen, and has opened the door to full, eternal and exuberant life! **We thank You, gracious and giving God, and we praise You.**

In this world of plenty, O God, we have chosen to live lives of poverty:

We have hoarded our blessings, and have kept more than our share of abundance causing others to know the hard reality of need and want; **Please, forgive us, Gracious God**

We have failed to care adequately for the world's abundant resources, bringing scarcity and pain to our planet; **Please, forgive us, Gracious God**

We have denied the goodness that we enjoy, and have forgotten how to be grateful, making ourselves miserable and hurting others; **Please, forgive us, Gracious God**

[Silence]

Remind us, O Lord, of all the good things that we have received. Remind us how to enjoy the blessings we experience. Remind us that giving is a source of pleasure and plenty. Remind us that there is enough to go around. And teach us to follow Christ in the ways of love, self-giving and compassion; even as You have forgiven us in Christ. **Amen.**

StF 156 – From the breaking of the dawn

- 1) From the breaking of the dawn
To the setting of the sun,
I will stand on every promise of your word.
Words of power, strong to save,
That will never pass away;
I will stand on every promise of your word.
For your covenant is sure,
And on this I am secure:
I can stand on every promise of your word.
- 2) When I stumble and I sin,
Condemnation pressing in,
I will stand on every promise of your word.
You are faithful to forgive,
That in freedom I might live,
So I stand on every promise of your word.
Guilt to innocence restored;
You remember sins no more.
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.
- 3) When I'm faced with anguished choice
I will listen for your voice,
And I'll stand on every promise of your word.
Through this dark and troubled land,
You will guide me with your hand
As I stand on every promise of your word.
And you've promised to complete
Every work begun in me,
So I'll stand on every promise of your word.
- 4) Hope that lifts me from despair;
Love that casts out every fear
As I stand on every promise of your word.
Not forsaken, not alone,
For the Comforter has come,
And I stand on every promise of your word.
Grace sufficient, grace for me,
Grace for all who will believe.
We will stand on every promise of your word.

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CCL No. 515642

Reading: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I 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 overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Reflection

When I was growing up one of the things that our Sunday morning worship encouraged was the learning of Scripture. The minister would decide what portion of Scripture we would learn that term. One of the first verses I recall learning was Psalm 23. It is a Psalm that means a lot to me and I have studied it in depth but sadly, over the past few years, I've seen this Psalm relegated to funerals either through the passage being read from Scripture or the singing of the verses through the various hymns written usually Crimmond but occasionally Stuart Townend. It is even a familiar passage with those people who claim to have no faith. Sadly, because we have relegated this Psalm to funerals, I believe the church has lost the significance of it and so briefly today, I want to claim this Psalm back from the funeral and into the life of the church.

David wrote this psalm in his later life. Scholars believed that he wrote it around the time of the rebellion of Absalom (2 Samuel 13-19). David was dealing with difficult things but what he did was to draw on his long experience and history with the Lord. So you could say this message is for mature Christians who either have fought battles and carried burdens or are fighting battles and carrying burdens. So, beloved, whichever of these seasons you might be in, its time to draw on your experience with the Lord. And if you are not in either of these seasons, then when you encounter them, you'll be armed with the Word of God and ready to do battle.

The image of a shepherd is a well-known Biblical example from the first martyr, Abel; through to Moses, the great leader and patriarch of Israel; through to David, the shepherd boy who became king; through the various words and visions of the prophets and even into the New Testament to Jesus who called himself the Good Shepherd (John 10). I don't know if you know much about sheep - I've not seen many around here - but in the valleys – there's loads and they are such fun to watch. Why?

Sheep are defenceless animals, they are prone to getting lost, need constant care and unlike cattle, they must be led not driven. Eastern Shepherds knew their sheep by name and could call them and they would come, each sheep have their own characteristic. Sheep were not kept for food but for wool, milk and reproduction.

David in Psalm 23 explains that if we follow the Lord and trust Him, He will meet our every need, no matter what the circumstances may be. The trouble is we tend to look to ourselves and at our own circumstances instead of Jesus. We try to be the shepherd but all we really end up with is lots of lost sheep, and maybe more than we care to admit, because of our stupidity.

Psalm 23 speaks of 4 things that the Shepherd provides and gives his sheep which we can learn and gain as we follow Jesus:

1. In the pastures (everyday life) – God is Adequate (v1-3)

God is a covenant making God and he will provide. Jesus is adequate for our every need of food, water and rest. Jesus the Shepherd knows where to lead us and he cares for us because he loves us. He is our provider and will give us what we need for our daily journey.

2. In the valley (in the tough places) – God is Serenity (v4)

Jesus the Shepherd is not before us but beside us leading the way. He calms our fears. Sheep lack good vision, they can be easily frightened in new circumstances and especially where it's dark, but the Shepherd calms them down. The Shepherd is equipped to lay down his life for his sheep and bring peace to them. In the tough places, with God, we too can enjoy the peace of God. Paul tells us it's the peace that passes all understanding. The closer we are to the Shepherd the safer we are and the more His peace fills our hearts.

3. In the fold (in the safe places) – God is Certainty (v5-6)

When I learnt this Psalm as a child, I thought that the table (v5) was a piece of furniture and I couldn't understand how you could get a table in or even on the mountains (especially some of the Valley mountains). But it's not a piece of furniture it's something that is on the ground and spread out usually a flat place in the hills sometimes with walls around 3 sides. It is a place to eat and rest, it is a place where the Shepherd brings his sheep to safety. The danger is not always removed but the certainty of God with us does help us to overcome the danger and not be paralyzed by fear. Rom 8:31-39 tells us that we are more than conquerors. We can overcome the danger with God beside us.

4. In the father's house (in the house of God) – God is Eternity (v6)

In looking back over his life, David gave thanks that the Lord had blessed him with goodness and mercy. Are we able to look back over our life and give thanks for the goodness and mercy of God recognizing his eternal hand on our life?

In John 10 Jesus shows us how being a Shepherd works in practice and that as we spend more time with him, we'll get to know him. So, let's not try our own way but let us rest in God, seek God's will not just for our life but the life of His church because God is adequate, serenity, certainty and eternal.

StF 481 – The Lord’s my shepherd

1) The Lord's my shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me lie in pastures green,
He leads me by the still, still waters,
His goodness restores my soul.

*Ch) And I will trust in you alone,
And I will trust in you alone,
For your endless mercy follows me,
Your goodness will lead me home.*

2) He guides my ways in righteousness,
And he anoints my head with oil;
And my cup - it overflows with joy,
I feast on his pure delights.

3) And though I walk the darkest path -
I will not fear the evil one,
For you are with me, and your rod and staff
Are the comfort I need to know.

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Prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession

Father, we give you thanks for the risen Lord, the Good Shepherd, who seeks out and saves all who are lost. We pray for all who are walking in the valley of the shadow at this time, all those whose lives are hard or being made hard, for all being attacked by evil.

May they know your love and protection. We remember all who are called to share in the shepherding of your people: we pray for our ministers, local church pastors, pastoral visitors and many others

L: Lord of hosts **R: You are our hope and our strength.**

We ask you to guide all carers and counsellors. Strengthen all who are looking after others. We pray for the Samaritans, for Alcoholics Anonymous and other similar organizations. For all who seek out and befriend the needy.

L: Lord of hosts **R: You are our hope and our strength.**

We remember all who have protected us and guided us. We pray for those who have supported us in times of need, those who have stayed with us in times of darkness. We pray for our homes and our loved ones.

L: Lord of hosts **R: You are our hope and our strength.**

We come with all who have entered into weakness, darkness or trouble this week. We pray for those who cannot pray for themselves, for those who have lost memory or reason, for all who are facing death, especially those who are lonely. May they know the Good Shepherd is with them.

L: Lord of hosts **R: You are our hope and our strength.**

Lord, may we learn to abide in you, and know that you aide in us.

May we know that nothing separates us from you. We pray for all who have passed through darkness, and have entered light and life everlasting.

L: Lord of hosts **R: You are our hope and our strength.**

In the name of Christ, who taught us to pray together saying:

The Lord’s 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. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. **Amen.**

StF 323 – I will sing the wondrous story

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| 1) I will sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
How he left the realms of glory
For the cross on Calvary: | 3) Faint was I, and fears possessed me,
Bruised was I from many a fall;
Hope was gone, and shame distressed me;
But his love has pardoned all: |
| <i>Ch) Yes, I'll sing the wondrous story
Of the Christ who died for me,
Sing it with his saints in glory,
Gathered by the crystal sea.</i> | 4) Days of darkness still come o'er me;
Sorrow's paths I often tread;
But the Saviour still is with me,
By his hand I'm safely led: |
| 2) I was lost; but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Raised me up, and gently led me
Back into the narrow way: | 5) He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet;
Then he'll bear me safely over,
Where the loved ones I shall meet: |

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Closing prayer - A Paraphrase of Psalm 23

God, You are enough for us;
You give us rest in soft fields and beside whispering streams;
You restore and renew us, and lead us into life-giving ways;
When death and evil come close to us, you carry us through, you protect and comfort us;
When others seek to do us harm, your grace uplifts and provides for us in public view;
You fill us with your strength and we enjoy overflowing abundance;
We have confidence that your goodness and compassion will fill our days,
and we will stay immersed in your life and presence forever.

Amen.