

3rd May 2020 Sunday Morning Service

STF 98 – Your love is amazing

(V1-Ch-V2-Ch-V1-Ch-Br-Ch)

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| 1) Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging,
Your love is a mountain, firm beneath my feet.
Your love is a mystery, how you gently lift me,
When I am surrounded, your love carries me. | Ch) <i>Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah, your love makes me sing.
Hallelujah, hallelujah,
Hallelujah, your love makes me sing.</i> |
| 2) Your love is surprising, I can feel it rising,
All the joy that's growing deep inside of me.
Ev'ry time I see you, all your goodness
shines through,
I can feel this God-song, rising up in me. | Br) Yes, you make me sing.
How you make me sing, sing, sing,
Lord you make me sing. |

Prayer of Praise

Prayer of Praise,

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, we pause in this time to praise you for who you are;

For your majesty, your authority, your sovereignty, your power.

There is no God like you. There is no God beside you.

We praise you, the one true living Lord of all creation.

You are `lord of all you have made.

You have authority over all that was, is and is to be.

Yours is the power, yours is the glory and your name is above all other names.

We pause and praise you for what you have done.

You have made us and you love us,

Held us and healed us,

Forgiven us and accepted us.

You have made us your children;

You have given us your Son, whom we know as both Jesus our Saviour,

And Christ our Lord.

We praise you for the living Christ , the shepherd who knows all his sheep,

Calls us by name.

We praise you, our Father and Shepherd, for who you are and what you have done to make us your own,

In the name of the Good Shepherd, Amen

Prayer of Confession

All we like sheep have gone astray each of us turning our own separate way.

We have all sinned and fallen short of your glory,

but your glory is what we desire to see and in your presence is where we belong.

Oh Lord, show us your mercy and grace.

Take us to your holy place forgive our sin and heal our land.

We long to live in your presence, by your grace cleanse us through Jesus that in your presence we may truly dwell.

Amen

Reading: Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will 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 your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

STF 481 – The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want

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| 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. | 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. |
| Ch) <i>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.</i> | 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. |

Reading: John 10:1-10

"I tell you the truth, the man who does not enter the sheep pen by the gate, but climbs in by some other way, is a thief and a robber. The man who enters by the gate is the shepherd of his sheep. The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice." Jesus used this figure of speech, but they did not understand what he was telling them.

Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

Reflection

Listening to voices is part of life for most of us - voices on TV, radio, people in the house with us, in the shops etc. For some listening to voices just does not happen, either they were born deaf or have lost all or part of their hearing as they have aged or through illness and accident.

My mum has severe hearing loss; it has got worse over the years. Even as a young adult she would not always hear if someone called out her name from a distance. A person who went on to become a really good friend, June, had not been aware of my mums hearing problem and so thought my mum was a bit stuck up; June would call out and my mum, not hearing, would be perceived as ignoring her.

A number of years ago I saw a man wearing a T-shirt with the slogan "My wife says I don't listen, or something like that" on the front.

Sometimes we don't hear some times we don't listen, do we?

If we can be like that with parents, our spouse, or children, can be like that with God, with Jesus our Shepherd too?

Is there a spiritual parallel? Do we have selective hearing when it comes to God?

At times we're content to be just in the presence of the Shepherd, and that's OK. Yet there are times we get so absorbed in what we're doing, what we're thinking, with ourselves so much that we don't listen to what God could be saying.

I wonder what benefits there are from listening to the voice of the shepherd?

The Voice of the Shepherd Goes Before Us and Guides us

"and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out."

Good hearing/listening can make a difference – Goal-ball is a game played blindfolded with bells in the ball; the better the hearing the better chance of being able to play well.

There is great comfort in the image of the voice of the shepherd calling us from in front for it means the Good Shepherd goes before us to prepare the way. There is no place that we go that the Shepherd hasn't already been. He has already made sure the path is clear and safe or at least manageable. There may be hardships, there may be mishaps, there may be struggles but the Good Shepherd has already seen those and knows how to help us negotiate through the treacherous territory. He has already prepared a way for us to get through. All we have to do is continue to listen to His Voice.

Many of us are now used to Satellite Navigation systems or being guided by Google maps – other systems are available. On many you can change the voice. Some voices seem to shout at you. – If I ignore my sat nav it does not get annoyed and apart from the occasional "turn round" she works out a new route for me. The Good Shepherd is better than any Sat Nav when we get it wrong, ignore an instruction, it is not the end of the world, God can recalculate a new route for us, not the ideal he had planned but a suitable alternative that may be tougher but God can compensate for our waywardness.

When I have been out Trekking it is good to know that the leader knows the route. A number of years ago Anita and I walked the Hadrian's wall Way, a little 86 mile stroll. We travelled East to West, into the prevailing wind. The locals who we passed would ask why East/West and I would answer because that is the way the guidebook is directing us. On day one as we walked from Wallsend, East of Newcastle, at one point the guidebook read – "at this point you will be able to smell the sea" – and we could. It gave us confidence that the author had been that way before and we could trust the guide.

Many know what it is to be guided by God through listening to his voice – a voice that can be heard in many different ways but most likely when we are praying about some issue for then we are more likely to be listening. It is not lazy guidance it is a seeking of the will of God.

The Voice of the Shepherd Protects Us

Not only does the shepherd lead us and guide us, but the voice of the Shepherd Protects Us.

You have to make sure that the voice you are listening to is the right voice.

Are we worse than sheep? "But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

There are a lot of voices out there vying for your attention and loyalty. There are a lot of voices that want you to think they are The Voice of the Shepherd; in reality they are the voice of the thief Jesus describes in verse 10. Bob's "Famous Ice Cream Parlour" in Bethesda, Maryland, was to be robbed. The manager Nathan Peabody was warned in time; Moments before the robbery he was contacted by telephone. The voice said, "Are you the manager? Listen carefully; don't panic. This is the police. You are going to be robbed. Do NOT resist. Let the robber have your money. We will be waiting right outside your store as we need to catch him with the money on him. Thank you for your cooperation."

Sure enough, a man with a scruffy beard and a knife came in demanding money. Mr Peabody took all of his cash out of the drawer and gave it to him. Peabody watched as the robber left the store, and waited for the cops to close in. Instead, the robber just got in his car and drove away. As Mr Peabody saw the taillights disappear in the distance he realized what had just happened. He realized that the call hadn't come from police headquarters after all, but from the thief.

We need to recognise the voice of the shepherd; we do that by spending time listening to him, getting to know his intonations and style. In these days of lockdown we have plenty of time to listen to the voice of the shepherd as we read the words of Scripture; reflect upon the words of others and discern the difference. The better we recognise the voice of the Shepherd the more diverse we recognise he uses to

guide us. Jesus was right, [John 10:10] "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. [He] came that [we might] have life, and have it abundantly."

Listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, follow where he leads, be guided in his ways and be protected from enemies who come to destroy truth. And the greatest truth of all is God is Good, God is Love and God loves you.

Offering prayer

Lord, for those who are weak, we will seek to be their strength;
To those who are defeated, we will offer hope through your victory;
To those who are hurting, we commit ourselves to listen;
To those who are lost we will speak of the Shepherd:
For those who are empty, we commit ourselves to love them.
For those without hope and without love, we will offer Christ. **AMEN**

Prayer of intercession

Lord, we ask –

For the courage of the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep.

We pray for those who are prepared to suffer and have given their life in the care of others

Silence

We pray for those who risk their own safety by accompanying others along paths of deep suffering, through valleys of fear and despair.

Lord we ask for the Compassion of the Good Shepherd who leads his sheep to safe pasture.

We pray for those who work to feed, shelter and educate people around the world and on our own doorsteps.

Silence

We pray for those who are supporting the bereaved, isolated and anxious

Lord we ask for the love of the Good Shepherd who knows his sheep by name.

We pray for our church fellowships and congregations;

Silence

We pray for our families who are living close by or at a distance from us.

Silence

We pray for ourselves that we might hear the call from our Good Shepherd and follow his way of love.

Silence

For we make our prayers in Christ's name who is the Good Shepherd and taught us to pray-

The Lord's Prayer.

STF 158 – Lord you sometimes speak in wonders

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| 1) Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders,
Unmistakable and clear,
Mighty signs that show your presence,
Overcoming doubt and fear. | 3) Lord, you often speak in Scripture,
Words that summon from the page,
Shown and taught us by your Spirit
With fresh light for every age. |
| 2) Lord, you sometimes speak in silence,
Through our loud and noisy day;
We can know and trust you better
When we quietly wait and pray. | 4) Lord, you always speak in Jesus,
Always new yet still the same:
Teach us now more of our Saviour,
Make our lives display his Name. |

Blessing