

WELCOME - Good morning! My name is Rev. Scott Guy. I recently retired from Northfield Parish Church in Aberdeen and am now living in St. Boswells. My wife Adrienne and I have been worshipping with you over the past few weeks and it is my great pleasure to lead you in worship today. *"The Lord hears the righteous when they call to Him for help and saves them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to those whose hearts are breaking and He rescues them. The righteous do not escape all troubles, they have them too, but the Lord helps them in each and every one. The Lord protects them from danger."* - Psalm 34 v 17-20

HYMN 381 (CH3) I will sing the wondrous story

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:

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 was lost: but Jesus found me,
Found the sheep that went astray,
Raised me up and gently led me
Back into the narrow way:

Yes, I'll sing . . .

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:

Yes, I'll sing . . .

Days of darkness still may meet me,
Sorrow's paths I oft may tread;

But his presence still is with me,
By his guiding hand I'm led:
Yes, I'll sing . . .

He will keep me till the river
Rolls its waters at my feet:
Then he'll bear me safely over,
Made by grace for glory meet:
Yes, I'll sing . . .

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION - Lord God, we draw near to You this morning to experience just how loving, how patient, how merciful and how majestic You really are. You lead us and guide us by Your Holy Spirit as we go through life.

You satisfy us with good things, You protect and shield us from harm, You love us with an everlasting love. You lift us up when we fall down, You put our feet on solid ground and steady us as we walk along. You give us a new song to sing, a song of praise to You.

We stand in awe before You, for You have done such amazing things in our lives and in the lives of all who are Yours. Who is there like You? There is no one!

You alone are our strength and shield, to You alone do our spirits yield. You alone are our hearts' desire and we long to worship You.

Forgive us Lord for the times in our lives when we have ignored You.

When we thought that we knew best and failed to consult You about the way forward.

Forgive us Lord when we chose to go our way and not Yours and suffered the consequences.

Forgive us for all the wrong things we have thought and said and done, which have hurt those around us and hurt You.

Yet You have never held any of this against us and continue to pour out Your love to us as a devoted Father. You forgive us and encourage us to forgive others also.

Help us to follow Your ways, to love You with all our hearts, all our souls, all our minds and all our strength and to love others as much as we love ourselves.

And hear us Lord, as we pray together in the words which Jesus has taught us: 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 Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom the power and the glory forever. Amen

The Lord is my shepherd;

I have everything I need.

2 He lets me rest in fields of green grass
and leads me to quiet pools of fresh water.

3 He gives me new strength.

He guides me in the right paths,
as he has promised.

4 Even if I go through the deepest darkness,
I will not be afraid, Lord,
for you are with me.

Your shepherd's rod and staff protect me.

5 You prepare a banquet for me,
where all my enemies can see me;
you welcome me as an honored guest
and fill my cup to the brim.

6 I know that your goodness and love will be with me all my life;
and your house will be my home as long as I live.

REFLECTION

Turning to the Psalms can help us when we feel a bit down and need God's help and healing.

We look to God in the Psalms, so that we can be lifted up into His holy Presence and experience His great goodness, His everlasting love and His tender mercy for ourselves!

And this morning, I'd like us to look together at the most familiar of all Psalms - 23 - The Lord's my Shepherd. Often read and sung at funerals because of the great comfort it gives to those who are grieving. But relevant to each one of us at all times in our lives.

David writes from personal experience. He had been a humble shepherd. He had faithfully looked after and protected his flocks just as those shepherds did who watched their flocks by night, whom we sing about at Christmas.

The description of God as a Shepherd is found in other parts of the Bible: in *Isaiah 40 v 11: "He will take care of His flock like a shepherd. He will gather the lambs together and carry them in His arms. He will gently lead their mothers. Ezekiel 34 v 15: "I Myself will be the Shepherd of My sheep and I will find them a place to rest."* And in New Testament – Jesus

Christ: "I am the Good Shepherd," Hebrews calls Him the Great Shepherd and Peter calls Him the Chief Shepherd.

So The Lord our God is OUR Shepherd. He is YOUR Shepherd, He is MY Shepherd
He takes care of us as a faithful, loving Shepherd takes care of his sheep. He meets all our needs,
He makes sure that we have everything we require to live.

4. He provides food for us to eat and water for us to drink.

He gives us new strength!

He restores souls!

When we find that we just can't go on, He picks us up! He gives us His own strength!

He encourages us to go on, with His help. Reassuring us, telling us that we can do it, building up our confidence, filling us with hope, reminding us that He is always right there with us and will never ever leave us on our own.

He guides us in the right paths, as He has promised. He shows us the way to go.

He leads us as a shepherd. In this part of the world we are very familiar with shepherds - many of you will recall the story serialised in the Dandy of Andrew Glen and his famous collie sheepdog Black Bob, who lived on a farm in the hills above Selkirk.

But shepherds in the Middle East don't drive their sheep from behind with a sheep-dog.

They lead them from the FRONT, they blaze the trail and set the pace and their sheep obediently follow. Sheep don't know the way to go and you and I don't know the way to go through life.

We need a Leader, Someone who has gone that way before, Someone who knows the way, Someone we can follow!

Some years ago now I went on a charity trek thro Sahara desert, I had never been there before, so I didn't know the way. I needed a guide, someone who had been that way before. Someone who knew the desert, someone whom I & the rest of us could follow. And thankfully we had such a person - a young Moroccan named Lahcen. As long as we followed him we would make it. But if we set out on our own we would almost certainly become hopelessly lost, with disastrous consequences!

You and I need a Leader to help us to make it through life. If we try to do it on our own we will fail miserably, we need Someone to say "Follow Me"

Someone we can trust. Someone who knows us inside out. Someone who knows what He's doing. Someone who cares about our wellbeing. Someone who is fully determined to lead us to our destination.

The Lord our God loves each one of us. HE has promised to lead us if only we will follow!

The Lord our God has made it possible for each one of us to ask Him to come into our lives, by His Holy Spirit. To always be there with us and to lead us from within.

Have YOU asked His Holy Spirit into YOUR life?

Are YOU allowing God's Spirit to lead you and to guide you?

Let's return to the Sahara desert. In the Sahara there were no street lights. When it became dark we had a generator which provided us with some basic lighting. But after a couple of hours it packed in and we had to switch on our head torches to see where we were going!

Pitch black!

Now if I hadn't had that head torch I would have been afraid, very afraid, because you never knew what was out there or what you might bump into or trip over or fall down. Fear of the unknown, of that which we cannot see and cannot control. Many of us are afraid of death and what it might be like to go through the process of dying. We're afraid of walking thro' the valley of the shadow of death! What will it be like? How will I feel? Will it be painful and long drawn out? "How will I cope? Who can help us? Who can we turn to who has experienced walking thro this darkest of valleys and come out the other end? No-one! Except One! And that is Jesus Himself! HE has walked through the valley of the shadow of death! HE knows what it's like to suffer and die!

HE has conquered death and only HE can help you and me when we face what HE faced, because HE came through it!

Suppose you're in a hospital ward waiting for a big op. How do you feel? Scared, apprehensive, worried, can't sleep! Consultant explains the op to you, that only helps a bit,

You're STILL scared,

You're STILL apprehensive.

You're STILL worried.

You STILL can't sleep!

But there in the bed next to you is someone, around the same age, who, a few days ago had the same op as you are about to get. What was it like, you ask them? And he/she explains to you all that happened, how they felt, how they came through that op and are now sitting up in bed feeling so much better! That person knows exactly how you are feeling, because THEY felt that same way, just a few days before, when THEY were in the exact same situ that YOU are now in! And, having spoken to them, asked all questions, you feel so much better. You're still a bit frightened and apprehensive & so on, but not NEARLY so much as before. Talking to that person has made all the difference to you, because you know that they understand how you feel!

When we are afraid of death and the process of dying, JESUS knows exactly how we feel. And talking things through with HIM in prayer, asking HIM our questions, telling HIM all our fears, will always help us!

“I have gone through what YOU will go through,” He tells us. And, what's more, I will be right there with you when YOU go through it! Death will not be the end for you, because I have already died in your place! And just as I overcame death, so you.... if you believe and trust in Me and in what I have done for you; YOU will also overcome death. And you will live with Me forever! I will be with you - ALWAYS!! In THIS life - and in the life everlasting which follows! I will never, ever leave you! I will never ever forsake you! I will be with you, always, even 'til the very end of time!

And as we move on in the Psalm, we see that we are not just sheep being looked after by the Shepherd -

We are human beings, upon whom our Creator longs to lavish good things.

You prepare a banquet for me, in full view of everyone, You honour me, You pour out so much of your goodness upon me that it overflows!

This banquet is in Heaven. Jesus has gone ahead to prepare it for us! We are His honoured guests. We are His brothers and sisters sitting at the table beside Him, with God the Father at the head.

Is there a place reserved for YOU at His table?

But you say: How will I know if there is a place?

(Wedding - name tags at table, find your name and sit down at your appointed place.)

Well, if YOU believe that Jesus, the Son of God died for YOU and YOU have asked Him into YOUR life as YOUR Shepherd - - - YOUR name is already written on the place tag!!!

The amazing goodness, love and mercy of the Lord our God will always be there - in this life and in the life to come - there will be no end to His goodness, love & mercy.

GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS... We will live with Him and enjoy His wonderful company forever!

You know what it's like when you just enjoy being with someone so much that you never want that time to end? That's but a tiny taste of what it will be like to be with God in Heaven!

We will just want it to go on & on. And the wonderful thing is - it will. We will feel right at home! HIS house will be OUR home, for all eternity!

The Lord our God says to you & me:

Make yourself at home, because. this IS your home and everything in it is YOURS!

Now THAT'S an invitation we CANNOT ignore!!!

Concluding Prayer - Lord God , we thank You that You are our Shepherd. That You watch over us and take care of us day after day. We thank You that You know each one of us by name and that we are Yours. We thank You that Your Son Jesus died in our place on the cross, so that by trusting in Him we might have eternal life and be with You and Him forever. We thank You that we can put all our hope and trust in You and that You will always be there for us. Help us Lord to trust You more, especially when everything and everyone seems to be against us and we feel low and weary. May each one of us learn to follow Your leading in our lives, as Your Holy Spirit works within us. For we pray all of this in the powerful and wonderful Name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN The Lord's my Shepherd/I'll trust in Him

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.

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

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 And I will trust

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.

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

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PRAYER OF INTERCESSION –

Read by Irene McFadzean

God our Father, we draw near to You in our prayers to remember those who are going through difficult times at the moment.

Those in our own communities here in the Borders and those further afield.

We remember those young people who have just received their exam results and are worried about their future. Help them to know that there is support available for them and that there are many who are able to see them through these times. Be with their families also as they seek to support them. Let each one of them know Lord, that You are with them and are always there to listen to their concerns and to bring them Your hope for the future.

We pray for those in Greece, Turkey, Algeria and the United States, who are experiencing these terrible wildfires at the moment. We pray that the authorities concerned will be able to contain these fires. We pray for those who have already suffered and have lost family members. Bring them Your comfort, give them Your strength at this time and in the times to come and help all those who are working with them to put an end to this destruction and loss of lives.

We pray also for those in Afghanistan who are worried about their families and themselves in all that is going on in that troubled land. We pray for an end to the senseless violence and murder, that You will be with all those who are suffering there and bring peace and stability in that country.

Lord God we bring before You now those whom we would personally like to pray for at this time, bringing our concerns for them before You and we do so now in the silence

Lord these are our prayers for others this day. We offer them up to You in the strong and wonderful Name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Lord. Amen.

HYMN 153 Great is Thy faithfulness

Great is Thy Faithfulness O God my Father

There is no shadow of turning with Thee
Thou changest not Thy compassions they fail not
As Thou has been Thou for ever wilt be

Great is Thy faithfulness, Great is Thy faithfulness

Morning by morning new mercies I see

All I have needed Thy hand has provided

Great is Thy faithfulness Lord unto me

Summer and winter and spring-time and harvest

Sun, moon and stars in their courses above

Join with all nature in manifold witness

To Thy great faithfulness mercy and love

Great is Thy faithfulness . . .

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth

Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide

Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow

Blessings all mine with ten thousand beside

Great is Thy faithfulness . . .

BENEDICTION –

And now may the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep,

The Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.