

Morning Prayer 11th October 2020

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity

Service with Bishop Trevor Musonda Mwamba



Personal preparation before the service begins.
Please take time to remember where you are,
and why you are here.
Give thanks and become still
in the presence of God

Prelude

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with us.
This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Song SoF 537

The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
in pastures green; He leadeth me
the quiet waters by.

My soul He doth restore again;
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for His own name's sake.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
yet will I fear no ill;
for Thou art with me; and Thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

My table Thou hast furnishèd

in presence of my foes;
my head Thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling place shall be.

CCLI Song # 5072217
Jessie Seymour Irvine | Scottish Psalter
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Let us pray with words from Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd; •
therefore can I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures •
and leads me beside still waters.
He shall refresh my soul •
and guide me in the paths of righteousness for his
name's sake.
Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of
death,
I will fear no evil; •
for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You spread a table before me
in the presence of those who trouble me; •
you have anointed my head with oil
and my cup shall be full.
Surely goodness and loving mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life, •
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit,
**As it was in the beginning,
is now and shall be for ever.**

The Collect for today, the 18th Sunday after Trinity.

God, our judge and saviour,
teach us to be open to your truth
and to trust in your love,
that we may live each day
with confidence in the salvation which is given
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

The first reading is taken from Isaiah 25:1-9

Let us prepare ourselves for the word of God
Our hearts and our minds are open

O Lord, you are my God;
I will exalt you, I will praise your name;
for you have done wonderful things,
plans formed of old, faithful and sure.
For you have made the city a heap,
the fortified city a ruin;
the palace of aliens is a city no more,
it will never be rebuilt.
Therefore strong peoples will glorify you;
cities of ruthless nations will fear you.
For you have been a refuge to the poor,
a refuge to the needy in their distress,
a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat.
When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter
rainstorm,
the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place,
you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds;
the song of the ruthless was stilled.

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all
peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines,
of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines
strained clear.
And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;

he will swallow up death for ever.
Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all
faces,
and the disgrace of his people he will take away from
all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.
It will be said on that day,
Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he
might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

This is the word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

The reading is taken from Matthew 22.1-14

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to
Matthew

Glory to you, O Lord

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:
The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king
who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his
slaves to call those who had been invited to the
wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he
sent other slaves, saying, "Tell those who have been
invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and
my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is
ready; come to the wedding banquet." But they made
light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his
business, while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated
them, and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent
his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned
their city. Then he said to his slaves, "The wedding is
ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore
into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to
the wedding banquet." Those slaves went out into the
streets and gathered all whom they found, both good
and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.
'But when the king came in to see the guests, he
noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding
robe, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you get in

here without a wedding robe?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, "Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Homily

The Lord is my Shepherd

Life changes in a moment. 34 years ago my mother died in a car accident. I remember that day as if it was yesterday.

It was an ordinary sunny Saturday afternoon. I was in my study preparing a sermon for Sunday when the telephone rang. I answered, it was my brother Jay, and he simply said, 'Trevor', I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'Mummy is dead'. Suddenly the fine day was no longer fine. In a moment my life changed.

After the funeral one of my siblings gave me a beautifully embroidered cloth of Psalm 23. My mother had made it for me before she died. I took it as my beloved mother's last message to me and have treasured it ever since. I had the embroidered Psalm 23 framed. Whenever I look at it I think of my mother and meditate on the wisdom of the psalm.

Albert Einstein once said science can tell us a lot about the universe, how old it is, how vast it is, what laws of physics control it. And he went on to say that science is however powerless to answer the most important question of all: Is the universe a friendly place and supportive of human hopes and aspirations?

Psalm 23 as a prayer in beautifully crafted words with its imagery of the Lord as our Shepherd answers the important question. It's a compact spiritual masterpiece that gives us a complete practical theology. God who

created the universe is present, loving, caring, a good Shepherd at the center of everything.

The Psalm reveals God's everlasting presence with us in the good and bad experiences of our lives.

When anxious we find courage to overcome our fears. When grieving we find comfort and our way through the valley of the shadow of death. When our lives are embittered by bad people we are taught how to deal with them. When burnt out and tired of life God restores and replenishes our souls.

Psalm 23 is an evergreen prayer that soothes the pain of life. Many times over the centuries in dark moments people have prayed the Psalm to bolster their faith. And in every utterance of the 123 words that comprise the Psalm people have found the comfort, strength, encouragement, inspiration, joy, faith, love, and hope endued in every word.

The Psalm takes us to God as the Shepherd of our lives. The Hebrew people who gave us the Bible were nomads travelling with their flocks and herds wherever they was pasture for the animals to graze on. So we have the stories of Abraham, Moses, and David tending their sheep.

They were good shepherds guarding their flocks with love, dedicated to protecting them from the world's dangers. So the Hebrews in their poetry pictured God as a good Shepherd.

The Lord is my Shepherd means we live in a fickle and often frightening world. We are aware that bad things happen to us and other people. What the philosopher William James described as "the pit of insecurity beneath the surface of life".

In a very down to earth manner Psalm 23 acknowledges this pit of insecurity beneath the surface of life and pragmatically tellings us in Rabbi Harold Kushner's words:

"God's promise was never that life would be fair. God's promise was that, when we had to confront the unfairness of life, we would not have to do it alone for He would be with us". "Thou art with me."

Yes. Our world may not be a perfect world but it's God's world and that makes all the difference. God is there to take care of us, to help us, even as a shepherd cares for his sheep in a world of dangerous predators and threats of accidents.

Yes. We live in a frightening world but it is less frightening knowing God is here with us. I am reminded of George Gershwin's romantic ballad "Someone to Watch Over Me". That is the spiritual ballad of Psalm 23. The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want. God watches over me. God watches over us.

In the face of the adversities we may face in life with honesty and optimism, Psalm 23, inspires us to see ourselves, our life, as bundled up with the Life of God.

It inspires us to see the world we live in without illusions and to live courageously, doing good for ourselves and others.

Psalm 23 is not a soft prayer dipped in honey telling us if we are good people, life will be easy. No it's a tough prayer to face life's challenges with fortitude and emerge better persons, stronger and wiser with God's help.

The Psalm's shows God's faithfulness and generosity towards us in this world and beyond.

The Psalm lifts our eyes to see the world as God would have us see it. The message of the Psalm over centuries for people like you and me is simply that: If we feel alone and adrift in a friendless world don't believe that feeling because the priceless reassurance of Psalm 23 is that, God is always with us. Always. Always. "The Lord is my Shepherd. I shall not want."

This is the last message my mother passed on to me.
This is the message we must believe and pass on to
others. At the heart of the universe is a loving God who
always conspires to make things well in our lives
because:

The Lord is our Shepherd. We shall not want.

Intercessions (by Iris)

Lord, our shepherd,

Only calling you so makes us members of your flock.
Looking around we realise that we belong to many
flocks.

Being part of a community has many aspects. We are
not on our own.

As Christians we belong to a flock that might be your
most difficult one:

the holy Church, the communion of saints. Make us
aware that you guide us for your name's sake.

Let us uphold your holy name in our prayers and
worship.

Do not let us disgrace it in our daily lives, our words
and deeds.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Lord, our shepherd,

There are many other flocks we belong to.

You said: "It's not good that the human is alone." and
put us into communities to share our lives.

We may dare to impose ourselves on others in times of
need. Let us be humble enough to do so.

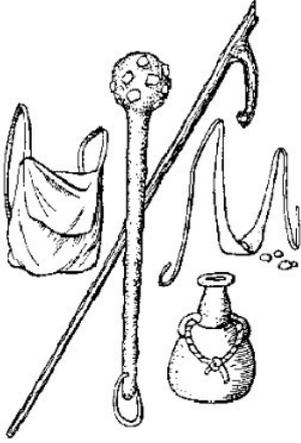
We are called to take care of each other when others
are in need. Do not let us look for the comfortable way
when our neighbour has to be able to rely on us.

Lord, in your mercy

hear our prayer.

Lord, our shepherd,

You know of our times of darkness, when our soul walks through the valley of the shadow of death and we can't see you any more.



Let us then hear your rod and your staff hitting the valley's wall, reassuring, consoling, guiding. Let us be open to your presence in unexpected ways and find our way through the darkness.

We ask you especially for mentally ill people, their valleys are particularly deep, the darkness around them particularly black.

Do not let them become faceless patients in a system that prefers prescribing drugs to actual help. Let them find healing and shelter. Put people at their side who take them seriously and support them in a good way.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Lord, our shepherd,

We ask you for those who are supposed to lead us in our various flocks:

Thank you for Bishop Trevor and the time he spends with us. Let it be fruitful for him and for us and let him find us as a hospitable community.

Bless our search for a new minister and lead someone to us who draws us to you.

And I ask you for our political leaders, too. In the USA we observe an election campaign that already began as mudslinging. Let the parties involved realise the damage they cause and find a path back to civilization.

But would smite the living fountains
From the rocks along our way.

Be our strength in hours of weakness,
In our wanderings be our guide;
Through endeavour, failure, danger,
Father, be thou at our side.

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The Blessing



The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace;
and the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
be with you now and always.

Amen.

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil,
and keep us in eternal life.

Amen.

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Postlude