

Welcome to you all here in person, and to all of you watching or reading the service at home. God welcomes us all.

Call to worship - Psalm 145: 1-4; 7

I will exalt You, my God the King;

I will praise Your name for ever and ever.

Every day I will praise You and extol Your name for ever and ever.

Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise;

His greatness no one can fathom.

One generation commends Your works to another;

they tell of Your mighty acts.

(We) celebrate Your abundant goodness

and joyfully sing of Your righteousness.

- **Hymn** - WF 'Rejoice in the Lord always'

Prayer

When life is good, when all around us is going right and tears are happy tears: we rejoice, blessed by Your name.

When all around us is going wrong and tears are sad tears: we reach out to You, blessed be Your name.

Awesome God, full of life and light, You fill our hearts with Your love, and we rejoice in You, blessed be Your mighty name. Amen.

Psalm 23 for young people

Psalm 23 is one of the more famous psalms written by David the King. This was the same David who took down Goliath with a slingshot and some smooth stones.

David was now King of the country called Israel, he was also a musician and liked to write poems and songs. David hadn't always been a King, in fact he grew up as a shepherd looking after his family's sheep! Can you imagine how different that must have been!!

What does a King wear on his head? Crown. What does a shepherd wear on his head? His hair! Where does a King live? Castle. Where does a shepherd live? Out in the fields with his flock of sheep!

Who fetches the King his glass of water or cooks his dinner? Servants. Who does these things for the shepherd? He does it himself!

A shepherd is a servant himself serving his family by looking after the sheep, living and working out in the fields wearing raggedy old clothes and with a small bag of bread for lunch.

But even though a King and a shepherd are so different, there is something they both have in common - they both take care of something. A King is supposed to take care of and protect his kingdom, and look after the people living there, and a shepherd looks after and protects his herd of sheep.

In the first part of the psalm, David talks about God being his shepherd. The sheep rely totally on their shepherd for food, water, shelter and safety, and here David is telling

us that God gives us everything we need (which for a sheep is nice green grass and clean water!). David tells us God gives us peace and rest because we can trust God.

In these next verses David is saying that if we do trust God and let God guide us, we'll find a good path for our lives. Even when we go through some rough times when life is hard and we feel alone, God is always with us and can make us feel better when we need a loving friend.

In these last verses, David tells us how special we are to God. David is now a King himself, so he knows all about feasts and banquets. In David's time, people were anointed by the King if they were recognised as being someone very special. David is saying to us that we too are so very special to God that God treats us like honoured guests and has a feast of goodness in store for us. David ends by saying that we can be blessed by God always, with lots of goodness and love, and if we trust God and love God, we can look forward to living in God's love and care forever.

Prayer

Loving God, our loving Shepherd King,

You lead us through life's ups and downs and are with us in every circumstance.

Blessing, glory, thanksgiving and honour, be to you our God for ever and ever. Amen.

- **Hymn** - WF 'The Lord's my shepherd' (Townend)

Children leave for Sunday Club

Offertory & prayer

Lord, for Your goodness to us we thank You. For Your provision to us we praise You. For these gifts to be used to bring healing and help, comfort and care in Your name, we ask You. Amen.

POI - Duty Elder

Part 1: Reading - Psalm 23 for 2 voices

The Lord is my shepherd

God desires relationship

I shall not want

God provides every need, so I am lacking nothing

He makes me to lie down in green pastures

God gives me rest

He leads me beside still waters

God gives refreshment

He restores my soul

God provides healing

He leads me in the paths of righteousness

God offers guidance

For His name's sake

God gives purpose

Yes, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death

Trials may come

I will fear no evil

God protects

For You are with me

God is faithful

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me

God disciplines and draws me close

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies

God offers hope

You anoint my head with oil

God sanctifies

My cup runs over

God gives abundance

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

God blesses

All the days of my life

God is with me always

And I will dwell in the house of the Lord

God provides security

Forever

God is eternal

Amen.

Meditation on Psalm 23

<https://justdisciple.com/christian-meditations-on-psalm-23-the-lord-is-my-shepherd/>

MADELINE PEÑA

Close your eyes.

Focus your mind on the Lord. Be aware of your body. Let your muscles unwind and relax and be mindful of the present. Notice how your body feels in your clothes and the furniture that you're on. Take notice of your breaths. How do they feel? Are your lungs being filled, or does the breath just pass your throat? Take deep breathes. Listen to your surroundings. Be present with what your body is experiencing, and then offer these feelings to the Lord.

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

God is your shepherd, He is your provider. Rest in the knowledge that whatever you need, God has it all for you. Any desires to look elsewhere, other than God, lay aside for the time being. Just be with the Lord.

The LORD is our shepherd. A shepherd in Biblical times would lay down his life for his sheep, protecting them from danger, taking care of them, making sure they didn't wander astray. How much more will your eternal, all-powerful God protect and care for you?

He makes me to lie down in green pastures: he leads me beside the still waters.

Imagine the green pastures King David is describing, imagine the still waters. Allow your heart to be as peaceful as this image. Invite Jesus into this space of serenity. He is here with you. He gently sits beside you in that green pasture, and he has lead you to still water. There is peace, there is serenity and nourishment. Spiritual needs are met in this pasture where you meet Jesus. It is calm and your spirit can be at rest. The still water will nourish your body, for water is the source of life. The shepherd leads you into all good and perfect gifts.

He restores my soul: he leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

The Lord sees and knows your soul, He is here with you to restore all that is broken. You can be made new.

Not only does the Good Shepherd lead you to peace and nourishment, but always on a path of righteousness that is right for you. Let this truth settle deep within you; you are on a path of righteousness for your good and for His glory.

Even 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.

No matter where you find yourself in life, even in your lowest of lows, the Lord your shepherd calls you to have no fear. Allow yourself to apply this to your own life. Bring the lows in your life to the Lord now. You do not have to fear evil, because God is with you, God is with you, you are not alone. The Lord is there to comfort you. His rod is protecting you and will protect you. The Lord's staff will guide you and lead you to safety through those dark places and times.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

God takes such delight in you, you are safe at God's table. Imagine the warmth of the Lord's love gently pouring down and over you, from your head to your toes. The Lord anoints you with His oil of protection, of healing, of safe keeping.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

God's goodness and mercy are with you, now and in every day. Ask the Lord to open the eyes of your heart to see His goodness and mercy in your life, so you can give Him your praise. There is a place for you in the Lord's house, there is room for you. Picture your place in His house. Jesus has room for you in His heart, a room filled with love for you, a spacious place, a place of security, serenity, life, beauty, and joy. He is with you now and always. Amen.

Slowly open your eyes and take a deep breath.

- **Hymn** - WF 'Breathe on me, breath of God'

Intro to Part 2

God is our shepherd, leading us to the essential things of life, like water. Psalm 23 speaks of quiet water, with images of clear pools among verdant fields or trees, [Pic 4 here](#) or shallow, calm water in a trickling stream [Pic 5 here](#). God brings us into a peaceful place within ourselves whatever else is happening around us. But there is a different sort of water from which God also wants us to drink deeply, and we'll be looking at that next.

Readings - Rev 7: 9-17; John 4: 9-13; John 7: 37-41

As preparation for hearing what the Lord has for us this morning, let's stand to sing:

- **Hymn** - R&S 308 & 309 'Spirit of the living God'

Talk Part 2

Rev 7: 17, 'For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd;

"He will lead them to springs of living water."

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Living Water.

Wasn't it such a blessing to have some rain on Wednesday, our thirsty gardens and trees, the flowers and streams and the creatures that live in them all so desperately needed that glorious drinking of rain. And don't they respond so much better to the rain, than to water from the tap which we fetch and carry, or hose to them?

Way back in the mists of time in the OT, when the Hebrew nation were slaves to the Egyptians, the country of Egypt had virtually no annual rainfall. All their water came from the flood-waters of the Nile river and had to be carried to where it was needed - they had to rely on human effort to provide their people and animals with water. This would have been a major task for the Hebrew slaves - no fancy hose-pipes in those days.

By contrast, when the Hebrew nation were rescued by God from out of Egypt and shepherded to the land God had Promised to them, the land of Caanan (what is now the country of Israel), this land was watered by the rain, 'rain from heaven' every year, and from mountain springs that burst forth their clean, clear, pure water. This was what the Jewish people called 'living water', water straight from the Lord.

Living water - water straight from the Lord.

(John 4: 13), 'Jesus said, '...whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.'

From Psalm 23 we know that Jesus our good shepherd lovingly leads us to quiet, still pools, places of rest and peace when we need it, and that is so necessary. But what happens to still water if it's still for too long? It becomes stagnant and can dry up completely. And so it is with our spiritual life, our Christian life and our relationship with the person we claim is our Lord and God if we just stick with where we are now instead of refreshing that relationship. That's not where our Lord Jesus wants us to be or to stay.

(John 7: 37b-39a), 'Jesus said, 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them.' By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were later to receive.'

The Holy Spirit/living water - a spring welling up, a river of living water flowing. Water straight from the Lord,

Corrie Ten Boom said this, 'Trying to do the Lord's work in your own strength is the most confusing, exhausting, and tedious of all work. But when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then the ministry of Jesus just flows out of you.'

In Revelation we read, 'For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'

Living water: the moving of the Holy Spirit, the rain-shower from heaven. Rain that falls gently, seeping in to the dry ground of our hearts and minds, bringing buried seeds of our talents and giftings to life, green shoots of creativity sprouting. As the rain continues to fall on more people, more of us, it collects and starts to flow, nourishing more hearts and minds, gaining energy, growing into a stream of our love for the Lord,

flowing, spreading, reaching far and wide with the love of the Lord Jesus, beyond the bounds of our expectations, giving life and healing to us and to the people around us.

Jesus said (John 7: 37b-39a), 'Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink.'

Question is are you, are we as a church, thirsty for more of the Lord Jesus in our lives, thirsty for the leading and enabling of the Holy Spirit? Do you, do we actually trust God that much?

Some of us may be needing the Lord's quiet waters in our lives right now, and that's wonderful. If that's you, rest and be refreshed there. Some of us may have been in still waters a little too long, our relationship with the Lord casual and fleeting. If that's not where you want to stay, open His word, ask God to draw you closer to Him, and trust that's what the Lord will do. Some of us may be thirsty for more of Jesus in our lives. If that's you, don't be afraid to be open to the Holy Spirit, He is gentle and kind, and loves us so very much.

We all know the joy of rain after drought, we know the wonder of seeing parched and dried-up land flushing with life again after rain. That's what the Lord wants to happen here too, in you and me, in this church, and from this church to the many more hurting, parched people out there. Living Water. Bring it on in torrents I say. Amen.

Hymn - WF 'Holy Spirit, living breath of God'

Blessing

God our shepherd King,

Fill us anew with a desire for You,

A desire not to dwell too long in Your quiet waters,

But to be filled with Your living water, and to share that with others.

Blessing and glory, thanksgiving and honour be to You our God forever. Amen.