

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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6 September 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart

Sunflowers
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Psalm 23

Great Texts of the Bible #5

The LORD is my Shepherd

Psalm 23

(also John's Gospel chapters 10 and 14)

Prayers of Intercession

and

The Lord's Prayer



NOTICES

6 September 2020

Wednesday 9 September 1.30 pm Sweet Hour of Prayer

Sunday 13 September 11 am Great Texts of the Bible #6.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: Barbara MARTIN.



and



Calvin and Ruth MATHYS

are located in PNG with WBT. Calvin is an aircraft engineer

MEMBERS who wish to continue their freewill offerings may use the banking details at the bottom of this page or post to our Treasurer, Vic Ansell,

GARDENIA ST

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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Account name: Blackburn Presbyterian Church
BSB: 013-328. Account number: 2970 40694

GARDENIA ST.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BLACKBURN

6 September 2020



The Good Shepherd, c. 300-350, at the Catacombs of Domitilla, Rome.

WELCOME



Attacks by Boko Haram continued and resulted in hundreds of deaths, occasioned by security forces' failure to protect civilians. The Nigerian Army, Police and State Security Service continued to torture and ill-treat detainees. Communal violence continued in some parts of the country. Freedoms of assembly, association and expression were all under attack as the country witnessed an increasingly shrinking civic space. The government also disobeyed several court orders.

Amnesty International 2019

The Nigerian army has had some success subduing Islamist group Boko Haram, but Christians are still being killed in Nigeria. Many of the killings are carried out by nomadic Hausa-Fulani herdsmen, a largely Muslim ethnic group that frequently targets the more settled Christian farming communities of central Nigeria. Meanwhile, 12 of Nigeria's northern states employ Sharia (Islamic law), and Christians in these states face discrimination and restrictions in accessing community resources, such as clean water, health clinics, and higher education.

World Watch Monitor July 2020

Though the south of Nigeria is predominantly Christian, Islam dominates the north. Extremist groups, including Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen, have terrorised Christian believers for years. Violent attacks by extremists who target Christians often end in the loss of lives, physical injuries and the destruction of property. Many lose their land and source of income. Christians, especially girls and women, are often kidnapped during these attacks. There is little accountability for the violence that characterises Nigeria, and even less so, when Christians are the ones targeted.

Open Doors 2020

Great Texts of the Bible #5 Psalm 23

Sermon
Notes

The Psalms were and are the prayers and hymns of Israel. As such they were also Jesus' hymn book. Jesus quotes the psalms more than any other book in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Athanasius, a 4th-Century Church Father said: "In most of Scripture God speaks to us; but in the Psalms God speak *for* us." This alone makes the book of Psalms unique, and it is why, for centuries, the Psalms have been the prayerbook of the faithful seeking intimacy with God. With this in mind we turn to Psalm 23

1 A Psalm of David. The heading over this psalm ascribes it to David.

- A. This is the David who (like Moses) was once a shepherd (1 Samuel 16:11). And who like Moses became the leader and guide of Israel. His name is mentioned almost 1000 times in the Bible.
- B. David with whom YHWH, the LORD, had renewed his Covenant (2 Samuel 7:16). The same Covenant promises the LORD made with Abraham (Genesis 12) and renewed with Moses (mentioned over 30 times in Exodus) are extended to David and his descendants.
- C. The David located uniquely between Abraham and Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Matthew 1:1). Matthew's point is that David is of the promised 'line of David'.

Psalm 23 is the best known of the Psalms of David.

2 YHWH the Shepherd. This is an intimate metaphor.

The shepherd lived with the flock and knew them by name. David shares three things that fell to the shepherd, all of which would have been clear to Jesus:

- D. Guide. The shepherd led the sheep. He did not 'drive' them from behind. For them he sought out the best places. Green pastures and fresh water. His thinking was shaped by the needs of the flock.
- E. Physician. He 'restores my soul'. How often have we sung that verse in the Scottish Metrical Version of 1650? What was David thinking of? More than physical well being is suggested. Psychological and spiritual health are all hinted at.

This is all the more likely when taken with the expression 'right paths' or 'paths of righteousness'.

Derek Kidner says "The reviving of the sheep pictures the renewal of the man of God, spiritually perverse or ailing as he may be".

- F. Defender. The shepherd was prepared to defend the flock. David reported to Saul that he had killed a lion and a bear in defence of the flock.

Here the Shepherd provides security in the "valley of the shadow of death". The Shepherd alongside is addressed directly "you are with me", and ready to defend the flock.

Now the psalm *heightens* the intimacy:

3 YHWH the Friend.

- The metaphor changes at verse 5. The LORD the Shepherd is now the Friend to whom David speaks directly.
- G. "It is one thing to survive a threat, another altogether to enjoy a triumph" (Kidner). Everything now has that note of victory. A banquet in the presence of enemies.
- H. The assurance of goodness and mercy. This latter word is the strong word for "covenanted love" or "pledged love" sometimes translated *steadfast love*. Not a mere feeling but a settled disposition to seek the welfare of the beloved.
- I. Your house shall be my home. The house here is the Temple, but it also all that it represents, namely, the presence of God.

The expression "for length of days" in context is not eternity, but the logic of the *covenanted love* "allows no ending to His commitment". Not remote, but intimately experienced.

The teaching of Jesus (as in John 10) brings to fulfilment the concept of Israel's Shepherd. The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. They matter more to Him than life itself. As an old Scots lady was reported to say when asked about the love of the Saviour, "*It's better felt than telt*".