

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

9nd August 2020

**THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD
I HAVE ALL THAT I NEED**

God is good... all the time

**THE LORD'S MY SHEPHERD,
I'LL NOT WANT**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IThr9UcvWko>

gone against your will. You are with us, Lord. You lead us daily in right paths and offer to us the bread of life. You stand with us in times of trial and in the presence of those whom we fear, giving us your abundant love. And then you offer to us a place in your eternal home. How can we doubt your presence? Help us to trust you. Help us to praise you and remember that you have called us to be your witnesses and workers in this world. Give us strength and courage, joy and peace for all the work that you have for us to do. In the name of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for us, His sheep, we pray. AMEN.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

In the midst of all that we fear, God is with us. God will not abandon us. Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, laid down His life for us and offers us hope and peace. AMEN.

Call to worship

The God of all shepherds has called us here. We come today, celebrating God's love for us. The Good Shepherd has given His life for us. We come today, thanking Jesus for His witness and His teaching. The Shepherding Spirit moves through us, bringing us new hope. We come today ready to celebrate and to praise God.

Opening Prayer

Thank you, loving God, for bringing us to this time of worship. Refresh us and heal us again. Remind us of the many ways you have blessed our lives with your abundant love and presence. Guide our hearts and our spirits that we may hear your words and our souls may be stirred into active service to your people. In the name of the Good Shepherd, who leads us to life, we pray. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession

Lord God, we grumble and complain about our daily lot in life. We read the newspapers, watch the broadcast news and moan about the evil which flourishes in the world. And we wonder, "Where are you, O God?" We turn our backs on the needs of the poor or give only a cursory acknowledgment of their plight. We throw our hands up in the air and act as though we are defeated. And we cry, "Why isn't God taking care of all this?" Forgive us, patient Lord. Forgive our arrogance, our ignorance, our pettiness. Forgive us when we could have done something to help someone else, but chose instead to turn away. Forgive us when we, by our attitudes and language, our thoughts and actions, have

Psalm 23: 1; John 10:11-16 (NLT)

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father. So, I sacrifice my life for the sheep. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd.

"The Father loves me because I sacrifice my life so I may take it back again. No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded."

Reflection: (Because) The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want – copied with permission from Rev Donald Thomson's book, 'Reflections on the 23rd Psalm'.

The phrase '**you shall not be in want**' is the result of the Lord's shepherding. When the Lord leads us, every aspect of our lives becomes under His jurisdiction. The needs of body, soul and spirit are all considered worthy of being satisfied.

This is an age when physical perfection is a major goal for many, and advertising is increasingly deceptive in its use of altered and digitally 'improved' images of the human form.

It can be tempting to think that happiness can be guaranteed only if the body conforms to ideal specifications. A large percentage of the population move from one diet to the next, and young people are subject to depression and eating disorders if the view in the mirror is not as good as the advertising hoardings. The person that can combine a mirror

with an airbrush or a digital photo-messaging programme will be guaranteed a massive fortune!

The sheep in the Biblical flock were mainly imperfect physically. The hunt for food often led to lameness from clambering the steep hillsides and scars on their faces from eating the grass that grew under jaggy bushes.

When accepting burnt offerings for use as temple sacrifices, God required lambs without blemishes and scars. He wanted the best in order to test those making the sacrifice – would they be willing to give the best lamb rather than the one that was so damaged that it couldn't feed itself properly?

In the book of Job, Satan argued that Job was faithful to God only because he was physically fit. The Lord allowed Satan to attack Job with painful sores that made him the scorn of his family, and separated him from the worshipping community (Job 2). Even his own wife told him to curse God and die.

It is always tempting to think that faith in God will guarantee good physical health. Although God is able to heal physical illnesses, sometimes suffering from those very illnesses leads to a deeper faith and more active service. Christian literature is sprinkled with examples of people who would have been completely unknown, but have been brought prominence because they have overcome every physical problem that Satan has thrown at them. Their testimonies have led many people to faith, and encouraged countless believers.

The community of believers is also a part of our walk through life. To have strong friendships in a congregation is a necessity. To be able to share our worries and ask questions, confident that nothing we say will be transformed into gossip is a real blessing.

One of the problems with sheep is that they have poor eyesight. This means that when they are together as a flock and being led by the shepherd, no problems arise. If the sheep behind the shepherd keep watching him, the whole flock will be kept together. But if something spooks the flock, it could split into two or three groups. Only one of the groups will be following the shepherd, but the other ones are in danger of going astray. If the sheep at the front of the non-shepherded groups cannot see the shepherd, they just keep going in any direction, and the sheep in the middle or rear of these groups keep going because they can see the sheep beside them, and trust that the sheep at the head of the group are going in the right direction. That is not always the case.

The only way to remain faithful in our Christian journey through life is to keep our eyes on the Shepherd. Our Christian friends may be able to give us advice and encourage us, but before we make what could be life-changing decisions, it is always best to spend a long time speaking to the Shepherd. After all, He is the one who knows the past, present and future.

With God as our Shepherd, the non-physical parts of us are also satisfied. Mary declares, 'My soul glorifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour (Luke 1:46-47), and it is vital to distinguish between the soul and the spirit. The Soul, [which is the seat of human emotions] urges the feelings, whilst the spirit [which is the life force within each of us] can be united with God's Holy Spirit. The soul has to be trained and kept in check because it is the battleground between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the spirit...

(To be continued – next Sunday)

PRAY FOR LEBANON:

Please join us in praying for the people of Lebanon, where a huge explosion has rocked the capital city of Beirut. Hundreds of casualties are being reported, and buildings across a wide area have been destroyed or damaged – including those of a number of Tearfund partners in the city. Please pray for medics and firefighters who are responding; pray for those who have been wounded; and pray for those who have lost loved ones.

More prayers for others

Loving Father, the pandemic has starkly revealed the economic, racial and social inequalities of the status quo in so many countries of both hemispheres which makes for poor physical and mental health in all sections of the population, an increase in injustice and unstable communities. Lord, you are the God of justice and truth: lead us from darkness to light.

Our Good Shepherd, the bottom line is that we cannot go back to "normal" because "normal" is what got us here. We choose love. We choose compassion. We choose non-violence. We choose equality. And we choose to dedicate our lives to you and to create cultures of peace, justice and healing.

We choose to follow you, Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Send your Holy Spirit to fill us with hearts brimming over with love for you and one another. Use, empower, guide and anoint us to take good care of all around us in need. May we, like you Lord Jesus Christ – the Good Shepherd, happily invite the despised, touch the unclean and lift the head of those who are brought low. Set your church apart for bigger, better and greater things. Give us that hope against all hope for a world transformed by your healing touch. Through Jesus Christ, the mercy of God. Amen

Closing Hymn: Trust and Obey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KB4KcleYIWM>

TRUST AND OBEY
When we walk with the Lord
in the light of His word,
what a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
he abides with us still,
and with all who will trust and
obey.
*Trust and obey,
for there's no other way
to be happy in Jesus,
but to trust and obey.*

Final blessings

The Good Shepherd leads us forward, from this place, into the world to serve God's people, to witness to God's love in all that we do. We go in peace and God's peace goes with us. Amen

*God
is good
all the
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