

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill

23 August 2020

He leads me beside quiet waters

Psalm 23:2

Good is good... all the time...

The Lord's Prayer

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.*

*Give us today
our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory
are yours.
Now and for ever. Amen*

Opening Hymn: The Lord's my Shepherd I'll not want
by Stuart Townend

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

Call to worship and opening Prayer

Our days, weeks and months may have been filled with noise, but today God invites us to the quiet, still waters of His presence. As we worship together, may we feel an unusual sense of peace in our hearts, or a stillness in our minds that wasn't there before.

May God's presence show up again today, as we quieten everything else and invite Him into our lives and homes. Our God comes to us with His wonderful loving heart. He comes to minister His grace and love, deep in our lives.

God of grace, knowing you are with us in the ebbs and flows of our everyday lives;

- your Spirit's presence within our hearts,
- your gentle whisper guiding our steps,
- your warm embrace when times are hard,
- your hands held out each time we fall.

Knowing you are with us in our everyday lives is blessing enough for today.

May our time spent well with you today be blessed by moments of quietness, by light in our darkness, strength in our weakness, grace in our meekness, joy in our gladness and peace in our stillness.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Psalm 23: 1-2;

The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need.
He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside quiet waters.

Isaiah 49:10

They will not hunger or thirst, nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them. For He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water.

Revelation 7:17

For the Lamb in 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."

Poem: 'Still Waters' by Dave Hopwood

He leads me beside still waters.
He calls me to stop for a moment and rest.
He leads me beside still waters.
He sees the stressing out and the fraying ends.

He leads me beside still waters.
The candle burning at both ends.
He leads me beside still waters.
The core of our being stretched to its limits.

He leads me beside still waters.
Just for a moment to catch my breath.
He leads me beside still waters.
Just for two seconds to renew my strength.
He leads me beside still waters.

Reflection: 'He leads me beside quiet waters' (Psalm 23: 2) – copied with permission from Rev Donald Thomson's book, 'Reflections on the 23rd Psalm'.

The geography of the Holy Land means that there is very little 'quiet water'. Little rivulets trickle down steep valley sides, gathering sediment as they go.

As a result, one of the shepherd's main tasks is to find a spot where the rivulet can be dammed, and the sheep can drink fresh, clean water.

Ideally, the dam has to be made, and the water has to build up behind it, before the shepherd brings the sheep to drink.

The dam allows the sediment to fall to the bottom of the newly created pool, and the water becomes fit to drink. The effect of strong sunlight on the water means that it breaks down any bacteria that may be present, making the water doubly delicious.

The other purpose of the dam is to make it easy for the sheep to drink. The position of the nostrils make it very difficult for sheep to drink from running water, without choking.

A rarer provision is that of a well. Wells tended to be in, or near towns or villages - because people gathered and settled round sources of good water. In country areas, a well is a real blessing, but could also be a source of conflict. Who owns the well and the water? Who has the right to use the water? How much water is a shepherd entitled to use?

A well in the countryside would have a trough at the side. The shepherd would draw the water from the well, and pour it into the trough to allow the sheep to drink. The trough would be at a height that would be appropriate for the sheep.

Again, the picture is of wonderful provision. The sheep have no idea how much effort it took the shepherd to draw the water from the depth of the well, or whether there was a cost involved. All they know is that whilst before they were thirsty, now they are satisfied *(To be continued – next Sunday)*

Prayers of thanksgiving and for others

Good Shepherd of the sheep, we pray for the Church, for all the congregations in our local communities and beyond, and for all our church, civic and community leaders. Empower and guide them in their life and work.

We pray for clear guidance and direction in those many issues which disturb us, asking not that you lead us the easy way but the way that is right and good.

Good Shepherd of the sheep, we pray for the world we inhabit – the world we have inherited and will pass on to successive generations. Teach us to look after it carefully, to share its gifts more fairly, and to work together to ease its sufferings.

Turn the hearts of those who are excited by evil things and encourage the timid to speak out for what is wholesome and good.

Good Shepherd of the sheep, we bring the needs of many in our world for whom health care is a luxury and often unavailable. We pray for all those around the globe who dedicate their lives to caring for the sick.

We pray for our local communities as children and staff return to school, as many in the business community begin to resume or rebuild their businesses, as many groups explore new ways to work, and as families meet again after times apart.

Good Shepherd of the sheep, be with those still in isolation, those who need to quarantine. Be close to us in our social distancing. Grant us your:

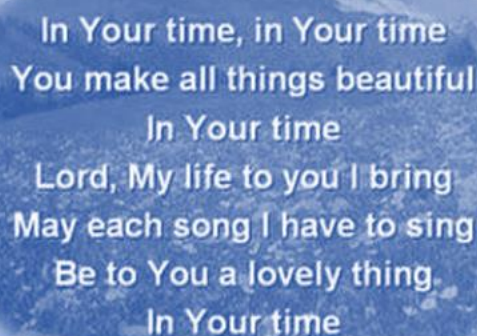
- healing mercies,
- joy in our sadness,
- light in our darkness,
- wisdom in our confusion,

Be all that is familiar when all is unfamiliar.

And as we and many other congregations work hard and smart towards the reopening of church doors, may we, with the zeal of Pentecost,

- take good care of one another,
- explore meaningful ways of serving our communities
- and speak of your goodness to an emerging world. In Jesus' name, Amen

Closing Hymn: 'In His time' by Marantha Singers
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJeNUINY7lw>



In Your time, in Your time
You make all things beautiful
In Your time
Lord, My life to you I bring
May each song I have to sing
Be to You a lovely thing
In Your time

Final blessings

May God's blessings of the earth surround us, clear our paths and provide fresh water and green shoots to sustain us. May God's gift of the rising sun to lighten our journey. May soft rain in due season refresh us. May the voices of angels raise our spirits. May our loving Father's arms to lift and embrace us. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus, the love of God and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us and remain with us forever, Amen.



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