

THE WORD FOR TODAY

PSALM 23 — “The Lord is my Shepherd”

Written about 3,000 years ago, the words of Psalm 23 speak reassurance to all who read them today. They were written by someone who knew about shepherding—David was a shepherd boy before he became a great King.

There have been times in the last two years when I have felt a bit like a sheep—not knowing quite what to do next, worrying about food, not sure what it is safe to do or where it is safe to go, waiting for firm guidance, waiting for assurance that somebody is in charge and that they care about me. Perhaps you can identify with these feelings. These words of Psalm 23, part of God’s word to us in the Bible, speak to us across the centuries.

Follow the words of Psalm 23 on the panel below and then around the central display stand. The translation of the Bible used is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway. If you have a Bible at home you can find Psalm 23 in the Book of Psalms, which is just about at the middle of the Bible.



“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want.”

1

What a wonderful statement of trust this is! Of course shepherds always want their sheep to have whatever they need to keep them healthy. Why should we doubt that God will always want to make sure that we too have what we need to live day by day?

Yet worries crowd in. God has such a large flock of people—can he possibly care for me? I have done some stupid things—will God really still bother with me? David has no doubts—God is his shepherd and that means that he will not lack anything he needs. Let’s pray for the same trust in our hearts.

***Lord, help me to trust that you care for me every day of my life,
and that you will make sure that I have what I need.
Remind me every day—great is your faithfulness!***



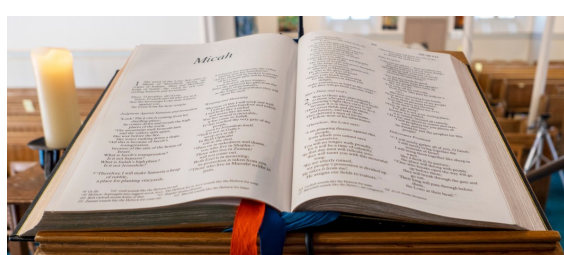
THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

***“He makes me lie down
in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters . . .”***

Not only does God want us to have all we need, but he wants us to have the best! Surrounded by all we need, we are encouraged to rest, we are led gently—there is no urgency.

During lockdown a lot of us discovered that there were many delights in the world around us which God gives us freely if we just open our eyes and ears. People have noticed birdsong, found lovely places to walk they didn't know existed, discovered what joy there is to be found in a garden! Can we remember this for the future, when we have returned to all the activities we had before Covid 19 arrived?

***Lord, thank you for the beautiful world you have made.
Help me to take time to appreciate its wonders, to take time to rest, to take time
just to be still—and know that you are God.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

“ . . . he restores my soul.”

3

Have you ever watched the TV programme “The Repair Shop”? In it people’s treasured possessions, which have seen better days, are lovingly restored to their original state—the way they were originally made. I like to think that this is what we are promised in these words.

God, the great restorer, can bring us back to how he made us in the first place—made in his image and for his glory. Perhaps life has knocked us about, particularly in recent times. These words tell us that whatever life has done to us, whatever we may have brought upon ourselves in our lives, however tarnished or damaged or torn we may have become, God can restore us to the people he made us to be. We can have a new beginning—a new future!

***Lord, I know I am damaged goods—I feel shaken and bruised by life—
and my soul cries out for renewal.***

***You alone can make me whole again, restore me to how you intended me to be.
Take me, Lord, renew and refresh and restore my soul!***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

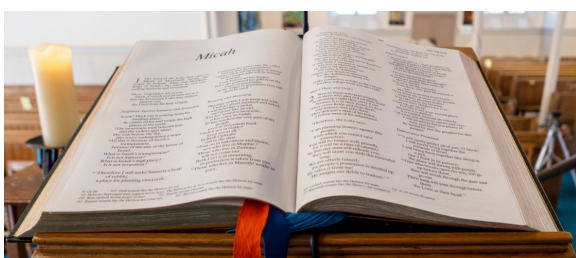
***“He guides me in
paths of righteousness
for his name’s sake.”***

4

If you watch sheep in the countryside they frequently seem to go their own way, often aimlessly, and can get themselves into difficult situations. When you are out walking, it’s not always easy to find the right path. Sometimes it’s good to have somebody who knows the way, although you can still choose to ignore the advice!

In these words from the Psalm there is more than just finding the correct route—“paths of righteousness” has something deeper. Are our lives following the right paths, or are we sometimes ashamed of things we have done, or failed to do? Are we listening to God’s guidance or are we just making our own decisions? Perhaps we need help!

***Lord, as I go through life, help me to listen for your voice,
and to follow your guidance on the right way to go.
Forgive me for the times I have gone my own way
and done things I am ashamed of, and keep me on track for the future.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

***“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.”***

5

A phrase which appears very often in the Bible is “Do not be afraid” or “Fear not”. Here we have David’s certainty that he has no reason to be afraid even in the most extreme of circumstances, because God is with him wherever he might be. Just as the shepherd in those days had the equipment he needed to fight off wild animals and to extricate the sheep from awkward corners, David knew that God had all the power needed to combat any anxieties he might have.

Some of us have been through dark times—bereavements, illness, anxiety—and there may be more in the future. These words tell us that however dark things might seem, God is always with us. The Almighty God, who loves each one of us. We might not realise he is there, but he is, and always will be.

***Lord, I am fearful of all sorts of things.
Remind me that you are always with me,
that you are the almighty all-powerful God,
and that with that knowledge I need not be afraid.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

***“You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.”***

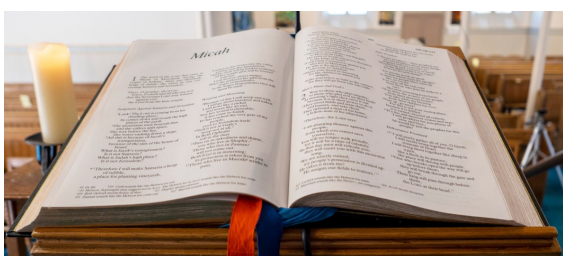
6



My cup overflows! This is no day-to-day hospitality—this is a generous, welcoming God you can picture standing in the doorway with arms outstretched—a friend to be cherished.

During lockdown there was much generosity, and many meals provided or food delivered. New friendships have been forged. This too is to be treasured and nurtured, following the Lord whose generosity never stops. Each one of us can be generous with love and kindness towards those around us.

***Lord, thank you for your generosity to your people,
which goes above and beyond what we deserve.
Help me to reach out in friendship to those around me
and to be generous and kind in all my dealings with others.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

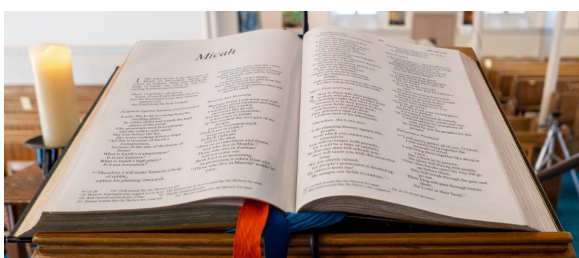
***“Surely goodness and love will
follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell
in the house of the Lord for ever.”***

7

Could anyone ask for more? Goodness and love around us for ever, not just in this life but on into eternity, where we will still be in God’s presence. A thousand years after this was written, Jesus said that he had come so that we could have life in all its fullness, and offered eternal life to all who believed. This echoes David’s confidence—he is sure that his life both here and hereafter will be safe in God’s goodness and love. What a difference it makes to know that there is a future if we too have faith!

***Lord, deepen my faith in you so that I can look forward to the future
secure in the knowledge that it will be with you.***

***Great shepherd of your sheep,
lead me into the full life Jesus promised both now and for ever.***



THE WORD FOR TODAY
Psalm 23

PHOTOGRAPHIC CREDITS

Image of the Bible on all pages— Gary Ross

Other Photographs:

Introduction—Ben Carter on Unsplash

Panel 1—Biegun Wschodni on Unsplash

Panels 2,3,4 & 5—Ruth Davies

Panel 6—Alevison on Unsplash

Panel 7—Ruth Davies