



### Introduction

Wherever you are, I want to welcome you to our service today and pray that it will be a time of worship where you feel able to be present with God and to know God's love, peace and power drawing you deeper into your relationship with God. We are continuing with our series looking at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm and today, Rev Alistair Newton will be sharing some thoughts with us on what it means for the Lord to be "Our Shepherd." But as we begin our service let us offer our time together to God in prayer:

### Prayer

Gracious God, as we draw close to you now with our hearts and minds set on worship, will you draw close to us by the presence of your Spirit. Where we are prideful; bring humility, where we are broken; bring healing, where we are lonely; be present, where we are running on empty; bring renewal, where we are unsure; deepen our faith, where we are anxious; fill us with peace, where we sense an inkling of your Spirit at work; fan into flames our life in you. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

We continue our worship as we share in a couple of songs of praise and commitment to our good and beautiful God.

### Songs

My Jesus, my Saviour,  
Lord there is none like you.  
All of my days I want to praise  
The wonders of your mighty love.  
My comfort, my shelter,  
Tower of refuge and strength,  
Let every breath, all that I am,  
Never cease to worship you.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring,  
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?  
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung  
As a praise of your name for the things you  
have done?  
O, my words could not tell, not even in part,  
Of the debt of love that is owed by this  
thankful heart.*

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing,  
Power and majesty, praise to the King.  
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar  
At the sound of your name.  
I sing for joy at the work of your hands.  
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand.  
Nothing compares to the promise I have in  
you.*

You deserve my every breath for you've paid the great cost;  
Giving up your life to death, even death on a cross.  
You took all my shame away, there defeated my sin,  
Opened up the gates of heaven, and have welcomed me in.

*(Repeat verse, chorus, chorus)<sup>1</sup>*

I will offer up my life in spirit and truth,  
Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to you.  
In surrender I must give my every part;  
Lord, receive the sacrifice of a broken heart.

*Jesus, what can I give, what can I bring,  
To so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?  
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung  
As a praise of your name for the things you  
have done?  
O, my words could not tell, not even in part,  
Of the debt of love that is owed by this  
thankful heart.<sup>2</sup>*

### Prayers

Our Shepherd, we come to you in prayer feeling shaken and afraid because of the future we see gaping before us. We feel we are walking through the valley of deepest darkness. Everything in our lives is shifting and changing; every belief and principle we cherish is challenged or disrespected. We cannot see the way ahead for us. We do not know how to walk as your people into the future. Good Shepherd help us to see you walking ahead of us.

Loving Shepherd, for your name 's sake:

**Guide us along the right path.**

Christ the true Shepherd, you were prepared to die for your sheep and taught us not to fear death itself, but the loss of the life of the soul. We confess that we are afraid of a future where past beliefs and morals are dying out; where worship is no longer valued: and where people do not turn to you. Christ our Saviour show us what we need to let die and what should give our lives to defend.

Loving Shepherd, for your name's sake:

**Guide us along the right path. Amen<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Darlene Zschech, 1993, Hillsong Publishing.

<sup>2</sup> Matt Redman, 1994, Thankyou Music.

<sup>3</sup> Christine Odell

## Scripture

Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD. Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the LORD. (Jeremiah 23: 1 – 4)

“Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again, Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. <sup>8</sup> All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. (John 10: 1 – 8)

## Song

Thou Shepherd of Israel, and mine,  
The joy and desire of my heart,  
For closer communion I pine,  
I long to reside where thou art;  
The pasture I languish to find  
Where all, who their Shepherd obey,  
Are fed, on thy bosom reclined,  
And screened from the heat of the day.

Ah, show me that happiest place,  
The place of thy people's abode,  
Where saints in ecstasy gaze,  
And hang on a crucified God;

Thy love for a sinner declare,  
Thy passion and death on the tree;  
My spirit to Calvary bear,  
To suffer and triumph with thee.

'Tis there, with the lambs of thy flock,  
There only, I covet to rest,  
To lie at the foot of the rock,  
Or rise to be hid in thy breast;  
'Tis there I would always abide,  
And never a moment to depart,  
Concealed in the cleft of thy side,  
Eternally held in thy heart.<sup>4</sup>

## Reflection

Rev Alistair Newton: “My Shepherd”

The videos can be viewed at [www.burleymethodist.org](http://www.burleymethodist.org)

Alternatively, the written text is provided below

## Prayers

As we respond to God's word to us today, we do so with our prayers of thanksgiving and Intercession. Please join in the words in **bold type**. Let us pray:

We give thanks to our God and Shepherd.

For the love of our Father, the Maker of all, the give of all good things: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For the world's beauty and the changing seasons, and for the life that we have been given: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For Jesus Christ our Saviour, who lives and works among us: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For his suffering and death on the cross and his resurrection to new life that we might know God: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For his rule over all things and his presence in the world: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For the Holy Spirit, the giver of life, who teaches, guides, and equips us: let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

For the grace of the Spirit in the work of the Church and the life of the world; let us bless the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

God our Father grant us the help of your Spirit in our prayers for the salvation of all people. We pray for the Church throughout the world, for our churches and each person who is a part of them that in faith and unity we may be constantly renewed by your Holy Spirit for mission and service to our communities and the wider world.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

<sup>4</sup> Charles Wesley

We pray for the peoples of the world, for the leaders of the nations, of international organisations and global businesses, that they may seek justice, freedom, and peace for all. We pray especially for the people of Belarus and Lebanon as they seek new futures, free from oppression and corruption.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for our country, for those who have authority and influence that all may serve one another in wisdom, honesty, and compassion. We pray especially for our politicians, business leaders and health care professionals as they seek to respond to the twin threats of Covid 19 and our exit from the European Union.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those among whom we live and work, for all our neighbours, colleagues, friends and family, that we may so use your gifts that together we may find joy in your creation and liberate it from the oppression we have caused.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all in sorrow, need, anxiety or sickness, especially for those who are known to us and loved by us, that in their weakness they may know your strength, and in despair, find hope in you.

Lord, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

In you, Father, we are one family on earth and in heaven. We remember in your presence those who have died. We thank you especially for the lives of June Bartliff and Janet Tindall and we pray for their families in their time of grief. We give you thanks especially for those who have revealed to us your grace in Christ. Help us to follow the example of your saints in light and bring us with them to the fulness of your eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**<sup>5</sup>

### The Lord's Prayer

As Our Saviour taught his disciples, we pray:

***Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.***

### Hymn

Love divine, all loves excelling,  
Joy of heaven to earth come down,  
Fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
All thy faithful mercies crown.  
Jesu, thou art all compassion,  
Pure, unbounded love thou art;  
Visit us with thy salvation,  
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver,  
Let us all thy life receive;  
Suddenly return, and never,  
Never more thy temples leave.

Thee we would be always blessing,  
Serve thee as thy hosts above,  
Pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,  
Glory in thy perfect love.

Finish then thy new creation,  
Pure and spotless let us be;  
Let us see thy great salvation,  
Perfectly restored in thee:  
Changed from glory into glory,  
Till in heaven we take our place,  
Till we cast our crowns before thee,  
Lost in wonder, love and praise!<sup>6</sup>

### Blessing

Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>5</sup> The Methodist Worship Book, Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes, 1999, P. 32 – 36.

<sup>6</sup> Charles Wesley

## Reflection: My Shepherd

Rev Alistair Newton

Last Week Rev Tim Perkins introduced our theme and unpacked the first few words of the Psalm 23 'The Lord is.' So, as we continue our Themed Preaching: The Lord is "My Shepherd" What does that mean for us? How do we respond to "My Shepherd" in 2020 Yorkshire?

I suppose we have very few 'shepherds' in our congregations today. I understand that the work of the shepherd maintains the landscape that we have become accustomed too in the countryside. Without the dedication and skill of the shepherd our landscape would look quite different.

What is your image of a shepherd? How is the image of a shepherd used in scripture? How does Jesus use this image? Is the image helpful in 2020?

### 1 What is your image of a shepherd?

I have no farming experience to draw on, but I have visited the countryside and watched television! Those of a certain age may remember Phil Drabble and the program 'One man and his dog.' Phil Drabble presented the series, on sheep dog trials, for 17 years and had, at its height, 18 million viewers. For many that program epitomised the skill of shepherds and sheep dogs acting as a team to drive the sheep into a gated fold. The BBC 'Countryfile' has, on occasion, focused on the work of the shepherd.

I can remember watching 'One man and his dog' and being fascinated by the skill of the shepherd and dog, or dogs, as they competed week after week. For many of us our understanding of a shepherd's life is brought to life through television documentaries and news reports.

I remember meeting a shepherd when I was on a church family walk. We had walked through various fields and our progress was noted by one particular shepherd. He knew we would walk towards him as it was the only path up the hill. He spoke to us about the need to protect the countryside and keep dogs under control – several the walkers had brought their pets for walk. We were left under no illusions that he thought 'dog worrying' was a constant threat to his livelihood. He would shoot any stray dog to protect his flock! He wished us a good walk.

The shepherd is skilled in caring and protecting the flock. My image of a shepherd is that of a man or woman working with a dog or dogs in all weathers, driving them from pasture to pasture and ensuring their well-being before taking them to market. Your image may be like mine.

I understand that a shepherd in the middle east does not herd the sheep forward but leads the sheep from pasture to pasture. The sheep are accustomed to trust the shepherd and follow in the shepherd's footsteps due to the sparse nature of the terrain. If they did not follow the shepherd, they would not find water or grass.

How do we respond to the phrase "My Shepherd" in Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' Psalm 23 is probably one of the best-known pieces of scripture in the Bible. 'The Lord is my shepherd...' The Psalm depicts a God who is caring, providing, protecting – as a flock is cared for, provided for, and protected by a good shepherd.

### 2 How is the image of a shepherd used in scripture?

In the Old Testament the image of the shepherd is that of a person leading the flock from pasture to pasture, caring and protecting the sheep. From Genesis to Zechariah the work of the shepherd is mentioned again and again. In Genesis 48:15 Jacob blesses his grandchildren with the words, '*The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day... let them grow into a multitude on the earth.*'

Jacob's last words (49:24,25a) to his sons include the phrase: '*by the hands of the mighty one of Jacob, by the name of the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel, by the God of your father, who will help you, by the Almighty who will bless you with blessings of heaven above...*'

God is seen as the shepherd of his people. God care for his people as a shepherd cares for the flock. That role of caring and leading God's people was in the hands of the leaders of Israel. The leaders were in the position of the Shepherd and the people were God's flock.

One of the most scathing passages of scripture, relating to shepherds, is found in Ezekiel 34. The antithesis of a good shepherd is shown in the misuse of power, they fed themselves and not their sheep; they have killed and scattered their flock for their own profit; they have neglected the pastoral care of those whom they should protect. God will take his flock from them and bring back the scattered sheep, '*I will set over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them; he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them: I, the Lord, have spoken*' (Ezekiel 34:23,24)

The reading we heard from Jeremiah also speaks of the corruption of those in leadership and the restoration of the people of God. The contrast between good and faithless shepherds is made clear.

So, into this understanding of God being the shepherd, and the flock being those who are called to be God's people, we have the psalmist saying; 'The Lord is my shepherd....' In this Psalm we can see the importance of the individual's response to that of the nature of the Shepherd – 'The Lord is My Shepherd'. Thus, emphasising the relationship of the individual before God.

### 3 How does Jesus use the image of the Shepherd?

Jesus builds on the image of the shepherd portrayed in the Old Testament scriptures. Jesus would be aware of the God given authority to the leaders as the shepherds of Gods people. Jesus came to bring hope and new life to a scattered and dispirited people. In John 10 we have Jesus saying '*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me...*'

Jesus also said, *'I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, and one shepherd...'*

Jesus contrasts the role of The Good Shepherd as against the hired help! The hired help has no affinity with the flock, so when danger comes, he runs away. But 'The Good Shepherd' is willing to sacrifice himself for the sake of the sheep. The Good Shepherd is caring, providing, protecting.

Jesus, The Good Shepherd, welcomes those of faith in God, and dare I say, welcomes those who have yet to respond in faith. Jesus had a ministry to the Jewish people, but not exclusively so, *'I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So, there will be one flock, and one shepherd...'* Jesus welcomes all who seek to be part of his flock of believers.

4 Is the image helpful in 2020?

The Lord is my shepherd... Is that helpful? I think it is! We may have an idealised image of a shepherd caring, providing, and protecting the lambs and the rest of the flock. Maybe, we may be aware that a shepherd's life is one of long hours, battling the elements and the constant financial demands of vet's bills, rent and market price.

The relationship between shepherd and sheep may be different in our country as opposed to the middle east, but essentially sheep look to the shepherd for care, provision and protection – just watch a flock of sheep respond to the call of the shepherd when they are hungry and thirsty!

If Jesus is 'my shepherd' I know he wants the best for me in nourishment of body and soul. He wants me to choose the right way in life and he will enable me to see that life through. He wants to welcome me into his presence and know he is always with me.

Charles Wesley penned a hymn 'Thou shepherd of Israel and mine.' That hymn focuses on Jesus 'The Good Shepherd' laying down his life for the sheep of his fold. It is a hymn of faith and hope. The Lord is my shepherd. We can all choose to be part of God's flock – a personal response to his love in Jesus! Amen.