

I will fear no evil, for You are with me. Psalm 23:4

St Nicholas Church, Sighthill
20th September 2020

God is good... all the time ...

Call to Worship

'Consider and answer me, O Lord my God;
lighten my eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;
lest my enemy say, "I have prevailed" –
lest my foes rejoice because I am shaken'.

We come to you O Lord,
seeking answers to our questions.
We come to you O God,
because you are the Creator.

We have trusted your steadfast love;
Our heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
We will sing to you because you have dealt
bountifully with us.

We come looking for a song to sing;
We wait for your voice
to call us from beyond our fears
We come ready to learn, to worship and to serve.

Opening Hymn: Psalm 23 (The Lord's my Shepherd) New Scottish Hymns

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

Opening Prayer

'Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil... (Psalm 23:4). As the global pandemic continues, the shadow of death is a reality for many. Many in our church family and local community have experienced the loss of a family member, a friend, or a work colleague. Current necessary restrictions also create complications for many. In our social distancing, sadness and loss we continue to bring our prayers to God, who comforts the grieving and promises never to leave us struggling alone.

Loving God, we come to you in our need. We know that you never abandon us. We know that no circumstance

is beyond your control or beyond your power. We ask that you hold us all close and be with us every step of the way. When we get scared, remind us that you are always with us. You defend and protect us. We ask for your protection today. In Jesus' name,



Psalm 23: 1-4;

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, **I will fear no evil...**

Acts 18:9-10

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."

Reflection: 'I will fear no evil' - copied with permission from Rev Donald Thomson's book, 'Reflections on the 23rd Psalm'

Travelling down that road to Jericho, it would not be unusual to imagine that there was a band of robbers

hidden in every shadow; the road was notorious for that very thing.

Travelling the road of life can lead us into all kinds of fears. Some shadows contain something evil, but other shadows are just shadows. The increasing violence in the world, and on our doorstep, makes us more wary of the present and the future. Many face a daily struggle to cope with poverty, illness and homelessness.

There are many evil people round about us, and some we know who make our lives a misery. It is impossible to avoid evil in the world.

In John's Gospel (12:31), Jesus tells us that through His death and rising again, the 'prince of this world will be driven out'. That prince is Satan himself. When we are born, we are born into the state of original sin, and Satan has a place in our lives. When we accept Jesus as Saviour, Satan is driven out of our lives. Satan then tries to come back to us, to re-establish his authority over us. If he can't do that, he still tries to trip us up from the sidelines.

The difference can be summed up by the use of two little words. When we are born, we are dead **in** sin. When we come to faith, we are dead **to** sin. Death no longer has jurisdiction over us, because God Himself is our Lord.

The reason the psalmist says he no longer has any fear of evil is because nothing can break the eternal union between himself and God. No matter what he suffers in terms of evil events and life's difficulties, through faith in God, he knows that God is with him, and his eternal life in God's presence is secure.

Song: Build your kingdom here – hand motion
(Celebrating St Nicholas, Church's 81st birthday)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLnTIXoP-HQ>

Prayer: Giving thanks for 81 Years of ministry

Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord! Praise the Lord! Give thanks to Him! God has blessed us and brought us to this time He has blessed us and brought us to this place. He has caused His name to dwell in our midst. He has stirred our hearts and made us glad. He has shown us His glory in His mighty Word. Our God has shown us the way of truth and life.

Praise the Lord! Praise the name of the Lord! And give thanks to Him! For 81 years, God has nurtured and fed us. For 81 years,

He has shown us His grace. For 81 years, He has given Himself in Word and Sacrament. For 81 years, our God has empowered us with His Holy Spirit.

For 81 years, God has made us His witnesses in the world. For 81 years, He has placed us in loving fellowship with one another.

Praise the Lord for 81 more years! Praise Him for many more! Praise the Lord for evermore! Oh, praise His Holy name.

Prayers for ourselves and others

Lord Jesus Christ, you taught us to love our neighbour, and to care for those in need as if we were caring for you. In this time of anxiety, give us strength to comfort the fearful, to tend the sick, and to assure the isolated of our love, and your love.

Loving Father, we, your people are not a people of fear: we are people of courage. We are not people who protect our own safety: we are people who protect our neighbours' safety. We are not people of greed: we are people of generosity. We are your people God, giving and loving, wherever we are, whatever it costs, for as long as it takes and wherever you call us.

In you O lord, have we taken refuge. May we never be put to shame. Deliver us in your righteousness. Incline your ear to hear us make hast to deliver us (Psalm 31). In Jesus' name, Amen

Closing Hymn: Blessed assurance Jesus is mine
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRYP3R3EhFc>



Final blessing

As the journey continues, remember this: Our God reigns! He is robed with majesty and armed with strength. His kingdom is from everlasting to everlasting. He holds our world and our lives securely. So, do not be afraid, but go from here with confidence, knowing that the God who goes with you is greater and more powerful than anything else you will face this week.