

Encouraging YOU to know JESUS

God loves each of us as if there was only one of us

Please note that our Interim Moderator and Locum, Rev. Rona Young, will be visiting those with pastoral needs by telephone during the Covid-19 pandemic. If in need of pastoral care, please contact Rona by telephone on (01292) 471982.

The Minister's Message

Bible reading (1) Psalm 23 (KJV)

1 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. 3 **He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.** 4 **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.** 5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Reflection 23rd Psalm vv 3 and 4

Verse 3

"He restores my soul."

There are times when we all feel run-down, over-worked, or for some reason, we do not have much energy. We might ask, "Can God do anything to help us when we feel like this?"

The answer is, "he can" – as long as we turn to him, and take care of ourselves, God will restore our spiritual zest and enthusiasm.

A famous missionary to India describes Jesus' ministry of spiritual restoration. I quote, "He is like the first rainfall of the monsoon in India - the dry, dusty ground, so barren and so hard, the very next day, has a green film of vegetation over it. The moisture touches the barren, dead soil, and it is alive once again."

So, Jesus touches our parched and barren lives and they develop new life, with new vitality and new hope. If you are feeling over-tired or run-down this morning, may you feel the wonder of Jesus' restoring touch.

Bible reading 2 Isaiah 53:1 – 6

1 Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.

4 Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. 6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

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

The Hebrew word for “paths” means “well-defined or clearly marked trails.” Sheep are stubborn creatures and, if left to themselves, will almost invariably leave the path and wander off.

An experienced shepherd is well aware of this, and always goes ahead of the sheep to make himself as visible as possible. There are many times when we too are stubborn and self-willed – we prefer to go our own way, and do our own thing.

In Isaiah 53: 6 are these words,

*“We all like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way,
and the Lord has laid on him, the iniquity of us all.”*

Each of us, like sheep, “*have gone our own way.*” When we follow our own way, rather than God’s way, then we usually find ourselves in some difficulty or other. Time and time again, we say and mean that we will follow God’s way, but then we follow the path that we think is best.

As Christians, we have put our personal lives into the hands of Jesus. No doubt, this is what Jesus means when speaks about “*taking up our cross daily.*” This means that every day, we are to forget about our own self-centred ways, and follow Jesus’ way. And our reward for following our Lord’s path? The answer is that we will be led from one good pasture to another.

Verse 4

***“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.”***

These words help us to imagine it is evening, when the shepherd leads his sheep down the mountainside into the valley. Because the sheep are so timid, they are comforted when they follow their shepherd. They will fear no evil because their shepherd is with them.

Millions of Christians have been greatly comforted by these words, as they pass through the valley of the shadow of death. This underlines for us, that although death may be a very deep dark valley, it is not something to fear, but an experience we all pass through to enter the kingdom of God.

The words, “***you are with me***” even in the valley of the shadow of death, are very comforting.

Dr. W. E. Sangster tells how, as a young boy living in the heart of London, he went for a walk one day and got lost. A kindly policeman took him by the hand, and took him to the police station. After waiting for what seemed like several hours in a dingy room, a stern officer came and took him down a dark passage, where he saw his father waiting for him. Sangster said, “It will not be different, I think, when I die. At the end of the passage, my Father will be waiting.”

The last part of verse 4 reads:

***“Your rod and your staff,
they comfort me.”***

In the days of the Bible, shepherds carried very little equipment with them, but they always had a rod and a staff.

A rod was a club that was used for a number of different purposes, but mainly to drive away the wild animals, or to catch a sheep's attention. If a shepherd saw a sheep wandering off the path, for example, he would throw the rod slightly ahead of the sheep, and so it would run back onto the path again.

The rod, therefore, became an object of discipline, not to hurt the sheep, but to direct them onto the right path. The shepherd also used the rod to protect himself and the sheep, whenever there was any threat of danger.

And what about the staff that is mentioned along with the rod? To quote again from Philip Keller, "It is the staff that identifies the shepherd as a shepherd. No other occupation has a shepherd's staff. It is designed, shaped and adapted especially for the needs of sheep, and only sheep. "

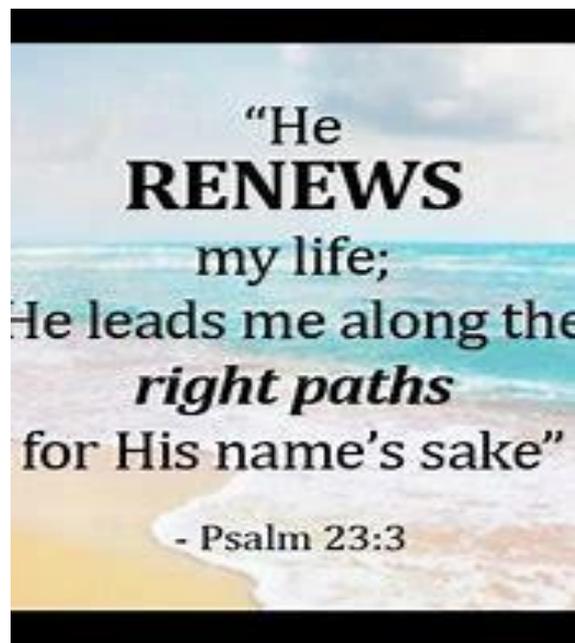
However, its main use is to guide the sheep. The tip of the staff would be laid alongside the sheep, and gentle pressure would guide the sheep, where the shepherd wanted it to go.

There would also be times, when a shepherd would hold his staff against the side of a nervous or frightened sheep, simply to be "in touch." To be treated by the shepherd in this special way, is to know comfort at a very deep level.

The shepherd provides everything for his sheep, and God, our Heavenly Father, through his Son, Jesus Christ, provides everything that we need in life. These two verses of the 23rd Psalm, seem almost too good to be true, but they are true.

You and I belong to the Good Shepherd, now and forever.

Amen.



Prayer

Let us pray,

Almighty God,
we thank you for all the many blessings you have poured into our lives, and for all the gifts that enrich them –
the love we share,
the beauty we see,
the health we enjoy,
the interests we pursue –
there is so much to be thankful for!

We thank you too Lord God, that in Jesus Christ you have set us free –
free to really enjoy your world knowing that the bondages of sin and death itself have been broken.
We thank you that we can enjoy life in all its fullness, not just now, but for all eternity.
We give you praise and thanksgiving, now and forever.

Loving God,
we know that you are a God who answers prayer, and we thank you for all the times you have heard us and responded to our requests – and to our sudden quick prayers for help.

Ever-blessed God,
we pray now for all those who are still very anxious that they will catch Covid-19, especially as they hear about those who now have coronavirus. Help them to do everything they can to keep themselves safe, and to put their trust in you.

We pray for all those we know, who are facing difficult times –
those grieving for loved ones,
those battling with illness, either at home or in hospital
those wrestling with depression and for whom life is so difficult day after day.
We ask a special blessing on Anne McRonald, back again in Ayr hospital.

Bless all our families, friends and loved ones wherever they may be.
This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord,
Amen.

Rona

God knows exactly what you need, who you need, how much you need, when you need it. Trust in Him.

Please remember in your prayers this week all of the people below in hospital, care homes or in their own homes:-

Mrs Margaret Burgess (now in Berelands)	Mrs Anne McDonald (back in hospital)
Mrs Irene Gibson	Mrs Maude Smillie
Mrs Rae Beattie	Mrs Jeanette Burns
Mr Alasdair Wham	Mr John Cassells
Mrs Betty McPherson	Mrs Ann Shaw
Mrs Anna Irving	Mrs May Wilkinson
Mrs Catherine MacDonald	Mrs Heather McLeod
Mr Ken Birnie	Mrs Madge Birnie

Please let the Session Clerk know of any member/relative who goes in to hospital or is ill at home. For those in hospital, please ensure you have their given Christian name which may not necessarily be the name by which s/he is usually known.

Prayer Chain Anyone having a request for prayer may contact Sheena Hunter on 01292 570200 or e-mail her at sheenachunter@hotmail.com

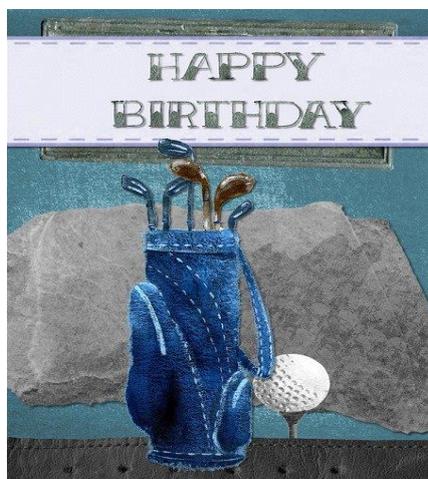
Kirk Session meeting There will be a Zoom Kirk Session meeting on Thursday 3rd September at 7.00pm. The sole purpose will be to vote on whether or not the church should reopen for worship at this stage. *Rona*

Can YOU help? We are looking for someone to be NWC's contact with Nkhata Bay Church in Malawi. This is open to all members of the congregation. If you are interested, please speak to Rev. Rona Young or John Bell in the first instance.

Salvation Army Foodbank A big thank you to all who have donated in the past few months. Please note that donations will now be accepted in the church drive between **2.00** and **3.00pm**. Only leave your car when the person before you has gone and, if possible, please place your contribution directly into the boot of the receiving car.

Birthday There is only one known birthday this week. We wish a very Happy Birthday to our Session Clerk who will be another year older tomorrow.

31st August John Bell



Difficult times While these are times of worry and hardship for many people, the Church is also struggling financially. If you are able, we would be most grateful if you would consider making an extra donation (according to means) to help cover ongoing bills etc.. Please contact Janis Meredith whose details are below. Anyone wishing to donate to Ayr: Newton Wallacetown Church online can use this link:- <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/news-and-events/news/2020/support-your-local-church-with-our-new-online-donations-system> Thank you.

John Bell

Answers to last week's word search 25 books – Acts, Colossians, Ephesians, Exodus, Ezra, Haggai, Hebrews, Isaiah, James, Job, John, Jonah, Jude, Leviticus, Luke, Malachi, Mark, Matthew, Micah, Nahum, Philemon, Proverbs, Psalms, Romans and Titus.

Remember **Streaming of our morning service** conducted this week by Gary McCleary and next week by Rev. Rona Young will commence at **11.00am** then our **prayer time** starts at **12.30pm** with the Lord's Prayer followed by personal prayers. This helps bring us together to reach out to him in prayer while we are distancing physically. Please join us for the service if you can and take part in the prayer time which many are finding valuable and some find comforting.

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