

Psalm 23

The Psalm has been described as a universal Psalm, the pearl of Psalms, a Psalm for all seasons. I warm to the opening words of the psalm from the Iona Community Daily Worship Book:

You God, are my shepherd;
I need nothing more.

But of course, they are not the words we know the best. I imagine many of us were introduced to Psalm 23 through the version sung to Crimond. So let us begin with this 17th century version sung by the Temple Church Choir

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/9zeMcdh26YA?si=A690M8kX-EWwcPqs>

In the Middle East the shepherd walks in front of his sheep and goats, he leads them. The sheep become familiar with the shepherds and follow him, as Jesus said 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' (John 10.27 NKJV)



Shepherding in
Jableh, Syria

Shepherding in
Oxfordshire



The Psalm is short enough to recall each sentence and to note its flow and the changes in the rhythm. In the opening verses the relationship is established with God that is fulfilled peacefully, refreshed and sustained.

*You God, are my shepherd;
I need nothing more.*

*You let me lie down in green pastures,
you lead me beside still waters;
there you revive my spirit.*

*You guide me in the right paths
for you are true to your name. (v1-3)*

Pause for a moment

Let us listen to Sir John Rutter's arrangement of the Psalm sung by the Cambridge Singers, Aurora Orchestra, with Thomas Barber as soloist.

 **YouTube** https://youtu.be/8f_0NgsWzfA?si=SokI3mEAX19BNQRf

The psalmist David was no stranger to the darker elements of life and was aware of the reassuring and encouraging presence of God in these dark times.

*Were I to walk through the darkest valley
I should not be afraid.*

*for you are at my side,
your staff and crook support me. (v4)*

Pause for a moment

We now hear Stuart Townend's composition and setting of The Lord's My Shepherd Slideshow created by Collective Worship Hymns.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/CSlffUwmyFc?si=BAPUdI6E2eTEfbY>

We come to the closing verses of the Psalm and the hospitality and blessing of God for all to see, even in the face of adversity. The use of oil to anoint was a common practice in biblical times and was a sign of respect by a host to a guest. Priests and Kings were also anointed in recognition of their office. Oil is often used today during services of healing.

The overflowing cup symbolises abundance and blessing drawing us confidently to the presence of God throughout our lives, with us being at home within the house of God.

You spread a table before me
in clear view of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil,
my cup is overflowing.

Unfailing goodness and kindness
will follow me all my days.
My home shall be in God's house
as long as my life shall last. (v5-6)

Pause for a moment

*Ian Adams closes his reflection on Psalm 23 with these words:

So what might become possible in and around us if we recognize this moment, this day or this season as being one of fullness, a gift from God, containing all that we need to thrive and to bring our goodness to the world?

Prayer:

*O God, our sovereign and shepherd,
who brought again your Son Jesus Christ
from the valley of death,
comfort us with your protecting presence
and your angels of goodness and love,
that we also may come home
and dwell with him in your house for ever.*

We close with Howard Goodall's composition sung by the Choir of Wells Cathedral. He was commissioned to compose a theme song for the comedy *The Vicar of Dibley*.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/yLxdb3ov-zE?si=S0IHCmaOAHVGbv5U>

Fr Derek

**Verses from Psalm 23
New King James Version**

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.

Yea, 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.

You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil;
My cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow
me
All the days of my life;
And I will dwell in the house of the
Lord. Forever.

**Verses from Psalm 23
Iona Community Daily Worship**

You God, are my shepherd;
I need nothing more.

You let me lie down in green pastures,
you lead me beside still waters;
there you revive my spirit.

You guide me in the right paths
for you are true to your name.

Were I to walk through the darkest
valley
I should not be afraid.

for you are at my side,
your staff and crook support me.

You spread a table before me
in clear view of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil,
my cup is overflowing.

Unfailing goodness and kindness
will follow me all my days.
My home shall be in God's house
as long as my life shall last.

Acknowledgements

Iona Community Worship Book

The Psalms selected are taken from the Psalms used by the Iona Community and are taken from the Iona Abbey Worship Book, Wild Goose Publications 2017. The material can be used for non-commercial use without written permission.

Photographs

Jebleh, is a Mediterranean coastal city in Syria. There are no photographs on Wikimedia Commons showing shepherding in Palestine/Israel recently.

Victor.ibrahiem.photographe - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0

Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire shepherding

Mike Faherty - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

***Reflections on the Psalms App** (hymnsam.co.uk), also available as a paperback

Reflection by Ian Adams, poet, writer, photographer and artist.

Prayer taken from Reflections on the Psalms.

Music

The Lord's My Shepherd Tune: Crimond Author: Francis Rous 1650 Performed here by Temple Church Choir · Sir George Thalben-Ball Video prepared by Gawler Uniting Church

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/9zeMcdh26YA?si=A690M8kX-EWwcPgs>

Requiem: The Lord is my shepherd - John Rutter, Cambridge Singers, Aurora Orchestra, Thomas Barber

 **YouTube** https://youtu.be/8f_0NGsWzfA?si=SokI3mEAX19BNQRf

The Lord's My Shepherd [Psalm 23] (w/ Lyrics) - Performed by Stuart Townend -LIVE- Slideshow created by Collective Worship Hymns.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/CSlffUwmyFc?si=BAPUdI6E2eTEfbY>

The Lord is My Shepherd (Psalm 23) [Goodall] — Choir of Wells Cathedral

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/yLxdb3ov-zE?si=S0IHCmaOAHVGbv5U>

≈≈≈

While I seek to use only reliable sources when using websites, I cannot guarantee that the content on these websites is or will remain accurate or appropriate. I also have no control over the advertisements that accompany the YouTube link, these do seem to be on the increase.

(Derek is an Honorary Associate Priest (All Saints & St James and St Stephen's, Elton) Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

≈≈≈

The dual Parishes of Kirklees Valley, Bury, (All Saints, Elton & St James, Woolfold) and St Stephens, Elton are in the Diocese of Manchester.

Vicar of the two parishes - Fr. Samuel Eccleston O.P. (Anglican Order of Preachers-Dominicans)