



Giffnock: The Park Church

Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2020



*Reflections of an old but much loved Psalm  
Part 1 - I Lack Nothing*

Good Morning everyone,

I trust you are all well as we come to the end of another week and what week it has been. Extremes of weather bringing record temperatures, and being Scotland of course we had not just one extreme but a whole range of extremes for in addition to temperature we have had the most dramatic of thunder storms and lightning along with the heaviest rainfall in parts of the country flooding towns and villages, washing away roads and hillsides and of course the sad event of a train derailment resulting in the loss of life. With all that is happening in the Across the world at the moment and with our Newspapers and Television newsfeeds really are about presenting the story of bad news as that which seems to peak people's interest more, the one question that goes through my mind seeing this is - where is the Hope for people to hold on to?

That is what prompted me to think about looking at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm yet again. This has been one of the most written about psalms, possibly the most sung by congregations, gospel singers and certainly of all the psalms I suspect this is the one most preachers will have sermonised over across the years, most often. While I don't presume to present thoughts that have not been expressed before by preachers far greater than me, I do however believe this Psalm in particular points us to where our Hope can lie even in these days that we live just now living still with restriction. My prayer is that these words encourage you and affirm again that sense of knowing God's love for all of us so that we can go forward into the days and weeks ahead with confidence and hope, knowing what Graham Kendrick the song writer referred to as " a Hope so sure, A Promise so secure"

With Best wishes

*Calum D. Macdonald*

*Please read the Letter sent from the Moderator of the General Assembly calling the National Church to Prayer this week.*



# The Church of Scotland

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

4 August 2020

*The text below has been sent to:*

*Presbytery Clerks, Ministers, OLMs and Auxiliaries, MDS, Interim Moderators and Locums, Readers, the Diaconate, Ministry Candidates & Probationers and Session Clerks*

Dear Friends,

While some churches have already re-opened for public worship, most are still considering how best, and when, to do so. The need to navigate our way through the challenges involved and to properly implement the published guidelines is causing a degree of anxiety not seen since the beginning of lockdown. Rightly so, there are all kinds of questions to be answered and systems to be put in place to ensure as much as possible that those who visit our buildings are kept safe. I am enormously grateful to all those who at national, regional and local levels have worked so hard to get us to this point.

But while we order supplies of sanitising agents and face coverings, measure our sanctuaries to calculate allowable numbers, and work out how best to handle 'in church' worship alongside digital content, we mustn't miss the opportunity that is now before us to ask the crucial questions of what it is we're going back to do and how best are we going to do it? Will it be business as usual or might this be an opportunity for us to invite a fresh blowing of the wind of the Spirit to refresh and reinvigorate us and to 'revive us for this hour'?

This may well be a critical moment in the life of our Church - a paradigm-shifting moment. And if that's true for the Church then it may be equally true for the country, not least as COVID-related economic realities begin to bite.

It's with that in mind that I have decided to offer A Week of Prayer for Church and Country, believing that as we head into such a critical period we should be 'on our knees' before the One who has promised to lead us. The week will run from Monday 17 to Saturday 22 August and I'm presently working with a group of wonderfully creative colleagues to put it all together. Fuller details of how to get involved and how to involve congregations will follow, but in brief there will be a short, recorded reflection and prayer each morning and an opportunity to gather nationally online

each evening. These gatherings will be entirely interactive and there will be ways for individuals and congregations to participate - as little or as much as possible.

I very much hope you'll want to participate in this week, as you are able, and that you'll encourage members to do likewise.

*'Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.'* Colossians 4:2

Yours in Christ,

*Martin Fair*

**Rt Revd Dr W Martin Fair**  
**Moderator**



# The Church of Scotland

MODERATOR OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

13 August 2020

*The text below has been sent to: Presbytery Clerks, Ministers, OLMs and Auxiliaries, MDS, Interim Moderators and Locums, Readers, the Diaconate, Ministry Candidates & Probationers and Session Clerks*

Dear friends,

At the risk of bombarding your inbox, I wanted to send a final communication regarding the Week of Prayer running from Monday 17 to Saturday 22 August. Principally, I'm keen to ensure that those who want to get involved will know how to do so.

At 8am each morning a pre-recorded reflection will go live on the Church of Scotland website and on Facebook. These will include contemplative music, Scripture readings, a brief 'thought for the day', a prayer and blessing. Additionally there will be a suggested prayer activity that you can choose to take up at some point during the day. Each of these activities has been designed for all ages but certainly with children and families in mind.

In the evenings, there will be a 'live' gathering on Zoom in which we hope many from across the country and perhaps further afield will participate. These will commence at 8.30pm - giving time for those who need to settle young children and for those who may have earlier meetings to join. The prayers from each evening will also be watchable on catch-up through the Church's digital platforms.

The evening gatherings will include the following:

- Prayers led by designated individuals, these including leaders from our ecumenical partners, Church of Scotland youth workers, ministers and staff members.
- Breakout rooms, during which participants will have a short time to reflect on the Scripture passage that was shared during the morning reflection, to pray together, and to 'compare notes' from around the congregations and communities represented.
- Reflective music and time to simply be still; there will be opportunity for individuals to bring prayer requests and causes for prayerful concern and thanksgiving.

The link for participating in the evening gatherings is as follows:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85689137107?pwd=ZUNmWVFkClJQVU83UnpjVSt3L1NRZz09>

Meeting ID: 856 8913 7107

Passcode: 2020

People who cannot connect to Zoom will be able to phone in:

Dial 0131 460 1196

Type the Meeting ID followed by #

Press # for Participant ID

Type Passcode when promoted (2020) followed by #

We are not posting the Zoom details on Facebook or the Church of Scotland website for security purposes, but we'd be delighted if you would make them available via email within your congregations.

But so much for the detail! What the week is really about, is creating space for the Church to come together from all 'airts and pairts,' to still ourselves and to listen for what the Spirit might be saying to us in these days (Revelation 3:22).

As we prepare for the coming chapters, let us begin from a position of humility, being on our knees before the One who will both feed us and lead us.

With every blessing,

Rt Rev Dr W Martin Fair BA BD DMin  
121 George Street • Edinburgh, EH2 4YN  
Tel: 0131 225 5722 • Email: [moderator@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:moderator@churchofscotland.org.uk) • Web: [www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)  
Scottish Charity Number: SC011353



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*Reflections of an old but much loved Psalm  
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*"Prayer should not be regarded as a duty which must be performed, but rather as a privilege to be enjoyed, a rare delight that is always revealing some new beauty." - E.M.*

*Bounds*

Let us Pray

God our Father in these moments that we take to still our hearts and focus our thoughts, bring us to that place that helps us realise that You truly are the Maker of all things, That you are the one described as Almighty, All powerful, Eternal, whose love knows no bounds and no end. Your Word tells us that we can come with confidence into your presence and know you will listen to our deepest heartfelt prayers whether for ourselves or for others. So here we gather before you now in our homes and although unable to meet together as Your church in our buildings for the time being, we collectively continue to pray to you for one another and for those whom we love seeking your Grace upon them. Draw near to all at this time and make your presence felt we pray.

Loving God we seek your grace and forgiveness upon us for those moments where our life as a Christian has been inconsistent at times. We have struggled with temptations that distract us from You, we have harboured the wrong mindsets and not acted as we should at times. We have even had the temerity to think that we know better than you. Forgive our proud and stubborn hearts and helps us to see the way in which you lead us and guide us. Through your Spirit's inspiration and the tenet of your Word helps us to work through how we can serve you better and know you more deeply.

We remember before you those who are nearest and dearest to us, those in our families and those who are our closest friends that you might reveal yourself to them.

Our Father we remember all who finished their schooling but who have been badly disappointed by the Qualifications they have received with Hopes dashed and a future unclear, grant them a sense of your reassuring presence that can lead them and guide them through this time.

For Those in Hospital or in Care at this time, for those who are undergoing investigation, treatment or surgery, we pray for Your healing touch to be upon them and those who treat and care for them.

For those whose future is unclear, unsure of what to do next or who have lost their job or whose job is under threat, be near to them and help them find the way through all this.

For those who grieve today draw near to them, Help them, find the comfort they need and the strength they require at this time. We remember especially each family impacted by the derailment in Stonehaven as well as all others looking to contend with their loved one being no longer in their midst. Reassure all of the hope and promise of Faith in Jesus, our Saviour who loved us and gave himself for us.

For the week ahead it is our prayer that you go before us as the light we need in moments of Darkness, as the companion always with us on our journey. For Now Gracious God Grant to us that sense of Your ever abiding presence that will never leave us or forsake us.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen!



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**Bible Readings**

**Psalm 23 : 1- 6 & John 10: 11 - 18**

**Psalm 23: 1- 6**

*A psalm of David.*

- <sup>1</sup> *The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*  
<sup>2</sup> *He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
<sup>3</sup> he refreshes my soul.*  
*He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.*  
<sup>4</sup> *Even though I walk through the darkest valley,<sup>[a]</sup>  
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*  
<sup>5</sup> *You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.*  
<sup>6</sup> *Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
forever.*

**John 10: 11 – 18**

- <sup>11</sup> *'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.* <sup>12</sup> *The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it.* <sup>13</sup> *The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*  
<sup>14</sup> *'I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – <sup>15</sup> just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I lay down my life for the sheep.* <sup>16</sup> *I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.* <sup>17</sup> *The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life – only to take it up again.* <sup>18</sup> *No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.'*



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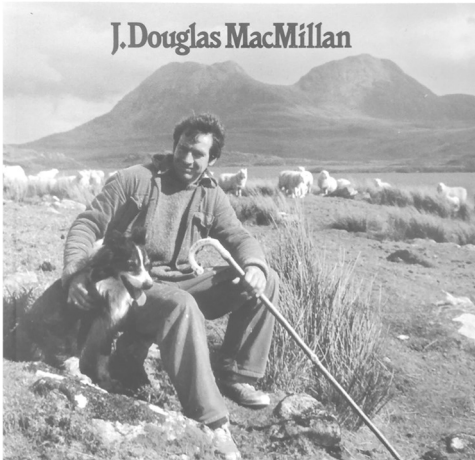
*Reflections of an old but much loved Psalm  
Part 1 - I Lack Nothing*

Good morning,

Welcome to what is going to be the first of a series of reflections based on what is perhaps Scotland's best loved, certainly best known psalm. I speak of course about the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm, what has often been referred to as the Shepherd's Psalm. What

# THE LORD our SHEPHERD

J. Douglas MacMillan



prompted this was my coming across a book that was given as a gift from Wilma's bridesmaid Shirley wishing me well just prior to the beginning of my studies at University. The Author, J, Douglas MacMillan was one of the main speakers at a Christian Conference many years ago in Wales. He had been a shepherd living in Ardnamurchan in Argyle who later in his life heard the Call to Ministry in the Free Church of Scotland where he enjoyed a successful ministry preaching and teaching. At the Conference where he had been a keynote speaker, he spoke of his time as a shepherd communicating with great effect helping many to see the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm in a vibrant way.

Beginning today and over the subsequent weeks we are going to look at the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm

and see again what we can learn from it and how we might hopefully apply what we have learned to our lives even now as we strive to contend with all that has been happening.

To help us with this morning I have sought to seek out the obvious New Testament reading to accompany these words of psalm 23 which is of course that which is one of the Great "I am" saying's from John's Gospel, namely that of John 10: 11- 18 where Jesus said "I am the good shepherd." so the focus today will be by way of an introduction to this psalm and hopefully we will see why the psalms as a book and God's word as whole can be a very effective tool in understanding God's

love for us and his call upon our lives. So our focus today is going to be primarily on Verse 1 only where read these Words.....

*“The LORD is my Shepherd, I lack nothing.”*

This verse makes only 2 statements. It identifies the nature of a relationship on the one hand while on the other it speaks of how fulfilling that relationship is.

The nature of one's relationship is important and we need to have clarity about where we stand in it, whether that applies to our romantic relationships or that of the work place, or friendship with others. The image of the Shepherd captured in psalm 23 is not something new. We read fairly early on in God's Word of how the relationship between God and Humanity is understood in Shepherding terms. The LORD being a Shepherd to His people is an idea beginning as early as the Book of Genesis, where Jacob refers to the LORD as, “the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel” (**Genesis 49:24**). Elsewhere the motif continues - **Isaiah 40:11** cites “How the LORD will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm.” The Prophet Micah follows that up where he “invites the LORD to Shepherd Your people with Your staff...As in days of old.” **Micah 7:14** as does Zechariah who speaks of the Messiah as “the Shepherd who will be struck, and the sheep scattered” **Zechariah 13:7** ( who is also quoted in **Matthew 26:31**). By the time of Jesus, people would have been all too familiar with the image of Jehovah, being the Great Shepherd. Jesus of course makes the controversial but revolutionary statement “I am the Good Shepherd”, daring to elevate his standing to that of the Great Shepherd himself (which of course we have since come to believe to be true) much to the consternation of the Pharisees.

The very obvious observation of all this is the Personal tone of the statement. It is thought that David will have written either when he was a young shepherd boy or in his later years as King when he is reflecting on life as a young shepherd. The one thing that stands out is the personal nature of the Statement - The Lord is MY Shepherd.

In church we talk of things like worship and praise as things we can do collectively but faith is the business of the individual. I have often said it is personal not private. Our faith is not to be hidden under the bushel or the bowl as Jesus Spoke of. It is something that we should hold as personal to us because when something becomes personal to us, it becomes important. Faith is important and it is personal. I cannot say that my faith is for my wife Wilma or anyone else in our Congregation and nor can Wilma or anyone say their faith is personal for me. Faith applies to the individual. Collectively we can celebrate our faith but only in that it applies to us individually. So while David Writes, “the Lord is my Shepherd, J Douglas MacMillan writes” I would urge you to come to know the Shepherd of the Psalm rather than just the Psalm itself because if you come to know the Shepherd, you will come to know the psalm.”

The second half of that Statement of verse 1 says "I lack nothing". What can that possibly mean ? I look at my bank balance and see there is never enough money to do all I would want to do. I do not have the most up to date technology or the ability to use it. Is it possible that this could be a reference to one's need and not one's greed to have everything and anything they want.

As you all know I had planned a luncheon for my birthday to celebrate turning 60 yrs old. In our planning we thought that rather than folk being very kind and generous, as they have always been at Park Church and give a gift of some sort to the minister, I realised there was nothing I really needed, "I lacked nothing" to quote Ps 23 vs 1, and so I thought that we could do something for Mission Aviation Fellowship who operate a flying doctors service offering health care in many of the poorer nations across the third world where there is no health care system much less a National Health Service the likes of which we enjoy and that could be those in the church's gift to me and my gift to someone else. While the Covid 19 lockdown torpedoed that from happening spectacularly, it is something I hope to do when we can return to some sort of normal routine again, whatever that might look like.

In these days that we live in with the fears and worries that this pandemic is continuing to overwhelm nations across the world, I still have my health, a roof over my head and food and water on the table. In truth what more do we need ? The rest is all gravy as they say. There are those who seek to have more money, more influence, more power than anyone else and it will never be enough and they will never be content and when this life for them is over, all that power, wealth and influence will count for nothing as they stand before the great Shepherd to account for their lives on this earth. The only thing that will stand them in good stead in that moment will be the words of Psalm 23 vs 1 - " The Lord is my Shepherd, I lack nothing". Their only saving grace then as it is now will be the Saving Grace of Faith in the Jesus who died and arose again for them.

There is much that we can look forward to in reading psalm 23 and learning from, the Shepherd's Psalm. Have a good week

Calum D. Macdonald

*Go now with your trust in the good shepherd,  
and let us love, not just in words,  
but in truth and action.*

*Believe in the name of Jesus Christ,  
and love one another, just as he has commanded  
us*

*And may God The Father be at your side,  
even in valleys of death.*

*May Christ Jesus be the  
cornerstone of your life.*

*And may the Holy Spirit  
abide in you and tend  
you with love and  
mercy all the days of  
your life.*

*Go in peace to love  
and serve the Lord,  
With God's Blessing  
this day and every day*

