

## Worship@Home 21<sup>st</sup> July 2024 With Revd David Speirs

### Opening Prayer:

Loving Shepherd, you know our names;  
you care for us. When we face darkness and  
death, walk beside us. When we hunger for  
your love, fill us with your presence. When we  
are fearful, feed us at your table.  
May we dwell in the house of goodness  
and mercy all the days of our lives. Amen.

By Mary Petrina Boyd (<http://www.ministrymatters.com>)  
Accessed at RE:Worship <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2015/04/opening-prayer-psalm-23.html>

### STF 481 – The Lord’s my Shepherd (Psalm 23)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrS0VXOOepc>

The Lord’s my shepherd, I’ll not want;  
He makes me lie in pastures green,  
He leads me by the still, still waters,  
His goodness restores my soul.

*And I will trust in You alone,  
And I will trust in You alone,  
For your endless mercy follows me,  
Your goodness will lead me home.*

He guides my ways in righteousness,  
And he anoints my head with oil,  
And my cup, it overflows with joy,  
I feast on his pure delights.

And though I walk the darkest path,  
I will not fear the evil one,  
For You are with me, and your rod and staff  
Are the comfort I need to know.

*By Stuart Townend. Words & Music © 1996 Getty Music &  
Songs; Thankyou Music. Admin by Integrity Music and Capitol  
CMG Publishing. CCLI Song Number: 1585970.*

### Please read:

#### Jeremiah 23: 1-6

<https://bible.oremus.org/?q=490874251>

### Time to Reflect

In order to more fully understand the reading  
that we have from the Book of Jeremiah today  
we need to consider the social and historical  
circumstances that the prophet is writing in.

Judah has been twice invaded by the  
Babylonian Empire (in 598 and 587 BCE)  
which has resulted in the destruction of the  
city of Jerusalem and the Temple. Significant  
numbers of Judean’s have been forcibly  
relocated to Babylon to serve the Empire in a  
period that would become known as the exile.  
Jeremiah’s writing puts these events into a  
theological context, as the people try to work  
out why the disaster has befallen them. It is  
Jeremiah’s assertion that it is Judah’s failure  
to trust in and follow God that has resulted in  
the downfall of the nation.

In chapter 23 Jeremiah turns his attention to  
those who hold positions of leadership in  
Judean society. The ‘shepherds’ that  
Jeremiah refers to are both the political and  
religious leaders of Judah who have failed to  
attend to their flocks and have scattered them.  
The specific charges have already been  
outlined in the previous chapter. The sons of  
King Josiah, in contrast to their father who  
furthered the cause of the poor and needy,  
allowed injustice to grow through their  
selfishness (Jeremiah 22:17).

Idolatry, oppression, violence and the  
shedding of innocent blood, neglecting to take  
up the cause of the widow, the orphan, and  
the foreigner are all identified as sins  
committed by Judah’s leaders (Jeremiah  
22:8-9). This corruption and injustice  
weakened Judean society and has led it away  
from God. The destruction that follows is  
therefore an outworking of their bad  
leadership, which the prophet makes it  
ominously clear will have consequences for  
those leaders.

Jeremiah’s utterances, which outline and  
explain the disaster experienced by the  
Judean people, are why he is often cited as  
being a prophet of gloom and doom. Yet we  
also have to recognise that Jeremiah also  
seeks to offer hope in a difficult situation.  
Jeremiah makes reference to the exilic  
remnant, now living in Babylon, who he states  
will find restoration by God’s hand. Jeremiah  
is confident in the faithfulness of God as the  
true and ultimate Shepherd of the covenanted  
people. It is this confidence in God which  
leads Jeremiah to proclaim that God will  
gather and restore his flock.

This regathering will enable God's covenanted people to be fruitful and to multiply (Jeremiah 23:3) words that echo the promise that God offers to all of humanity in the Book of Genesis (Genesis 1:28). Jeremiah also affirms that God will raise up shepherds who will actually shepherd the people and that none of the flock will be found to be missing (Jeremiah 23:4). Thus, through God's action there will be a complete restoration of the covenanted community where people will no longer live in fear, a reversal of their situation in exile.

Jeremiah then goes on to talk about a righteous branch from the house of David who will reign as King, dealing wisely and executing justice and righteousness in the land (Jeremiah 23: 5-6) and where the people will dwell in safety. For Christians interpreting this passage, it is the person of Jesus Christ who fulfils this prophetic expectation in his life, death and resurrection. Through Christ God's Kingdom is established amongst us and his way of love is made known.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we see many examples of bad leadership within the world. Cruel and vain rulers whose corruption, lack of concern for the vulnerable, and embrace of violence leads to war, poverty, and oppression. Yet Jesus, the Good Shepherd, offers a different way, the way of love. It is the calling of the Church to embody this love in its mission.

So let us commit ourselves to following Jesus, our Good Shepherd, who leads us in the way. Let us uphold God's mercy and justice for all people and let us seek to live out our calling to love one another in Jesus' name.

### **Prayer of Intercession**

You are invited to pray silently for:  
The needs of the world...  
The Church and its calling...  
Loved ones going through difficult times...  
For peace, justice, and reconciliation...  
In Jesus name. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven...

### **StF 713 – Show me how to stand for justice**

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

Show me how to stand for justice:  
how to work for what is right,  
how to challenge false assumptions,  
how to walk within the light.  
May I learn to share more freely  
in a world so full of greed,  
showing your immense compassion  
by the life I choose to lead.

Teach my heart to treasure mercy,  
whether given or received –  
for my need has not diminished  
since the day I first believed:  
let me seek no satisfaction  
boasting of what I have done,  
but rejoice that I am pardoned  
and accepted in your Son.

Gladly I embrace a lifestyle  
modelled on your living word,  
in humility submitting  
to the truth which I have heard.  
Make me conscious of your presence  
every day, in all I do:  
by your Spirit's gracious prompting  
may I learn to walk with you.

*By Martin E Leckebusch. Words & Music © 1999 Kevin Mayhew Ltd. CCLI Song Number: 3484230.*

### **Final Prayer**

In the Shepherd all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through the Shepherd God was pleased to reconcile to God all things, whether on earth or in the heaven, by making peace through the blood of the cross. The Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, has remembered us and forgiven us - the gates of Paradise have been unlocked; we are free to enter where the Shepherd reigns forever and ever! Thanks be to God! Amen.

Extracted from a prayer by James E. Janecek, in The Shepherd Reigns. Posted on the United Church of Christ's WorshipWays website. <http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways>

Accessed at: <https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2013/10/prayer-of-confession-proper-29c.html/>