

Kingswood Service 11th October 2020 led by Helen Newham.

Call to worship

Loving God, you gather us together tenderly as a shepherd gathers their sheep; you bring us together to feed us and to strengthen us with your living water. In you we find peace. Help us to accept the invitation to come to you; make us willing to respond to your call, and ready to receive you now. Amen.

Reading Psalm 23

Hymn 1. The Lord is my shepherd 481

Prayers.

Lord, you are our shepherd. The shepherd looks after the sheep. He is with them day and night. He makes sure they have enough to eat and drink, and a shady resting place. Where he leads, they follow, so he walks on paths that are safe. He protects them from all kinds of danger. God, we praise you that you are like that shepherd, and that you care for us in the same way. **Amen**

We thank you, Lord, for all that is true, for the facts that are certain, for all that can be proved and on which life depends. We thank you that the earth will be going round the sun as we wake tomorrow, and that our delicately balanced place in the universe will be maintained. We thank you, too, for all those who live and speak the truth, and upon whom we can depend. We thank you, Lord, for all that is honourable and holy, for all the beauty of the world which reminds us of you and so can also be called holy. We thank you, too, for people whose conduct is honourable and who have integrity, and thereby reflect something of your nature. We thank you, Lord, for all that is just and upright, for our knowledge of right and wrong, reflected in the rule of law, and for all those who administer the law fairly. We remember with thanksgiving all in positions of responsibility who act justly, and who put aside personal interest to do what is right, immune to undue pressure and influence.

We thank you, Lord, for all that is pure. In a world where purity is ridiculed rather than revered, we give thanks for all who are trying to live moral lives, according to your example, and are not prepared to just do what they want. We thank you, Lord, for all that is pleasing and attractive, for people whose character radiates goodness, who never relate gossip or spread scandal, who don't say unkind things about others, and who are people you want to be with. We thank you, Lord, for all that is commendable and of good reputation, for those whose reputation is such that they can be trusted, and for those whose speech is always acceptable to you. Grant that we might have our minds fixed on these things, and by your grace be able to follow the examples set before us. **Amen.**

Lord we know in this last week we have upset others by our selfish words and actions, we have done things we shouldn't have and not done those that we should have. We remember that Jesus tells us that if we say we are sorry and really mean it our sins are forgiven. We ask these prayers through our lord and saviour, **Amen.**

We say the prayer Jesus taught his disciples.

The Lord's Prayer.

Reading. Matthew 22 v1-14

Sermon

Today I want to look at the re-assurance that God is with us, our comfort and protection 24/7. But what is comfort? According to the Oxford English dictionary it is 'the easing the grief or distress' or 'something that improves the mood or restores a sense of wellbeing too'.

To some people then, comfort can be a physical thing, but as Christians we have another source of comfort. We can reach to God, and he offers us a fresh, living source of comfort. But are we open and ready to accept God's persistent call? Really ready to accept his comforting presence?

Looking in my concordance there is a whole page full of references mentioning a comforting God in the Bible and there are nearly 2 pages mentioning God's protection. We cannot possibly go through all those now, if we did we would still be looking at them on Wednesday!

The book of Isaiah has many references to "a comforting God". Especially relevant is Isaiah 25 which speaks of deliverance from oppression and also mentions a banquet that the Lord would prepare. In Matthew's Gospel Chapter 5 the Sermon on the Mount states "Blessed are those that mourn, God will comfort them." I can confirm this is true. Without the comfort of God I would not have been able to cope with the loss of my Dad.

The Psalms are littered with songs of praise to a comforting, protecting God. Today we read Psalm 23 which was beautifully written by King David. It is a comforting passage often retold at funerals reminding us that God is with us even in our saddest and darkest times or in many cases especially in these times. It is then that He walks with us every step of the way. It reminds me of a poem, "footprints in the sand". I think you will probably have heard of it. That poem, too, is real and true for me. In my hour of need I have felt God's comfort, which really did ease my grief and distress just as described in the dictionary.

In Paul's letter to the people of Phillipi He urges them to "stand firm in the Lord" because the Peace of God is with them. He asks them to continue their praying and thanksgiving, reminding them to think before they act and of how to live in love with their friends and neighbours. Sound advice which is just as relevant to us now as it was to the people all those years ago.

Moving on to our passage from Matthew "The parable of the Wedding banquet". This is all about God inviting us into his Kingdom, repentance and our acceptance to live our lives under God's rule.

At first I thought what happened to the one who was not wearing the wedding clothes was a bit harsh. Perhaps he could not afford to buy them and that was why he was not wearing them. Upon research I have found that the King would have provided the wedding clothes and this man was REFUSING to wear them which to me puts a totally different interpretation on the story altogether.

I think that this account is telling us that God will equip and provide all the skills and abilities we need to do His will. All we have to do is accept the invitation and trust in the Lord and he will comfort, protect and provide everything we need. So Christians should feel comforted. There is nothing more likely to ease pain and restore our sense of wellbeing than the knowledge that we are not alone, we are supported and we can move forward swathed in love.

Just as God did for Moses (who felt inadequate), and Jonah and Amos and so many in the Bible, He will provide for each one of us. All we have to do is say YES.

So my challenge for to you today is "Are you accepting God's call?" What is He asking you to do that you are reluctant to say "Yes" too?

I urge you to take the plunge, you will not regret it. With God's love, comfort and protection, you have nothing to fear. He will support you through your hour of need, ease your grief and distress AND absolutely, completely restore your feeling of wellbeing. This is the full, 3 dimensional Christian definition of comfort. To feel this absolute sense of comfort, you just need to truly accept Jesus into your lives and answer his call. It will be a life-changing event, secure in the love of God. I can testify to that. Amen.

Hymn 2. When the music fades 437

Prayers for others.

We remember people who keep our hospitals running, porters, cleaners, catering staff, laboratory staff, radiographers, theatre technicians, and so on. All those whose jobs enable doctors and nurses to properly perform their duties. We think of people in the food chain, from farmers to supermarket staff, all who help keep us fed. Those who keep our streets safe, clean and rubbish free. So many workers we rely on to keep our society functioning.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

We pray for people who are special to us, who have our heart. Our family and friends, people who mean so much to us. Maybe we see them often or perhaps only infrequently but they will always be there in our hearts. Perhaps some of them are struggling at the moment because of the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in, who maybe themselves have lost a loved one as a result of Covid 19. In a moment of quiet let each of us bring to God these special people in our lives, all with their own particular needs.

Lord of all, hear our prayer.

We think about people who work, who have jobs and those who would like to work but can't find a job, who maybe have been made redundant because of the Corona virus pandemic. However, there are many in our country who have lost jobs recently, or who will have no jobs to return to when the furlough scheme ends, who are worrying how they will continue to feed their families, and maybe needing to use food banks for the first time. We bring these before you Lord God.

Lord of all, Hear our prayer.

We pray for the many people in our world caught up in wars where fighting and bloodshed are rife, where people are living amongst the rubble of damaged homes and destroyed cities. We remember the huge humanitarian disaster in The Yemen, where hospitals, often damaged themselves, are struggling to cope with the many ill and injured people. We pray for people in positions of authority in our own country, that they will use their influence and power wisely and responsibly and lead with justice and fairness for all people.

Lord of all, Hear our prayer.

We pray for the many people in our world, who need more good things, sufficient food, a supply of clean water near at hand and not a journey of several miles away, free education for their children and available medical care.

Whilst we think about the need in countries of Africa and Asia, help us not to be blind to the poverty that exists in our own country where millions of families are existing below the poverty line.

.Lord of all, Hear our prayer

We are all mixed up in the glorious jumble of God's people. God loves us all and he loves us to love each other. Hold us in the palm of your hand, Lord and keep us safe together. **Amen.**

Hymn 3. May the Mind of Christ my Saviour 504

Blessing

As we go into places of suffering, may your love wipe all tears away. As we go into places of hunger, may your love give bread and hope. As we go into places of fear, may your love provide peace and companionship, may your love speak of grace, and sing of joy: Loving God, grant us the courage to go where you would send us.

Amen

