

Easter 3 / 4 3rd May 2020

3 rd May Easter 3 What we would have had.	8.00 Holy Communion Jubilee Hall	I Peter 2 vv 11-17 p1218 John 16 vv 16-22 p1084	
3 rd May Easter 4 What we would have had.	9.30 Family Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 2 vv 42-47 p1094 I Peter 2 vv 13-25 1218 John 10 vv 1-10 p1076	SoF 445 O Praise Ye the Lord 434 O Love That Wilt Not Psalm 23 197 I Am A New Creation 111 For I'm Building a 519 Take My Life 22 A New Commandment
3 rd May Easter 4 What we would have had.	11.00 Holy Communion	Genesis 7 vv 1-24 p8 Acts 2 vv 42-47 p1094 I Peter 2 vv 13-25 1218 John 10 vv 1-10 p1076	MP 275 Will Your Anchor Hold? 277 Yesterday, Today Psalm 23 21 Bind Us Together 151 Majesty 119 Jesus is Lord 262 What A Friend

Psalm 23. *Dominus regit me.*

THE Lord is my shepherd : therefore can I lack nothing.

2. He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

3. He shall convert my soul : and bring me forth 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 comfort me.

5. Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me : thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

6. But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost;

Answer. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.

My father's father died at home back in 1963. His sister then read the twenty third psalm. The impression this made on my mother remained with her to the end of her life. So, when she died in the Wisdom Hospice in January 2011, I read the same psalm, as I did for my sister when she died in the same place eight days later. Many people find Psalm 23 extremely meaningful and it is often chosen for funerals and on other significant occasions in people's lives.

In the Bible, and I think in our own experience, God has two very different aspects. There is God as we think of Him beyond our imagination – Creator of Heaven and Earth, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, reigning in all eternity, everlastingly worshipped by cherubim and seraphim and all the company of Heaven – and there is God Whose Presence we feel intimately in our daily lives, the God we talk to in prayer, addressing Him as *our Father*, feeling that we can cast our cares on Him for He cares for us. We speak of God as both transcendent and imminent.

The LORD is my shepherd. The capitals indicate that the underlying Hebrew is IYWH. This is the great God of Isaiah's vision and Ezekiel's vision. This is

the God Who made everything that there is, the God who brought the Children of Israel out of slavery in Egypt to Mt Sinai, where He revealed Himself to Moses and gave Him the Law. There is nothing which such a God cannot do. And, as we say the psalm, we speak of Him as the One Who looks after us as a shepherd looks after his sheep. Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd. He is IYWH made flesh and this is what He says about you and me and the whole flock of God: *the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth*

them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. He calls each one of us by our names and we know His voice.

He shall feed me in a green pasture : and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort. He shall convert my soul : and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake. I know that God looks after me. You should know that God looks after you. Why does God look after us? *For his Name's sake.* We bear His Name. We are CHRISTians. We received our CHRISTian name at our Baptism. It is to the honour of God's Name that He cares for us. It is not what we deserve that counts. It is not for our honour that God loves us. It is to His glory that God cares for us.

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 comfort me. God promises to look after us, but that does not mean that we shall always have easy lives. We may go through some terrible times. Some people are doing so right now. We do not have, however, to fear evil. God is with us. Jesus is with us. His rod and staff comfort us.

Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me : thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full. In Old Testament times, they used olive oil as a cleansing agent and cosmetic. [I think the soap of those days had too much alkali in it to use on human skin.] Oil was also used in medicine to treat skin conditions. Oil is used to massage the muscles of athletes and soldiers. Oil is burnt to give light and warmth. Kings and priests are anointed with holy oil as a sign of the gift of the Spirit of God. We often use oil in Baptism and Confirmation and in services of healing. We think of God giving us bread and wine, both the basic necessities of mortal life and the food of eternal life. We envisage table fellowship with God and with one another. We experience this in Holy Communion when we partake of Jesus the Bread of Life and drink from the cup of salvation. All this is a foretaste of the fellowship we shall enjoy in Heaven with Christ Himself and with all Christian people. It was a little bit painful reading today's Acts reading about the early Christians meeting daily to break bread together in Christian fellowship, to hear the Word of God, to share all the good things they had received as gifts of God, to offer prayer and praise together as one Body. It was a bit painful to read that in these times when we cannot physically meet together. I trust, however, that we are united in spirit and in Christian fellowship and love. By God's grace, I shall continue to celebrate the Eucharist alone every Sunday on behalf of us all and in fellowship with my parishioners and with the whole state of Christ's Church militant here in earth and triumphant in heaven until such time as we are allowed back into our buildings and can resume the practice of the New Testament.

But thy loving-kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life : and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. As we said a couple of weeks ago, don't let us lose sight of our ultimate goal, which is to be with Christ for ever in Heaven. He is with us in every step of our journey through life. He will welcome us to live with Him in His house for ever. All we need is faith. *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son : and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be : world without end. Amen.*