



Sunday 21st March 2021

The Callaghan Family

Welcome to our Service today, we hope that you are all well and we pray God's Holy Spirit will speak to you as we worship Him together.

Have you ever been to a place and thought 'oh this is great, I'd like to come back here again'. Sometimes we do and discover things about it that we didn't know before. Or someone else visits the place and says to you, 'Did you see ?' Which makes you want to go back again. During Lockdown we have been on walks and looked at the landscape in a slightly different way that we would if we drove past in a car.



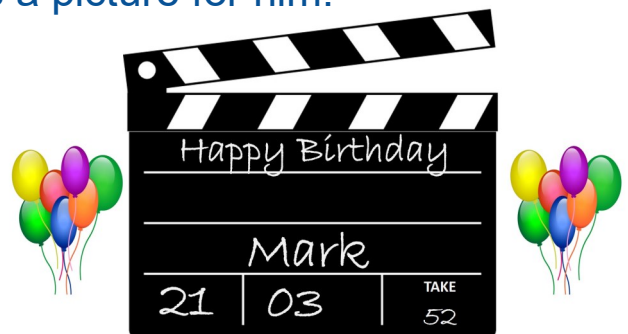
Our service today is a bit like that, as we will be looking at Psalm 23 again - well, just a few verses.

Let us Pray...

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank you for who you are we welcome you here today to our service. Lord, fill us and refresh us with your Holy Spirit that you may speak to us. Lord you are almighty, you are awesome and we worship you today.
Amen

We have one Birthday this week and it is Mark's today 21st March.

He likes to make short films so here is a picture for him.



Our first worship song is Everlasting Arms.

He lavishes grace as our burdens grow greater
He sends us more strength as our labours increase
To added afflictions He offers more mercy
To multiplied trials He multiplies peace

When we have exhausted our store of endurance
When our strength has failed and the day is half done
When we've reached the end of our earthly resources
Our Father's full giving is only begun
Our Father's full giving is only begun

Chorus

.....

Chorus

So lean hard, lean hard, lean on the everlasting arms
So lean hard, lean hard, lean on the everlasting arms
Lean on the everlasting arms

His love has no limits, His grace has no measure
His power has no boundary that's known unto men
For out of His infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again
He giveth and giveth and giveth again

Chorus

You lead me beside still waters
Your goodness restores my soul
I know that you'll never leave me
I know that you won't let go
You lead me beside still waters
Your goodness restores my soul
I know that you'll never leave me
I know that you won't let go

Your mercy flows like a river
Your mercy flows like a river
Your mercy flows like a river on us

Let us look at Psalm 23 again...
The Lord's my shepherd ,
I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me besides quiet waters, he restores my soul.
He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name sake.
Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I 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 overflows.
Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

Looking again at the Psalm as well as reflecting upon what Mervyn said in the family service in February, something jumped out and it is the last part of verse 4

Your rod and staff they comfort me.

So the question is:-
How does a rod and staff comfort a sheep?



Words and phrases are fascinating. Have you ever wondered why we say certain things? Or why is something called what it is? Or questioned why a particular word is used in that way?

Looking into 'the rod and staff' in Psalm 23 and how they comfort has opened a door as to why they comfort a sheep.

The staff is the traditional shepherds crook. Used in the field to rescue sheep, guide a new born lamb towards its mother, offer support for the shepherd.

So these things, yes, can bring comfort.

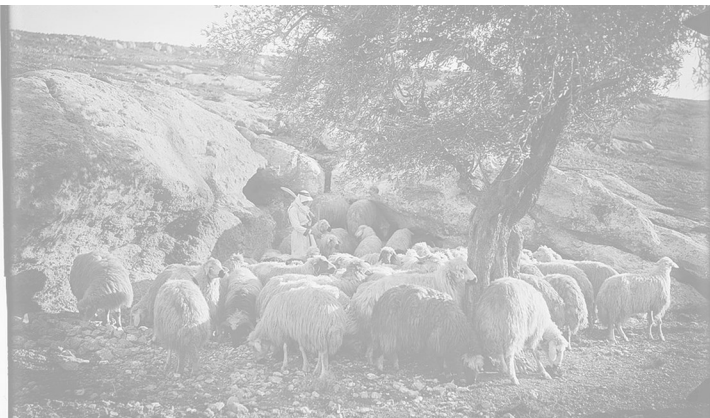


The rod is a short stick with a rounded end used to defend the sheep as well as to be used to discipline them and be thrown towards them to warn the sheep of danger.



All references to a rod in the Bible are things to do with punishment or to hurt people/animals.

The job of the staff is understandable but the rod???
The thing that hurts brings comfort. How? And Why?
It is when you look into what else it was used for and also what it is a metaphor for that we understand it.



A shepherd would gather his flock at night into a small enclosure and lie across the entrance to it with his rod closing the gap.
In John ch10 Jesus refers to Himself as both the Gate and the Good Shepherd. Verse 9 the gate and verse 14 the shepherd.

Then, in the morning all the sheep would pass under the rod of the shepherd as he first counted them and also inspected them. He would be looking for any signs of injury, looking at the fleece for any damp patches that could be something nasty. The rod sort of combed the fleece as the sheep passed under it. Which would bring comfort to the sheep knowing they were being looked after. However....

In the book of Ezekiel chapter 20 verse 37 it says...

I will take note of you as you pass under my rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.

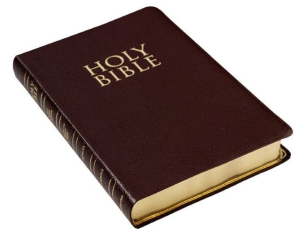
This is talking about people - so we pass under the rod like the sheep do, so that we can be inspected by the Lord who is our Shepherd.

The rod



Has been likened to or is a metaphor for...

The Word of God the Bible



In the light of this being applied to us, His rod can bring us comfort, safety, protection, healing as well as guidance, correction and discipline.

In a recent conversation with someone who is currently very busy lambing on the farm, they said that there was one small lamb that just fed all the time from different mothers.

So like that little lamb who just feeds at every opportunity it will grow up to be a good strong healthy sheep. This reminded me that when we take the opportunity to go deeper into the word of God, we too can feed on it and it also shows us all the amazing truths about how to live as God wants us to live.

Our service concluded with a worship song based on Psalm 121:-

I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains?
No, my strength comes from GOD, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains. He won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep. Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep. GOD's your Guardian.
Psalms 121:1-5a

The song is called 'My Guardian'

The Grace ...

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
And the love of God,
And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
Be with us all,
Now and forever more.
Amen

