



## SBC Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020

### Psalm 23

This Sunday being the 1<sup>st</sup> in the month would have been a café style worship, meaning that we pause from our studies of Philippians and look at something different. Today I have decided to focus on the reassurance that we get from God at this time.

Psalm 23 is often used when people need comfort, such as a bereavement, awkward times in lives, or of great stress. How can this Psalm offer us support and encouragement during this time of the Covid-19 virus attacking the world?

*'Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me, your rod and staff, they comfort me'. (Psalm 23 v4)*

God does give us the strength to cope with all that we are going through, these difficult times, when we can't be together in worship on Sunday or Thursday's at Kingfisher Court, we can't meet for group Bible Study, fellowship at coffee morning, Totstop to name but a few. These are just a few of the church based activities that are suspended at the moment. The impact to each of us is different, some have to stay indoors to protect ourselves, others are allowed out for daily exercise and some may be allowed out for work, while others work from home. Life as we knew it 2 months ago has gone, will it ever come back the way it was, we don't know.

But what we do know is that all through this, GOD is with us, walking beside us, behind us, in front of us, surrounding us with his love and support. Despite this knowledge there are some people who may be thinking that this virus is sent from God, as a punishment for the way that the human race is treating his world that he created. Whilst I am sure that God is very upset with the way that the human race is treating his world, I personally do not believe that this virus or any before or any to come are from God. I believe that God is a loving God and only wants the best for all his people, both those who believe in him and those who are yet to believe. Think of the words of John chapter 3 v 16 & 17 *'For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him'*.

During Jesus' ministry time on earth, he healed many people of many different illnesses and diseases, he showed great compassion often to those who the rest of society shut out. Some people suggest that this virus might be the sign of the end of time and Jesus' 2<sup>nd</sup> coming. When Jesus was questioned about when he would return by his disciples, he replied no one knows when I will return apart from my Father in Heaven, not even the angels (See Matthew 25 v 19).

Psalm 23 reminds us to put our trust in God at all times, the same as many people have done throughout all ages. Think of the many people in the Old Testament, Noah – who built the ark in the middle of the desert well away from the sea, Moses who spoke to Pharaoh and then led the Israelites out of Slavery, Daniel who refused to bow down to any other image. In



New Testament times, in the time that we are in now, just after Easter, the disciples are confused and if we are honest, it looks like they were struggling to put their faith in God. To help them, God allows Jesus to appear to them to reassure them, the men walking on the Damascus road, their hearts burned as Jesus talked with them, when the disciples are locked in an upper room for safety, Jesus comes and stands with them to reassure them. Mary on that glorious Easter morning, sees the son that she bore and when God was ready opened her eyes so that she could recognise Gods one and only promised Son, Jesus.

These and many other times throughout the bible, when people have felt at the end of the road, God has stepped in to help them in the way that they needed at that time. The last verse of Psalm 23 reads *'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'*.

This verse in particular I feel gives us all hope, it reminds us that Gods' love, strength, help and support are with us every moment of every day. What should we do about this? We should dwell in the house of the Lord, make time for God in our lives each day – take time to read the bible, pray. In our prayers as well as asking God for what is on our minds, make time to be still with God and just listen, he may be trying to say something very important to us. Maybe we can start the day with a time of prayer and end the day with prayer.

In these days of restriction let each one of us take comfort in the love of God and then as we support those around us, share his love through our actions and words.

Part of John 16 v 33 reads *'In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world'*.

Whatever happens in this world, let each one of us remember that the risen Lord is waiting to welcome us into eternal life, a life without the pain and suffering, a life that is beyond our understanding.

May each one of us in the coming week, make time to listen to God, so that we can be used by him to share his love as we support those around us. May be rejoice in the comfort, love and strength that he provides for us all.

AMEN

*Doug Thompson*