

Grazing the pastures

by Rev Dan Balsdon, Sunday 26th July 2020 | read online at www.revdanbalsdon.com

The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Psalm 23:1-3, NRSV

At zoom family church last week, we thought about stories in the Bible about animals. Donkeys, foxes, sheep, goats, pigs, ox, frogs, locusts and more.

Then we thought about shepherds and sheep. Along with playing hide and seek the sheep in each of our homes, puzzles, games and songs, we watched a video clip which I found enlightening and challenged some of my assumptions about the meaning of Psalm 23.

The video clip is set in the wilderness, *mid barr*, also known as Green pastures. Whenever I read Psalm 23, I would picture one particular field of lush green grass on my grandparents farm - the field we always knew as Meadow.

But, it seemed obvious once the video had pointed it out, that there was not such lush green grass at the time Psalm 23 was written. The Green pastures of the Psalms are the not lush green fields Cornish meadow of my grandparents.

Green pastures were brown, rocky, wilderness hillsides. Yet they were places where some moisture was present, enough to allow small tufts of grass to grow up from the edges of rocks with seeds and moisture are both caught. To graze in green pastures, shepherd and sheep are always on the move, a tuft here, a tuft there. Seeking food for the day, and finding just enough.

To graze in green pastures is not to sit down in one spot, forever, with every bite of sustenance we need at our fingertips. Life as a disciple is not a bed of roses where everything is sorted for us from the comfort of our homes without us having to do anything.

To graze in green pastures, is to keep moving, searching for the more that could be growing behind the next rock. To be a disciple is to learn that God will provide for today's needs, and to trust in God for enough for tomorrow.

'give us today our daily bread'

The Lords Prayer

I find that all gives helpful meaning to 'give us today our daily bread'. There were no supermarket shelves stacked with Hovis and Kingsmill! Bread making was a daily activity of providing enough for the now, and trusting for tomorrow.

I find this a helpful encouragement to me to keep journeying. That being a disciple is not about having everything sorted, a banquet table before us or the answers to all of life's questions.

It is to keep trusting, and through trusting to keep journeying and searching, because I never know what God has in store for me behind the next rock.

What about you? What do you think? How do you respond to the suggestion that green pastures may not be the image western society has often assumed?

Please watch the clip and reflect for yourself, and comment with your reflections below. https://youtu.be/AlrS3h7cH_A