

Fourth Sunday in Lent Year A (22 March 2020)

Lectionary Readings

1 Samuel 16:1-13, Ps 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41



Reflection on Psalm 23.

There is no doubt that we are living in unprecedented times, in our church, in our community, in Australia and indeed in our world as we deal with the destructive spread of Coronavirus.

In the midst of all the talk of "social distancing" and "self-isolation" (the latter being a current reality for me) I find myself reflecting on the image of the good and gentle shepherd which forms part of our lectionary readings for this the fourth Sunday in Lent.

Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing I shall want," is undoubtedly one of the most well known and loved of the Old Testament psalms. We are not sure when David wrote it but it was certainly through difficult times.

At the heart of this hymn is an invitation to trust in the one who provides care, the one who gathers in, the one who heals and comforts and loves, the one who puts our feet on the right path.

There is no doubt that even in the midst of darkness and in the valley of death and fear, God is ever present, and because God is there the danger is less. God is beside us to guide us safely with crook and staff; God follows us with goodness and kindness; anointing and soothing our pain; preparing for us a banquet of rich food and wine; and, leading a way through the desolation of the desert to restful green pastures and to the still life-giving waters of peace.

Psalm 23 reminds me that God walks beside me; God accompanies me, especially when I am most in danger.

As we continue to struggle with the uncertainty and anxiety surrounding the spread of the coronavirus this image of God as the good and gentle shepherd is one for all of us to hold on to. While self-isolation and social distancing may be necessary, indeed essential for our world at this time, the God who drew near to us in Jesus is with us still – lockdown never applies to God.

Jesus has promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).