

## ***Sacredise Daily Worship***

Personal Worship Resources for the Week:

19 - 25 July 2015

### **Thought for the Week:**

Sheep without a shepherd need a place to belong and someone to care for them. This is the heart of the Scriptures we read this week. In the Gospel of Mark we read of Jesus looking out at the crowds who follow him and recognising that they need compassion and good leadership. They have been betrayed by their leaders and they are "like sheep without a shepherd." And so, filled with compassion, Jesus heals and feeds them. In the Old Testament we witness God's promise to David. The shepherd boy who has now become king desires to build a "house" (a Temple) for God. His motives may well have been a bit mixed. There was definitely a desire to worship God and create a place for others to encounter God. But, there seems to be a bit of a desire to "domesticate" God, to let others know that he was "in" with God and God was on his side. But, God turns the tables on David - rather than let David build a house for God, God proclaims that God is going to build a "house" (a dynasty - there's a play on words in the Hebrew here) for David. God promises that David's Reign will never end and that a descendant of David will always be on the throne. Through the ages the prophets reminded the people of this promise, and spoke with hope about the "good shepherd" who would come as the fulfilment. When Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd" he was claiming to be the fulfilment of this promise himself.

Two implications arise from this for us. The first is that we are the sheep who need the good shepherd to care for us and create for us a place of belonging. Jesus has offered himself to us as exactly this, and has welcomed us into God's household. The second implication is that we, too, are called to be good shepherds of those for whom we care and with whom we live. We, too, are to welcome others into God's household and create for them a place of belonging.

This week we seek to find our place in God's household even as we create space for others.

### **Sunday 19 July 2015**

**Reading:** Jeremiah 23:1-6

**Reflection:** As we know, after years of alternating between good and bad kings, and multiple prophetic warnings, God's people were conquered and carried off into exile. These events were brought on, at least in part, by the corruption and self-interest of the religious and political leaders. In Jesus' day, the same issues were present - that's why the people who followed him were like "sheep without a shepherd". Today's reading gives God's perspective on such failed leadership: Corrupt leaders will ultimately face the consequences of their actions, and God will send "responsible shepherds" - especially the descendant of David - to care

for and heal God's people. Jeremiah's prophecy - which we read today - is a strong word of judgment against corrupt leaders, but it's also a word of hope for those who suffer as a result of such failed authority. Both Jesus himself, in the claims he makes about himself, and the early Church as they followed Jesus, believed that God's promise of the coming good shepherd had been fulfilled in the Incarnate One.

We live in a world that is experiencing a crisis of leadership. Whether in the public, political realm or the private, family realm, we have all been affected in some way by the corruption and self-interest of those who were supposed to be caring for us. It's easy to get despondent as a result of this, but when we remember that our true shepherd is Christ, and that he welcomes us into God's household, we can rest in the knowledge that, whatever we may face, God strengthens and sustains us.

What does it mean for you today that Christ is your Good Shepherd?

**Practice for Today:** It is often really hard to give thanks when things are not going well, but hard times are when we most need to remember what we have to be thankful for. As we wrestle with the big challenges in our lives, and as we acknowledge our disappointment with those in authority over us, we can give thanks for the Good Shepherd who welcomes us into God's household. Try and be thankful throughout today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Thank you, Good Shepherd, for your welcome, your guidance and your care for me.

### **Monday 20 July 2015**

**Reading:** 2 Samuel 7:18-29

**Reflection:** One of Sunday's readings was God's promise to David, through the prophet Nathan, that David's dynasty would last forever. This promise became a significant part of Israel's hope in the coming Messiah. They believed that a descendant of David's would come and liberate them, care for them and rule over them wisely. As we have noted, Jesus is portrayed in the Gospels as the fulfilment of this promise - the awaited descendant of David. In today's reading we get a glimpse into David's response to God's promise. The prayer that is recorded here is filled with amazement, humility, praise, celebration, thanksgiving, and acceptance of God's call.

David was not perfect - his motives were often mixed and he sometimes allowed his personal desires to get in the way of his calling - but this prayer reveals a significant difference between David and his predecessor, Saul. Where Saul became arrogant and rebellious as his power went to his head, David somehow managed to retain some humility and a deep sense of submission to God. Somehow David continued to recognise that everything he had and everything he had become was pure gift - and he received God's grace and blessing with an open and humble heart.

What gifts are there in your life? How do you respond to these gifts - and to the

tough times you may face? How can you maintain both your humility and your trust today?

**Practice for Today:** A good way to keep ourselves in perspective and nurture a humble heart is the practice of praise. As we focus on who God is, we are reminded of our true place - the place of humility and submission - and we are able to recognise the gift that our lives really are. Try it today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** I praise you, O God, because all that I have and am is a gift of your grace.

### **Tuesday 21 July 2015**

**Reading:** Psalm 100

**Reflection:** Today's reading is a well-known Psalm of celebration of thanksgiving. In it, the psalmist encourages God's people to worship and to give thanks in God's Temple because of all that God has done. God made each one of us; God is our shepherd and we are God's flock (as Jesus reminded us on Sunday); God is good and God's love is unfailing and eternal. When we remember all of these truths about God it's hard not to respond in celebration!

It doesn't always feel like God is good, though. We all know times when we have felt abandoned by God and when we haven't experienced God's love and goodness. It's important in those tough times to remember both God's promises, and our previous experiences of God's goodness. When we commit to celebration and thanksgiving, even in dark times, we discover the truth of this Psalm, and we remember that we have experienced God just as the psalmist describes. The key is to keep reminding ourselves of God's presence and grace, even when we don't experience them in the moment.

How have you experienced God's unfailing love and faithful grace in your life?

**Practice for Today:** As in this Psalm, praise and thanksgiving often flow from remembering. When we take note of God's presence and activity in our lives, and when we remember what God has done for us, we are able to celebrate even in our suffering. Take time today to remember God's grace in your life and nurture a spirit of celebration through the day.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** I remember and celebrate all the times when your gracious presence has blessed me, O God.

### **Wednesday 22 July 2015**

**Reading:** Luke 15:1-7

**Reflection:** Jesus offended the religious people of his day because he spent time and ate with "notorious sinners". But, Jesus knew that those who feel secure in their self-righteousness can't open themselves to God's grace, because they don't think they need it. Rather, it is those who feel lost (like sheep without a shepherd), and who know their brokenness, who are eager to be touched and healed by God's grace. It is to these lost sheep that Jesus came.

The truth is that we are all lost and broken on some level. This is what the religious people couldn't admit. We all fail others and ourselves. We all harbour destructive feelings and attitudes. We all insist on our own way at the expense of justice and love. When we pretend that we have no brokenness, we can't be healed. When we pretend that we're not at all lost, we can't be found. But, when we admit our need, and open ourselves to Christ's grace, we are healed and found a little more each day.

Where, in your life, are you still a little lost and broken?

**Practice for Today:** Confession is a wonderful gift that frees us to admit our need of God's grace, and opens us to receive it. Today, take some time to confess your brokenness and lostness - and your self-righteousness - and open yourself to God's forgiving grace.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Though I am lost and broken, you find me and restore me, Jesus.

### **Thursday 23 July 2015**

**Reading:** Colossians 1:9-14

**Reflection:** This Sunday the Lectionary moves from Mark's Gospel to John, and explores two well-known events: the feeding of the crowd and Jesus walking on water to save his disciples from a storm. There are resonances here with other readings we've already explored this year, but the focus of the week starting on Sunday is on choosing the values by which we live - self-interest or faith.

With this in mind, today's reading is a beautiful prayer of St. Paul for a church that he loved dearly. In it, the apostle prays that the believers will orient their lives around God's will and God's love. He asks that God will strengthen them to live faithfully, and prays that they will know the joy of living in God's Realm. It's a passionate plea for God's people to know life at its best, and to find the strength and courage they need to stay faithful to God's ways. It's a prayer we can claim for ourselves today, because God desires the same abundant life for us.

Read the prayer again, but put your own name in place of the "you" in each sentence. How does this speak to you today?

**Practice for Today:** When we pray for others and ourselves we are reminded of God's values and purposes, and we hear again God's call to live like Jesus. Furthermore, prayer opens us to the power of God's Spirit to keep us faithful. With this in mind, make today a day of prayer.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** Teach me your ways, O God, and give me the strength to live them today.

### **Friday 24 July 2015**

**Reading:** Psalm 145:10-18

**Reflection:** The words of this Psalm are filled with thanksgiving and praise for the God who is faithful and glorious and who provides for all living things. It's a bold

and inspiring proclamation, even though, as we look around us, we might be tempted to doubt its truth. If God provides, we might ask ourselves, why is there so much poverty in our world? Why has God not satisfied “the hunger and thirst of every living thing” as this Psalm claims?

If we look a little closer, though, we soon discover that God actually has provided enough for every living thing. We live in an abundant world in which there is more than enough for every person and creature on the planet. It is human greed and self-interest that has caused some to have far more than they need and others to have too little. As Gandhi said, “There is enough [in this world] for everybody’s need, but not enough for anybody’s greed.” In the coming week we will be faced with a choice: to live in faith as Jesus did, or to live in self-interest as David did when he put his own lust above the life of one of his soldiers. When we choose to be controlled by our lusts, our greed and our self-interest, we create need, grief and suffering for others. It is because we have failed to live faithfully and generously that there is poverty and homelessness in our world. That’s why it is so important, as this Psalm says, that we stay close to God by calling on God in truth - and that means to follow God’s gracious, generous and compassionate ways.

Today, why not celebrate God’s gift of an abundant earth, and seek to share what you have with others. There may well be someone who needs you to be a channel of God’s provision today.

**Practice for Today:** The practice of giving is a simple but profound act in which we remember and trust God’s abundant provision, and share what we have with others so that we all may have enough. It’s a commitment to “live simply so that others may simply live.” Try it today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** I celebrate your abundant world, O God, and share abundance wherever I can.

### **Saturday 25 July 2015**

**Reading:** John 4:31-38

**Reflection:** Tomorrow’s Gospel reading is about feeding crowds with meagre rations. This story may seem to be about food, but it’s actually about living as God requires, in generous compassion and faithful service - like the boy who shared his lunch with others. In today’s reading we come into the middle of a story in which Jesus has been leading an outcast Samaritan woman to new life and faith. After a compassionate and challenging conversation with her, Jesus’ disciples return from the nearby village where they have gone to buy food, and they urge him to eat something. Jesus’ response is startling: “My nourishment comes from doing the will of God.” Leading others to life and freedom and faith feeds Jesus’ soul, and, as Jesus shows in this discourse, it feeds ours as well. We are called to be “harvesters” reaping the fruit of life, liberation, justice, peace and faith as we serve those around us.

The challenging truth that Jesus offers us today is this: service may sound like a

tough thing to do, but there is actually nothing that feeds our souls more than serving, loving and liberating others. Can you believe this today? How can you “feed” on doing God’s work in your own life?

**Practice for Today:** The practice of compassion - of sharing in the grief and suffering of others - is an important Christian discipline. While we may think that we’re the ones doing the giving in these moments, we soon discover that we receive far more than we give. Try and live as compassionately as you can today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** My food, O God, is to do your compassionate, life-giving will.

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