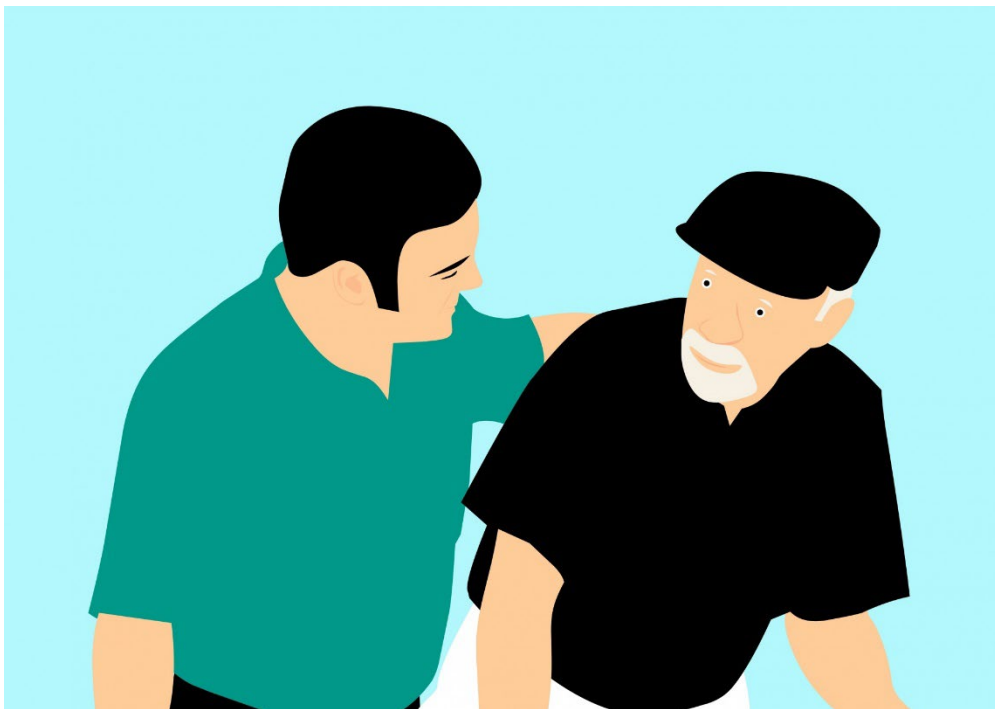




Order of Service



23 April 2023
10 am



Worship led by:
Rev Dr AJ Groenewald
Organist Martin Petty and the choir.

Gathering of God's People

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.

Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.

Words of welcome and announcements.

Good morning and welcome to our service

5 May 2023 Pre coronation two-course meal with wine, by Mackenzies. The evening will start promptly: **7:00 for 7:15pm. [Note the earlier start time!]** The cost is **£22 per person**. To reserve places and order your tickets for this special programme, please book and pay in person after the Sunday service in St Joseph's.

Fresh start collection 12 to 14 May 2023 10-12 noon ...all household goodies and products in good condition please.

Now let us Worship the TRUE and only Almighty God Together

Call to worship

Minister: Lord Jesus Christ, as you have
come to us:

All: We are witnesses to your love.

Minister: Open our minds to
understand your love

All: We are witnesses to your love.

Beloved, I greet you in the Name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen

MP 315 **I will sing the wondrous story.**

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

Lord, you are our shepherd, we shall not be in want.

You make us lie down in green pastures,
you lead us beside quiet waters,
you restore our souls.

You guide us in paths of righteousness for
your name's sake.

Even though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

we will fear no evil, for you are with us;
your rod and your staff, they comfort us.
You prepare a table before us
in the presence of our enemies.
You anoint our heads with oil; our cup
overflows.
May your goodness and love follow us
all the days of our life,
As we seek your presence through your Word
and Holy Spirit
As we dwell in your house forever.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our
debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the
kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever.
Amen.

Reflecting on God's Word

Bible reading: Ezekiel 34:1-31

Reader: Margaret Forsyth

The Choir sings SGP 88 “O what a gift what wonderful gift “

All sing last chorus:

O what gift, what a wonderful gift!

Who can tell the wonders of the Lord?

Let us open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts;

it is Christ the Lord it is He!

Reflection

¹¹ “For this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. ¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

Ezekiel was a prophet who had to represent God in a very unstable time in the history of the

Judean people. In those days they referred to their kings and leaders as shepherds. In our reading the shepherds, the kings of Judea were only looking after themselves and not the flock of God. In the year 597 BC King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon captured Jerusalem taking many of the leading citizens of Jerusalem as hostages to Babylon, among whom was Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi. They were resettled at a place called Tel Abib (which means 'mound of the flood') on the river Chebar, one of the stream canals of the Euphrates River southeast of Babylon, near the ancient city of Nippur. It was here that Ezekiel received his call as a prophet of the Lord approximately in 593 BC.

Ezekiel did not have a very easy task as a prophet of God. Once he was called he was so

overwhelmed that the only thing he did was to sit for seven days. He had to do strange things like eating a book roll as a symbol of God's action.

From the time of his call and until the final fall of Jerusalem in 586/7 BC, he was a virtual recluse in his house and afflicted with fits of dumbness and immobility. When his wife suddenly died, he was also not allowed to show his grief in any way. He had to go on as if nothing has happened because her sudden death was a symbol of the sudden destruction of God's temple in Jerusalem.

His contemporaries viewed him as somewhat of an eccentric. It was only in retrospect that his

true greatness was recognized and his words were preserved for posterity.

In our reading we can almost hear his passion as he speaks on God's behalf. He is telling the exiles in Babylon that it all happened because the shepherds of Judea, the King and his leaders did not bother to listen to God, and take care of his sheep. After Josiah the last kings of Judah were all corrupt. They led the nation to spiritual and political ruin. The condemnation against these shepherds is in vv. 1–6:

- they did not seek to meet the needs of the people but only used the people for their own selfish ends;
- they did not take special care of those in need, the helpless members of society.

- they met weakness and injury with callous cruelty;
- the people wandered from the Lord and became a prey to idolatry and immorality because of a lack of positive moral or spiritual leadership

But now the Lord God will act. He will remove the corrupt shepherds and become their one and only TRUE shepherd. It was not unusual for the people to think of God as their shepherd. He will feed them with the greenest pastures, and will quench their thirst with the most peaceful and cleanest streams of water. He will bless them and take care of them. They must put their trust in Him alone. He is the only one who is in charge of their lives. As a faithful shepherd he will look after all their needs.

He promises them a covenant of peace. The large number of “I wills” in 34:10–29 suggests God’s determination personally to be involved in the lives and destinies of his people. There will be showers at the right season that produce bountiful crops. The people will dwell in security and freedom. There will be no famine or threats from enemies. The people will know that God, their Shepherd, is with them and that Israel his flock is his people.

God will also appoint his servant David to be his representative on earth. The use of “my servant David” represents the hope of a future resurrection of the golden age of Israel. David was characterized as a man after God’s own heart. God will in future appoint a new leader

for them like David who will tend His flock as His shepherd and be a prince among them.

I think the message was quite clear to everyone who heard it the first time: The leaders of the world have feet of clay. They are not trustworthy. Therefore the people of Judah need to look at God for His leadership. They must travel with Him and rely on His words of promise. He is the Good Shepherd that knows them by heart! He will give them a new future.

I think this is also a timely message for us all. We have so much more evidence than the exiles in Babylon of what God really can do.

I mean to say they did not know in 587 BC that God would indeed free them and allow them to

go back to Judea. They did not know that God will come to earth and show in Jesus Christ what a Good Shepherd really does. God showed In Jesus Christ our new covenant of peace.

We can indeed lie down in green pastures because we received all that we need, redemption, and spiritual guidance through his Holy Spirit. He reached out to you and me while we were wandering like lost sheep in the hills of darkness and despair. He healed us from all the wounds sin caused us. He gave us a new future of hope.

In this time we live in maybe we must focus again on God and what He requires from us.

- If you are appointed as a leader in society, you must tend to his flock as best as you can.
- If you are a church elder, you must tend to your sheep in your district as best you can.
- If you are a member of the congregation, you must look out for all the lost sheep and tell them about the Good Shepherd.
- If you are sitting in this church this morning and are experiencing feelings of being lost and lonely, if you are feeling as if you have lost your way, the Good Shepherd is here and He is inviting you to his table to be fed and nourished again through his presence and spiritual food.
- If you are sitting in this church and you feel as if your sins and your past is too much to bear any longer – bring it to the Good

Shepherd. He has already wiped away all your sins and transgressions. He is saying to you this morning: you are forgiven!

Maybe we must change our outlook and focus again on God.

I have written an article in the latest Blether about the things that we are not seeing ... or hearing... when I apply this to all talks and articles about the Mission plan, I do not see a lot of reference to the Almighty God and what He can do.

This prompts me to read you the edict of the Presbytery announcing a meeting whereby we

are called to attend to approve the “amended Presbytery plan”.

It is interesting to note that in the world of statistics - and I am not standing here pretending that I know everything about qualitative and quantitative research methods or algorithms or linear regression... - with the help of looking at patterns, things/results can be predicted. BUT in studying the statistics there is two variables that needs to be taken in account namely the dependent and independent variables.

So for instance when they want to know when best to plant some crops, they will look at the rainfall of the year but taken into account the

dependant variable namely the rain that can only be from GOD.

It seems as if we all forget that this church is part of the invisible church of Jesus Christ. It is not a man-made concept or human institution but founded by Jesus Christ.

He is the TRUE Shepherd who governs His Church through HIS word and HOLY Spirit. Everything we do on this campus and beyond is to WITNESS that He is our LORD and Saviour. Everything we do and say is to model HIS behaviour of LOVE, Peace, HOPE and forgiveness.

We seem to forget or taken into consideration that GOD is still in charge of HIS church and

HIS ministers whom HE has called. So whatever we predict - whatever we write or say or think about the future of Balerno Parish church in relation to the radical action plan, we must start with talking about GOD first. We need to start each conversation by prayerfully asking GOD what HE wants us to do. What is HIS will for us at this time?

He is the Shepherd God – He knows what we need.

Maybe we must stop trusting the worldly leaders and look to God as our Shepherd for his guidance. Maybe we must stop investing all our time and money in the things that does not really matter and give it to our Good Shepherd.

Yes maybe this is the time that we focus again on God's sovereignty and power.

We are no longer scattered sheep without a leader. God is looking after us.

Amen

CH4 533

Will you come and follow me?

Responding to God's word

Prayer of thanksgiving: Margaret Black

CH4 559

There is a Redeemer.

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

Go now in love and peace to embody the good news of forgiveness for all people. You are witnesses of these things. In the name

of God our Father, Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit!

Sung Amen, Amen, Amen

Please remain standing as The Bible is removed.

You are invited to stay for tea and coffee which are served in the hall.

Intimations

Worship services

30 April 2023 at 10 am Worship Grant Gordon will be leading the worship.

7 May 2023 at 10 am Worship

14 May 2023 Sport Sunday with all the Sport clubs in Balerno

21 May 2023 Pentecost Sunday 10 am Worship

THANKS TO YOU... Thank you for all your

generous contributions towards the ministry

and mission of the Church. Gift Aid envelopes

are available at the end of each row or from the Treasurer after the Service.

Sort code 83 - 19 - 15
Account 00119731
Balerno Church of Scotland