

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
24th May 2022**

READINGS

GOD is my shepherd!
I don't need a thing.
You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.
True to your word,
you let me catch my breath
and send me in the right direction.
Even when the way goes through
The Valley of Death,
I'm not afraid
when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook
makes me feel secure.
You serve me a glorious dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.
Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
Until I'm back home in the house of GOD
for the rest of my life.

Psalm 23 (The Message Translation)

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30 (N.I.V. Translation)

REFLECTION

A little boy was out helping his father with the garden work. His Dad asked the wee lad to pick up the rocks in a certain area of the garden. A little later the father looked over and saw him struggling to pull up a huge rock buried in the ground.

As his Dad watched, the lad struggled and struggled but could not budge the rock. Finally, he gave up and said, "I can't do it, Dad."

His father asked, "Did you use all of the strength you've got?"

The boy looked hurt and said, "Yes, Dad. I used every ounce of strength I have."

His father smiled and said, "No you didn't because you tried to do it on your own, and you didn't ask me to help. With my strength to help maybe we can lift the rock!"

The father walked over and then the two of them pulled that big rock out of the dirt.

There is also a wonderful legend concerning the quiet years of Jesus, the years prior to his visible ministry, when he was growing up as a carpenter's son in Nazareth. I have no idea if the story is true! The legend claims that Jesus, the carpenter like his father before him, was one of the master yoke-makers in the Nazareth area. People came from miles around for a yoke, hand carved and crafted by Jesus, son of Joseph.

When customers arrived with their team of oxen Jesus would spend considerable time measuring the team, their height, the width, the space between them, and the size of their shoulders. Within a week, the team would be brought back, and he would carefully place the newly made yoke over the shoulders, watching for rough places, smoothing out the edges and fitting them perfectly to this particular team of oxen. Each yoke was unique and perfectly designed to bear the load.

Later in his ministry when Jesus described our faith as like a yoke. He was thinking back to his own experience as a carpenter's son. To the unique yokes that he and his father made. That's the yoke Jesus invites us to take.

It's always easy to misunderstand this verse and folk think that an easy yoke means one that is no bother to carry. But do not be misled by the word "easy," for its root word in Greek speaks directly of the tailor-made yokes: they were easy because they were "well-fitted."

The yoke Jesus invites us to take, the yoke that brings rest to weary souls, is one that is made exactly to our lives and hearts. The yoke he invites us to wear fits us well, does not rub us nor cause us to develop sore spirits.

And yoke he invited us to bear is designed for two, just like those yokes in the carpenter's shop. For our yoke-partner is none other than Christ himself. He bears our burdens with us.

Amen

PRAYER

God with us
With us from sunrise to sunset
With us through the hours of the night
God ever present.
Thank you for your constant companionship.

Thank you that you do leave us on our own
Alone to face the challenges of life,
Alone to live out the trials of faith.
You are with us
To help bear the load
To comfort
And to lift up,
To rejoice and to build up

May we take up your yoke Lord,
Live the life you call us too,
Honour you with words and actions,
And show your love in our actions and our words.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

