

## Something Different

### The Lord is my shepherd

This week's Something Different is very different.  
This is the first time we've tried something like this.

Many of you will be familiar with the Godly Play stories.  
You sit quietly and listen as a story is told to you, slowly and gently.  
You watch while it is acted out in front of you using lovely handmade wooden figures.  
It's very calm, very thoughtful.

Very simple.

But it can give amazing insight into the story.  
It can show you how you are part of the story.

We're not able to do this at the moment so instead here is a story to read and  
pictures to look at.

Take your time over this.  
Chose a time and place where you won't be disturbed.  
Maybe take the pages one at a time.

Enjoy!

## A Godly Play approach to The Lord is my shepherd.

Read the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm to yourself. Now read it aloud and slow yourself down.

Read each verse again slowly, pausing as you go to let familiar words sink in.

Look at picture 1: The Lord is my shepherd.



Consider: what does that mean for you? Does it make you feel protected or herded?

Do you feel calm and cared for?

A shepherd would lay down in front of his sheep at night literally being the gate to keep the sheep safe. Sit and trust that Jesus, our shepherd is protecting us at all times.

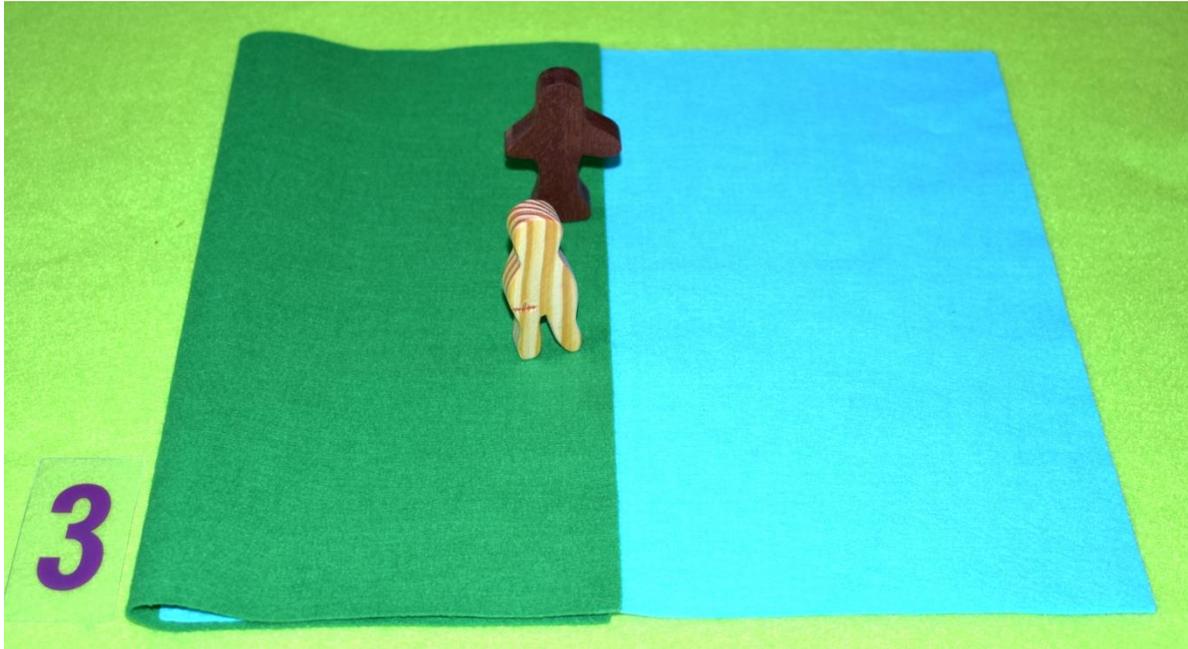
Look at picture 2: He makes me lie down in green pastures.



Consider: where are the good green pastures for you? Is it with people you love, or the places you like to be? Are green pastures ministries at church bringing blessings or when you share communion in a service?

Whatever our good pastures are, we can be assured that we know when we are blessed by the Lord. In spite of circumstances, God has good times, spiritual blessings and joy in His creation.

Look at picture 3: He leads me beside still waters.



Consider: Where do you go to be quiet and still? Can you take yourself there for rest now even if that is not physically possible? What helps you be still with God? Does water make you feel calm within or afraid? Do you prefer to look at water or experience being in it, or even on it?

It is still possible as I write, to walk by the river and the canal, taking in God's beauty in the spring sunshine. The canal is sporting amazing fish now that pollution levels have dropped and the waters are still and clear because of the lack of boats. Water refreshes us in so many ways and Jesus reminds us that only He can give us life giving water that will never run out.

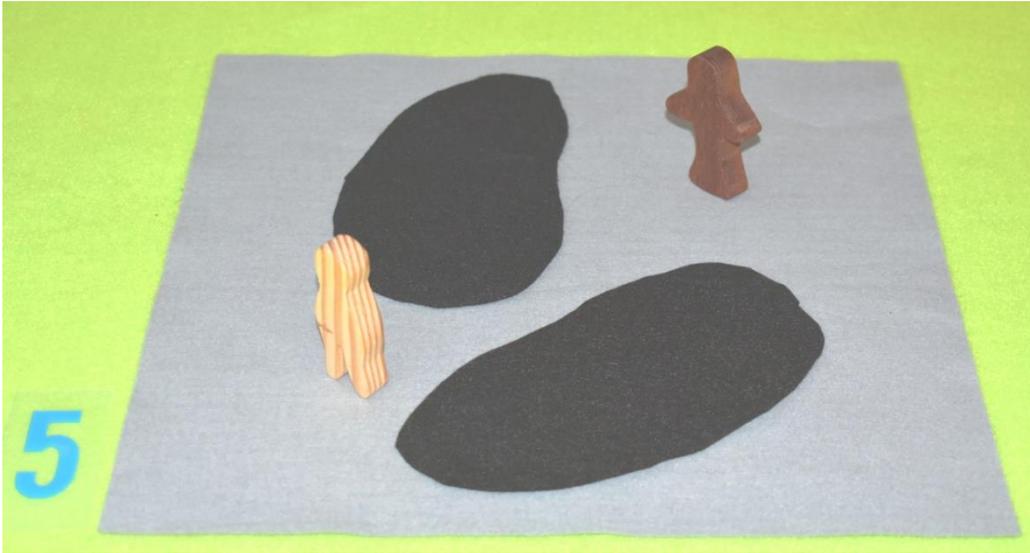
Look at picture 4: He guides me in the paths of righteousness.



Consider: God wishes us to draw closer to Him at all times. We are exhorted to pray in all circumstances and to grow in the faith that we proclaim. Where do you like to pray? Have you carved out a space in your busy household where you can be with the Lord? What do you want to share with Jesus now? Bring your thanks and praise in the knowledge that God hears your prayers

Jesus sets a straight path before us and encourages us along the way. We have the word of God to encourage us and keep us on a straight path. Our regular reading of the Bible will keep us rooted in our faith. Some of us have Bible study groups to support us in this learning journey or daily notes. We may even have friends brave enough to set us right when we have strayed too far and we should thank God for the people He puts in our lives to help and support us.

Look at picture 5: The valley of the shadow.



Consider: Nobody is promised that the life of a Christian will be easy or without hardship of some kind. What particular struggles do you face right now? What fears threaten to overwhelm you? Do you feel that your path is especially treacherous at the moment? Can you see Jesus with arms outstretched encouraging you through your rocky paths?

Life simply throws things at us and as people of faith we have the wonderful privilege of taking our troubles to God. Whatever worry and angst you face presently, mentally take it to the foot of the cross and lay it there. Give it to Jesus to deal with and rest in the knowledge that God can do all things and walks with us in our troubles

Look at picture 6: You prepare a table before me.



Consider: Sometimes we forget the sheer beauty and provision God sets before us. It is like a table groaning with food at a feast. So many of us are missing our families and church friends. We miss celebrating birthdays, weddings and special occasions. Who would you be with right now if you could choose? Where would you celebrate with friends? What provision do you bring to God's service?

The enforced solitude is tending to remind us of missed gatherings. We might be able to see one another through Zoom or Skype, or hear each other through telephone conversations, but we know it is not the same. If you are feeling particularly isolated or lonely, allow the feeling that Jesus is comforting you and wrapping His arms around you. He whispers that you are precious in His sight and these times will pass.

Look at picture 7: Surely goodness and love will follow me.



Consider: Where do you experience goodness or love? Where would you like to see more of this blessing? To whom can you show God's love at the moment? How do you wish to express thanks for the love God has shown you?

Many of us are being blessed by words of loving comfort and concern. Neighbours shopping for each other and people sharing what they might have kept for themselves. There seems to be a general goodwill that we often only experience temporarily and it is heart warming. Millions have volunteered to get food to the vulnerable and elderly and in our own area; neighbours arrange to sit outside at regular times so that those living alone get normal contact. Each Thursday our street rings with the sound of clapping and cheering for all the key workers. These times bring us new opportunities to share the goodness we have received in the Gospel of Jesus' saving grace.

## Now respond to the Psalm.

Read the psalm again perhaps using a different version. Picture yourself in all the verses. Imagine the feeling of walking with God so closely that nothing seems to trouble you.

Respond by creating art works about this psalm. Perhaps attempt to write your own 23rd psalm set in today's unusual circumstances and send it in to Dot to bless us all.

Get a bowl of water and set it beside you. Ponder how peaceful it is just looking at the still clear waters. Maybe walk by water today if it is safe for you to do so.

Sing your favourite hymn or song of praise. If you feel shy about doing this, then you can always look up the song on YouTube and listen or sing along.

There is the most beautiful version of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm by Stuart Townend on YouTube. There is one with the back drop of a river and the words for you to sing along. Sit and listen and allow yourself to be blessed. Find other versions and meditate on the words of blessing that are there for you.