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Excerpts from **Pray as you Go** by *Revd Helen Brown*

Excerpts from **Pray as you go** – please note that I have included contributions from various members of this face book group without naming them.

The Lord's Prayer

Now for the 3rd section on the Lord's Prayer:

Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.

Bread stands for the daily nourishment of food. Of course, on a spiritual level this is the intake of all our spiritual and material needs. Without this nourishment which the Lord gives us we would be powerless to do anything. Much like our body would be if we didn't eat. In acknowledging that our sustenance comes from the Lord we are recognising that He is the only source of real power. We take bread in the Holy Supper to represent God's Love - His precious Love which nourishes us so deeply. It is this Love which fills us but which when shared with

others really grows within us.

Asking the Lord to 'forgive us our debts', we, again, are realising our need of the Lord. He works through us but this is not a need on his part. When you think about it, the Lord uses us in a powerful way to benefit others and his Kingdom, through channelling his love. This is despite our failings in life.

How easy do you find it to forgive?

How many times have you prayed for forgiveness for yourself?

Do you feel God's Love working within you?

If we do not learn to forgive; our ability to love would turn to hatred and jealousy. In order to truly channel the Lord's love to others; to promote healing in this world of ours, then we need to endeavour to be forgiving.

"Give us grace for today". I am willing and ready to receive and freely give Presence, Love, Harmony to all You bring into my day. As I let go the past, let all judgement evaporate, as I ask for forgiveness and accept forgiveness, seeing only Love reflecting Love.

Give us this day our daily bread

Food given freely without demand,

Food for the next step on our path towards inner peace and joy.

Food that is needed and fits the situation and inner emptiness we experience *now*.

Can we see in ordinary everyday thoughtfulness and kind act,
the bread of loving goodness that is given?

Wholesome food for our souls.

O Saviour of my soul,

You lift me up out of the mess I make when left to myself.

And forgive.

You encompass me with love and mercy, no matter what I have done.

My need for forgiveness humbles my pride.

The fruit of this painful learning is,

that I can choose to extend this spirit of forgiveness to those who have hurt and wronged me.

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown.

But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.’ Luke 7:47

This is the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/276157511029041>

The LORD is our shepherd; we shall not be in want *by Revd Jack Dunion*

Psalm 23:1-3 *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.”*

As we enter into a new year filled with uncertainty we can only guess what may lie ahead of us in 2022. Yet we still need to make plans for the year ahead. How then might we best deal with the high degree of uncertainty we are currently facing?

One way, is to look with dread on what may or may not happen in the months ahead. Many people take this approach to life. It’s something I think is illustrated well in a poem by Robert Burns, namely *“To a mouse”*. If the title doesn’t ring a bell, then you may be more familiar with this much spoken quote from the poem: *“the best laid plans O mice & men”*.

In his poem Burns depicts a farmer out ploughing a field with his hired hand working ahead of him clearing the long grass with the sickle. The hired hand is about to hack away at a mouse’s nest woven into the roots of the long grass. But the farmer stops him in his tracks. He does so out of a sense of empathy as he identifies with the mouse’s position. He knows that he himself could plan out his own future, put his time and energy into building a life for himself and his family, but at any time disaster could strike and wreck all his plans.

This was exactly what was about to happen to this mouse as the sickle descended upon its home. It’s what Burns meant in saying *“the best laid plans O mice & men”*. But he went further. Unlike himself, the mouse was blissfully unaware of the pending danger. He writes *“still, though art blessed compared wi me, the present only touches thee. But och, I backwards cast my eye on prospects drear, and forward though I canna see, I guess and fear”*. In other words, the mouse was better off than he was. Because, unlike the mouse, human beings can look forward and guess what disasters might lay ahead. We often use foresight to worry ourselves about what might happen in the future. It’s because we human beings have a reasoning faculty, one which no other species of animal on earth has. And having this ability we tend to look ahead and worry about what ‘might’ happen.

So, what alternative can the church offer based on the Word of God as we move into a New year filled with so much uncertainty? Well, Psalm 23 for a start offers us an alternative strategy to guessing and worrying about what ‘might’ happen in the future.

It's perhaps the best known and the best loved Psalm. In fact, it's thought by many that Psalm 23 is the best poem ever written, myself included! It's the image of God leading His people as a shepherd. He leads us as the shepherd leads the flock. The thought of being led by someone who loves us dearly on whom we can completely rely and in whom we trust is in itself a help in easing any worries we may have moving forward. We can put our lives in the hands of our shepherd.

In fact, if we read the whole Psalm we will find that it's the Lord who does almost everything suggested in the Psalm. The only thing required of us is to walk through the valley of the shadow of death with confidence. It's the Lord who does the work of leading us to the best pastures, or beside the quiet waters and it is He who restores our souls. These are all images which convey great hope in a secure and peace filled future for anyone who chooses to follow the Lord. Even when things get difficult in life and we need to walk through the dark valleys as it were, we need fear no evil, for He is with us and will lead us through safely to a better place. Even on the way through, in the midst of all our troubles, He prepares a table for us, reassuring us that we have nothing to fear if and when we are allowing Him to lead us. Even during the most difficult parts of life's journey He sets a table before us in the very midst of our enemies. And, He fills our cup to overflowing. He feeds us spiritually so we have the strength to go on and not be drawn into whatever may be going on around us. And He fills our understanding with truth to guide us along a safe path to life.

In the gospels too the Lord highlights the futility of unnecessary worry about what may or may not happen in the future. He points out the futile nature of this in Luke's gospel: *"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?"* (Luke 12:25,26). This worry about the morrow is what Burns' poem to a mouse refers to. Yes, he found himself in the same position as the mouse. But he added to his trouble the futility of worrying about the bad things that might happen. In this poem Burns sees his powers of reasoning as a disadvantage because he is describing things from the worldly perspective.

However, was he perhaps unaware that reasoning has a much higher use than simply looking ahead with dread? Our reasoning also has an inner use which can act as a channel through which a more heavenly light may shine. A light which can illuminate the natural mind and helps us make more sense of life's apparent misfortunes. Our reasoning in this respect is a bit like the Greek God Janus who was the God of gates and doors. Janus was often depicted on coins as having two faces, one looking back the other looking forward. It's actually where the word January comes from. In January we look back at the past year and forward to the year ahead. This is also where the word janitor comes from. A janitor opens doors to let people in, and closes them after they leave. Human reasoning performs a similar function. It serves as a doorway between that which is going on in the world around us and that which is going on in our spirit.

Going forward into the New Year we can either put all our focus on the world out there and reason about it in the dim light of this world. Or, we can focus on that which the

Lord provides for us from within. The Lord Himself tells us that He is the light of the world (John 8:12). Burns speaks of the natural, which causes us to worry for no apparent reason and to no avail. The Lord however, prescribes for us a spiritual outlook which not only helps us overcome any worries we may have about our future, but also strengthens our faith and encourages us to seek eternal benefits instead.

This is partially what is meant in Psalm 23 by the Lord preparing a table in the presence of our enemies. Our enemies would enflame any worry or fear we may have regarding what might happen in the future. The table the Lord prepares for us is laid out with spiritual food from His Word. The Lord said in John 6:27 *“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life”*. If we can keep our focus on the Lord, allowing Him to lead us, we can go forward safe under His care, despite any appearances to the contrary. Inwardly we can know and trust that He would never let anything happen to our spirit, which is the part of us that really matters! If and when we gain such inner confidence in His ability to lead us then we stay at peace inside, despite what may be going on in the world around us. Inwardly, a table is prepared for us in the midst of any worldly troubles we may experience, even when the world seems to be going mad all around us.

So, in the year ahead we have a choice. We can use our powers of reasoning to look ahead, guess and fear. Or, we can seek to live by the eternal truths of the Word, putting our trust in the Lord's promise of an eternal future for all those who follow Him. It is they alone who genuinely say in their heart of hearts:

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.”

Revd Jack Dunion