



Reflections on Psalm 23

"Loving God who promises to meet all our needs..."

By Karen Stallard, Union Chapel Minister

Why is it that sometimes we feel hungry, thirsty, and that sometimes there are starving people in this world who struggle even to draw fresh water?

Perhaps it is because we have not given much thought to meeting our own needs; or perhaps it is because we have been so preoccupied with ourselves that we have neglected the needs of others.

Thank you that you have given us a world in which we can grow food enough to feed the population. Help us to feed ourselves well and to share what we have generously.

We pray for those who are starving and who are out of our reach, may they know a long arm of provision when food is scarce.

O gracious God hear our prayer

Loving God who promises to meet all our needs...

Why is it that we can become so tired and weary?

Perhaps it is because we have not understood the freedom you have given us to rest in the darkness and to enjoy a day of rest. Perhaps it is because we demand from ourselves and others more than we were made to give and so we become weary.

Thank you that you have given us day and night, times to work and times to rest. Help us to stop when we need to, help us to sit and relax, to laugh and be care free, and help us to give others permission to do the same as well. Forgive us when we force others into working when they need to rest. Forgive us for abusing the precious time you have given us. We pray for those who cannot sleep, may they find peace enough to enter into that dream like state which makes all things bearable again.

O gracious God hear our prayer

Loving God who promises to meet all our needs...

Why is it that we feel lonely sometimes?



Perhaps it is because we do not trust anyone enough to become close and intimate, perhaps it is because we avoid those relationships where our emotional needs might be met because we are afraid of being abandoned.

Thank you that whether we walk through the valley of light and joy, or darkness and despair we can be assured that you are with us; help us to find other companions on the way who will relive our loneliness and provide the intimacy which helps us feel whole. We pray for those who are on their own and isolated often unseen and forgotten, may they know your seeing and loving presence in their lives.

O gracious God hear our prayer

Loving God who promises to meet all our needs...

Why is it we feel anxious sometimes?

Perhaps it is because we are facing things we are frightened about, and sometimes we make others feel anxious because they feel frightened of us! Our anxieties are a way of telling us we are frightened of certain things.

Thank you that you walk with us in our fears, that even in our darkest moments you understand how we feel. Thank you that you are not a God who avoids pain and suffering, but understands fully the horror we can often face. We pray that you would help us to attend to our fears, to relieve our anxiety and understand that nothing can destroy our spirits. We pray for those who live in fear of their lives daily through war and violence: provide for them the comfort they need and enable them to escape the violence when there is an open door.

O gracious God hear our prayer

Loving God who promises to meet all our needs...

Why is it we feel angry sometimes?

Perhaps it is because in the past we have been very hurt, wounded by strangers and by those who we love. Perhaps we have suffered injustice and oppression, perhaps we have shut away that part of ourselves which is unacceptable to the world and we are angry that we are so split.

Thank you that anger can tell us something about our own stories, thank you for the times when a person's anger can change something which is oppressive and unjust into something liberating. We pray that you would help us turn our anger into something liberating rather than something destructive. May we learn how to be a people who, rather than perpetuating the wounds turn our energy into healing the



wounds. We pray for those who have every right to be murderously angry because of the pain inflicted on them, may you bring them to a place of rest and healing and may they know that you will judge that which has caused such pain.

O gracious God hear our prayer. Amen