

Thought for the Day 28th April - Psalms 93 & 23 - Robert Loane

Psalm 93

¹ The Lord is king, and hath put on glorious apparel: The Lord hath put on his apparel, and girded himself with strength.

² He hath made the round world so sure that it cannot be moved.

³ Ever since the world began hath thy seat been prepared: thou art from everlasting.

⁴ The floods are risen O Lord, the floods have lift up their voice: the floods lift up their waves.

⁵ The waves of the sea are mighty, and rage horribly: but yet the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier.

⁶ Thy testimonies, O Lord, are very sure: holiness becometh thy house for ever.

Psalm 23

¹ The Lord is my shepherd: therefore can I lack nothing.

² He shall feed me in a green pasture: and lead me forth beside the waters of comfort.

³ He shall convert my soul: and bring me forth in the paths of righteousness, for his Name's sake.

⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.

⁵ Thou shalt prepare a table before me against them that trouble me: thou hast anointed my head with oil, and my cup shall be full.

⁶ But thy loving kindness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

These words may not be the ones with which you are most familiar. They are taken from the version used in the Book of Common Prayer. They are an older translation than the Authorised Version but at times the language seems to me to paint a more vivid picture than later translations.

These two psalms fit together like the two sides of a coin. Both have six verses; both begin "The Lord is"; they start in security, contrasted with adversity; and both end looking forward to serenity in the "house of the Lord forever". One is largely in the future tense; the other in the present tense.

The 23rd psalm is more subjective, describing the poet's feelings of confidence in the shepherd. The first person pronoun "I" is prominent. The shepherd has forethought and care in providing for the needs of his flock. The sheep are valuable to the shepherd. The trust is maintained whilst passing through an unpleasant, even physically dangerous, place. The shepherd knows why they are going through there though the flock probably does not. He may not enjoy the route either.

But he knows what the goal is and why it is necessary to go that way. The subject changes in the last two verses from a sheep to a person who can rely on God's goodness and mercy and to dwelling with the Lord for eternity.

The obverse of the coin is the 93rd psalm. It is more objective about the Lord who is king. The pronoun "I" is not mentioned. It is about the Lord. He is dressed prepared for the role; he is powerful and mighty, he created the world, he is eternal. Present troubles do not faze him – he is mightier still.

Both finish looking forward to the time when we will be in the house of the Lord. Goodness and mercy will be our experience, but we need to remember that "holiness becometh thy house for ever".

God cares, and God is faithful

These psalms are a reminder to us of where our confidence should lie and why. At times of uncertainty, doubt and wondering what next and where next, I have found them to be a source of comfort and reassurance. Especially remembering that "the Lord, who dwelleth on high, is mightier".