

Our Gracious Queen

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[0 : 00] But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this evening, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, the book of Esther, and Esther chapter 4.

Esther chapter 4, and if we read again at verse 13. Esther 4 at verse 13. Then Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews.

For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place. But you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this.

And so on. As you know, God Save the Queen is our British national anthem.

And it's an anthem that's very, you could say, energizing and very emotive, especially when it's sung at the time of year when there's the Festival of Remembrance. I'm sure you see it on BBC One.

[1 : 21] It's the time of year when we're remembering the fallen soldiers and there's this Festival of Remembrance in the Royal Albert Hall. And they all sing God Save the Queen right at the end.

But the British national anthem, God Save the Queen, it was originally written in 1744. And it was written in tribute to the Queen Elizabeth's predecessor and ancestor, King George II.

With the original lyrics, they opened with the plea, God Save Great George the King. And of course, the lyrics have been adjusted throughout the years now to suit our female monarch.

God Save our gracious Queen. Long live our noble Queen. God Save the Queen. Send her victorious, happy and glorious. Long to reign over us.

God Save the Queen. But these well-known words, they're not only words of praise for our Queen, they're also words of prayer on behalf of our Queen.

[2 : 29] Because as you know, and as we've said today, we're exhorted and we're encouraged in Scripture to pray for our monarch, to pray for those in authority over us.

But you know, what's remarkable is that the words, God Save our gracious Queen, these words of praise and words of prayer, they've been answered. Because as we said even to the children this morning, Queen Elizabeth really is a gracious queen.

Not only in her character, her conduct and her conversation as monarch, but she's a gracious queen because she has come to experience and enjoy the grace of God through Jesus Christ.

And it's no secret to us that the Queen's faith in Christ is of the utmost importance to her. And that throughout her long reign and her many years of service, along with the numerous family struggles and scandals, and we've seen it all, we've read it all, we've heard it all, even the death of her husband recently and her deteriorating health.

All through all these things, throughout the last 70 years of her reign. The wonderful thing is, her faith hasn't faltered. Because Queen Elizabeth knows that she may be sovereign over our united kingdom and common wealth, but her faith makes her fully aware that there is a greater sovereign who reigns and who rules and who overrules in all things temporal and spiritual.

[4 : 03] She knows that Jesus is the King of kings and the Lord of lords, and He has all authority, all authority and all sovereignty in heaven and on earth.

And you know, when you come to look at this passage this evening, we see another gracious queen. We have Queen Elizabeth, who's a gracious queen.

But this evening, I want to draw your attention to another gracious queen in the Bible, Queen Esther. And I want us just to follow or follow the storyline of this book.

I want us to consider this gracious queen by following three headings. The place of the story, the plot of the story, and the providence of the story.

The place, the plot, and the providence of the story in the life of this gracious queen, Esther. So we look first of all at the place of the story.

[5 : 04] The place of this story about the gracious queen, Esther. Look at verse 10. We're told there that then Esther spoke to Hathach and commanded him to go to Mordecai and say, All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law to be put to death except the one to whom the king holds out the golden scepter so that he may live.

But as for me, I have not been called to come in to the king these thirty days. The story of this gracious queen is a unique story because, boys, God is not mentioned in this story. God is the one person who is not mentioned in the book of Esther. But even though God is not mentioned in the story of Esther, God is not absent. Rather, God, you can see him. He's everywhere present. And he's graciously working all things together for the good of his people and ultimately the glory of his own name. And for that reason, the place that this story has, it is important and integral to the greater story, the greater narrative of the story of redemption. Especially because the story of this gracious queen Esther, it's not actually set in the promised land of Israel. It's actually set in the problematic land of Persia.

[6 : 44] Because at that time, the Persian Empire, it had expanded and extended over 127 provinces, including the land of Israel.

So the Persian Empire, it had extended and expanded from India to Ethiopia. It covered most of the Middle East, including Israel, Babylon, Egypt, and parts of Africa.

The Persian Empire at that time was massive. And at the time, they were wanting to extend it even further, to expand it even more, to take over the whole known world.

But what's interesting is that the king at the time, King Ahasuerus, he had inherited this influential empire from his father.

His father was called Darius. And Darius had inherited this Persian Empire from his father, Cyrus. And those two names, Cyrus and Darius, they ought to be familiar to us.

[7 : 48] Because Cyrus and Darius, they were influential in the return of the Israelites and the restoration of the temple. And you know, this place and this period in history, it's fascinating.

Fascinating to follow the story of how the Lord was working in the lives of his people. Because in 605 BC, the Babylonian army, under the rule of King Nebuchadnezzar, they invaded.

They invaded Jerusalem. They invaded the southern kingdom of Judah. They entered into Jerusalem, and they took the Israelites captive into Babylon for 70 years.

Then in the summer of 586 BC, only 20 years into their 70-year exile in Babylon, the Babylonian army, they returned again. And they returned to destroy Jerusalem, to ransack the city, and to leave the temple in ruins.

Then about 50 years later, 538 BC, the Persian Empire overthrew the Babylonian Empire. And then a year later, 537 BC, King Cyrus, he was the king of Persia at the time.

[9 : 04] And he encouraged and he enabled the Israelites to return to the land of Israel and to restore the temple. And what's remarkable is that the Lord not only used King Cyrus to free the Israelites, he also used King Cyrus to fund the Israelites.

Because King Cyrus, he provided funding. He sent them back home with money to rebuild and to restore the temple on their return.

But sadly, out of the mass population of the Israelites who were first exiled into Babylon, only 50,000 of them returned to Israel to rebuild and restore their nation.

Many of them remained in Persia. And when this small remnant actually returned to Israel, it wasn't long until they ran into problems. And we saw that when we studied the book of Zechariah.

They ran into problems and the temple lay in ruins for 15 years. But it was towards that, the end of that 15-year period, that King Cyrus died.

[10 : 11] And his son Darius, he succeeded him to the throne of the Persian Empire. And in 520 BC, in the second year of Darius' reign, the Lord's prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, they both appeared on the scene.

They issued this call to repent and a call to rebuild. And according to Ezra the priest, so when you read all these books together, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, according to Ezra the priest, it was during the sixth year of Darius' reign in Persia, which would have been 516 BC.

That was the year that the temple was finally rebuilt and restored. Then, 35 years later, King Darius was succeeded by his son, King Ahasuerus.

And so King Ahasuerus, who is part of this story, King Ahasuerus was the son of King Darius and the grandson of King Cyrus.

So that's where he fits into this story. He was the descendant of kings who were faithful to the Lord's people. And King Ahasuerus finds his place in the story living in Susa, the capital city of the Persian Empire and the capital city of all these 127 provinces.

[11 : 34] And as King Ahasuerus, he pronounces and proclaims Esther to be his young queen. This young Jewish woman, she was pronounced and proclaimed queen of Persia in 479 BC.

Now, I know these are all dates that maybe are swimming about in your mind, but the idea is to set the scene and see that our gracious queen Esther, she finds her place in this significant story in order to preserve and to protect the lives of the Lord's people.

And it's a fascinating story. But the wonderful thing is, it's God's story. It's God's story about his people.

And is that not often what we say about history? History is just his story. It's God's story. History is his story. And the place of our gracious queen Esther in history is also his story.

It's God's story. Because the Lord used this gracious queen to achieve and to accomplish his perfect plan, path, and purpose in history.

[12 : 51] It's his story. And it has also been his story in the history of our country, Great Britain. It's been his story in the history of our gracious Queen Elizabeth.

Because as you know, technically Queen Elizabeth shouldn't be queen. You remember that her uncle, King Edward VIII, he was the shortest reigning British monarch in history.

He reigned only 326 days. He didn't even reign a whole year until he abdicated the throne in 1936. And he left it to his younger brother, King George VI, and also his now successor, Queen Elizabeth II.

And like our gracious Queen Esther in this story, the Lord has used our gracious Queen Elizabeth to achieve and to accomplish his perfect plan, path, and purpose in history.

And when we look at history, that's what we need to see. We need to see the fingerprint of God on every part of history. Because it's his story.

[14 : 04] It's his story. And my friend, it's his story in our lives too. It's his story in our lives too. And you know, I love those words in Jeremiah 29, verse 11.

They're often misquoted or misused for prosperity. But you know, the promise in that version, Jeremiah 29, 11, it was a promise that was given to the Lord's people before this story in Esther unfolded and was unveiled.

The promise to his people was given before the exile in Babylon. This promise was given before the story of Queen Esther and all that unfolded and was unveiled in Providence.

The Lord promised to his people in Jeremiah 29, verse 11, I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you.

Plans to give you a future and a hope. And you know, I wonder if that promise, if they kept pleading that promise throughout those 70 years of exile and throughout the story and the period of Ezra and Nehemiah and Esther and Haggai and Zechariah, I wonder if they kept coming back to Jeremiah 29, verse 11 and saying to the Lord, well, Lord, you said you know the plan.

[15 : 37] And you know, my friend, in many ways, that's what we need to do too. When the story doesn't seem to be going along with our narrative and the way we want it to be written, we need to keep going back to the Lord's promise.

I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you, not to harm you. Plans to give you a future. And that future might be eternal.

And that hope might also be an eternal hope. And you know, those plans, the plans that the Lord unfolds even in this book, they find their place in the plot of this story.

That's what we see secondly, the plot of the story. So we're looking at his story, history, the history of the Lord's people. And we see the place of the story. And we see the plot of the story.

The plot of the story. Look at verse 14. For if you keep silent at this time, so this is Mordecai speaking. If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place.

[16:46] But you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this. Then Esther told them to reply to Mordecai, go gather all the Jews to be found in Susa and hold a fast on my behalf and do not eat or drink for three days, night or day.

I and my young woman will also fast as you do. Then I will go to the king, though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish. Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.

So the book of Esther, it's a great read. If you've never read it or haven't read it for a while, then I'd encourage you to read the book of Esther. In fact, the plot of this story, it's better than any TV, soap, series or storyline.

Because it has all the action you could ever want in it. It has lust and lies. It has power and prestige. It has drama and death. It has tension and triumph.

It's all here in the book of Esther. But the plot of this story, it only covers a 10-year period. The period from 483 BC to 473 BC.

[18:03] With Esther being crowned queen right in the middle of it, 479 BC. And the plot of the story is carried out by four main characters.

There's the king, King Ahasuerus. There's Mordecai, who is Esther's cousin. There's Haman. He's wicked Haman.

And then there's our gracious queen, Esther. And so the first character we're introduced to in this wonderful story is King Ahasuerus. And as we said, he was the king over 127 provinces within the Persian Empire.

So he was a powerful man. And because he had such an empire, he had a powerful army. But as you'd expect with a man with so much power, all the power went to his head.

Because Ahasuerus, when you look at him, when you study him, he seems to be a bit of a narcissist. He loves himself. And he loves to display and to demonstrate his authority, not only in the world, but also his authority over women, even his wife.

[19:16] Because in the opening scene in chapter one, Queen Vashti, who was his wife at the time, she refuses to dance for all the dinner guests at yet another one of Ahasuerus' great drunken parties.

And she says, no. She refuses to dance for her husband and all the dinner guests. And so what does Ahasuerus do to his wife? He puts her to death for saying no.

Ahasuerus was a man who abused his power. And he abused his position. He got angry. He got argumentative. He got aggressive when he didn't get his own way.

Which should always be a reminder to us, as Christians, that that's not how we are to behave. No matter how tempting it may be to be bossy, or manipulating, or controlling, or dictating, or wanting to lord it over others, that's not how we are to behave.

That's not how we're to behave at home, how we're to behave in the workplace. That's not how we're to behave in the community. And it's certainly not how we are to behave in the church.

[20:32] You know, that's why Augustine, the early church father, he said that the defining feature of a Christian should be humility, humility, humility.

The defining feature of a Christian should be humility, humility, humility. But you know, after deposing and disposing of Queen Vashti, Ahasuerus was then on the lookout for a new queen.

He wanted another wife, which is how Mordecai enters into the plot of the story. And Mordecai is introduced to us as Esther's older first cousin.

He's part of the exile. He was part of the exile that went into Babylon. And we're told in the narrative that Mordecai has raised Esther like his own daughter because Esther was an orphan.

Her parents had died when Nebuchadnezzar had invaded Israel. And so in their relationship between Esther and Mordecai, there was trust.

[21:35] They trusted one another. They trusted one another. And that trust was important and integral when Esther was crowned queen over Persia.

Because shortly after Esther's coronation, two of the king's officials, they sought to put the king to death. They wanted Ahasuerus dead, probably because he was too powerful.

But the amazing thing is Mordecai overheard their plans. And he tells Esther. And Esther relays the message to her new husband, King Ahasuerus.

And it results in protecting King Ahasuerus and punishing the king's officials on the gallows. But even though Mordecai had protected King Ahasuerus, his protection of the king was never recognized.

No one recognized him for his gallant efforts of protecting the king, not until five years later, when one night we're told, King Ahasuerus, boys, King Ahasuerus couldn't get to sleep.

[22 : 52] So he gave an order for the book of memorable deeds, the book of memorable deeds to be read to him. And it was a book that was full of all the honors that the king had bestowed and blessed upon his people.

It would probably have been a very boring book to read, which is why he wanted it read to help him fall asleep. But when the book was read in his presence by one of his servants, it had the opposite effect because he didn't fall asleep.

The section of the book of memorable deeds, which was read to King Ahasuerus, was actually what happened five years earlier when the king's officials sought to commit treason against the king.

But Mordecai's protection of the king was never recognized and never rewarded. And so when Ahasuerus discovers that Mordecai had been so kind to him and protected the king, Mordecai was exalted to the position of prime minister in the Persian Empire.

And you know, we can actually learn a lot from the character of Mordecai when you read through the narrative because despite not receiving recognition or reward at the time, he remained faithful to the Lord.

[24 : 11] Despite not receiving recognition or reward at the time, he remained faithful to the Lord. You know, the character of Mordecai, it was something like the character of Joseph.

How Joseph remained faithful in the midst of sin and suffering and sorrow. And that's our call too as Christians, is it not? Despite receiving, we might not receive recognition in this life for things we do for the Lord.

We might not receive a reward for what we do for the Lord in this life. But our calling is not recognition or reward. Our calling is to remain faithful to the Lord.

Our calling is to remain faithful to the Lord. But of course, the twist in the plot, the twist in the plot of the story came from this man, Haman. Haman was an evil man.

And the twist comes when Mordecai is promoted to the position of prime minister. And there's a bit of tension there because Haman is already the prime minister. So the king is shunting out his prime minister and he's putting a new prime minister in place.

[25 : 25] He's putting Mordecai in place, which creates tension to the point that Haman now wants to destroy all the Jews. He knows that Mordecai is a Jew.

He knows that Queen Esther is a Jew. So he wants to destroy all the Jews. And so Haman tries to convince King Ahasuerus to sign a decree that would destroy all the Jews that were living within the Persian Empire of 127 provinces.

And he wanted to destroy them on one particular day, the 13th day of Adar. And this decreed day of destruction, the 13th day of Adar, boys, are you listening?

It was determined by throwing two dice. I'm sure you've played Monopoly before. We have Monopoly in our house. You get two dice to roll, just like you play when you play Monopoly.

And Haman, he decided, evil Haman, decided the day of death and the day of destruction for all the Jews by throwing two dice. And it's interesting because the Hebrew word, boys, the Hebrew word for two dice is Purim.

[26 : 41] Purim. The festival of Purim is now a Jewish festival. The Jews hold the festival of Purim every year on the 13th day of Adar.

And the reason they hold this festival called Purim is because that was the day they should have been destroyed by Haman. But instead, the 13th day of Adar was the day that Haman died and the Jews were delivered by their gracious queen, Esther.

And so when we come to this section in the plot of the story, Esther, who is a Jew by birth, she's now the beautiful wife and queen of King who has Ueras, but her real beauty was when she takes a risk.

She takes the risk of going to her king in order to persuade him not to destroy the Jews. And we read about that in verse 11. All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is one law to be put to death.

She's taking a risk of trying to persuade the king not to destroy the Jews. But as Mordecai famously said in verse 14, who knows? Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?

[28 : 08] And Esther responds there in verse 16, I will go to the king though it is against the law and if I perish I perish. And you know Esther's words they aren't careless.

They're very careful. In fact her words are prayerful and purposeful. Her words are prayerful and purposeful because Esther knew that it was no use just being prayerful and then sitting back. She knew she had to act. She knew that she needed to be prayerful and purposeful because providence had led her to this point.

And you know my Christian friend, sometimes we have to be like our gracious Queen Esther. We have to prayerfully and purposefully take risks.

We have to prayerfully and purposefully take risks. And what I mean by that is we have to do things that will sometimes challenge us and even cause us to step out of our comfort zone.

[29 : 16] Here is Queen Esther. She could have stayed in her comfort zone and kept silent. But she desired and she decided to speak. She was prayerful.

She was purposeful. And you know we have to do the same. We have to step out of our comfort zone. Whether that's speaking about our faith, whether that's standing up for Jesus, whether it's inviting someone to come to church, taking them to church with us, saying I'll meet you at the door. Come with me. We have to be prayerful. We have to be purposeful. We have to take risks for the kingdom of God. Because every encounter in a day, and this is what I love about this book, it reminds us that every encounter in a day, all our contacts in a day, all our conversations in a day, they're all according to God's providence.

They're all according to God's providence. That's why we see lastly in this story, the providence of the story. So the place of the story, the plot of the story, and the providence of the story.

The providence of the story. Look at verse 16 again. As we said, the story of this gracious queen is a unique story.

[30 : 56] Because boys, even though God is not mentioned once in the story of Esther, God is not absent. He's graciously working all things together for the good of his people and the glory of his name.

He's unveiling and unfolding his perfect plan, path, and purpose, and he's doing it all according to his providence. And of course, when we speak about providence, we mean that our sovereign God has seen every detail.

He's a God of the detail. He has seen every detail of this world take place beforehand. That's what the word providence means. It means seen beforehand.

So he has seen every detail of our lives and the lives of everyone else and everything else in this world. He has seen it all take place beforehand. Which means that nothing takes him by surprise. It's all according to his providence. Therefore, our lives, they are not an accident. They're not a random result of mishap or misfortune.

[32 : 06] Neither are our lives the outcome of luck or chance or fate or fortune or karma or destiny. No, God, in his perfect providence, has planned and purposed everything to take place.

Which ought to help us not only this story but also our story. When we look at this story and see providence, it helps us understand the place and the plot and the providence of the story in the book of Esther.

Because when you read this story, when you read his story here, it wasn't because of destiny that Esther became queen over the Persian of the king's officials plotting treason.

It wasn't fate that Haman rolled the purim, the dice, to appoint the day of death and destruction for the Jews on the 13th day of Adar. It wasn't a random event that the king Ahasuerus couldn't sleep one night and wanted all the memorable deeds to be rent to him.

It wasn't even by chance that the servant picked up that particular book, and read that particular memorable deed on that particular night about, and he was reading exactly about what happened to Mordecai five years earlier.

[33 : 30] It wasn't good fortune that Ahasuerus found out about Haman's attempt of treason against his queen. It wasn't because of karma that Ahasuerus hanged Haman and hanged him on the very gallows which Haman had built for Mordecai.

My friend, none of it was an accident. It wasn't an accident that Mordecai was prime minister in Persia, and Esther was the gracious queen who saved the Lord's people.

No, none of it was an accident. None of it was fate or fortune or karma or chance or luck. No, it was all appointed. All appointed and all according to the perfect plan, path, purposes, providence and providence of our sovereign God.

And you know, you look at history, you look at his story, and that's what we see. Everything working according to the perfect plan, path, purpose, and providence of our sovereign God.

Because you know, without the Lord and his providence, there would be no promised Savior. Without the Lord and his perfect providence, there would be no promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

[34 : 58] But you know, when we look at this story and his story in history, when you consider the place and the plot and the providence of this story about our gracious Queen Esther, it should make us realize that the Lord has not only written this story, he's also written the story of our lives too.

He's written every word, and he's written every page, he's written every chapter, he's the author of the story, he's the director in the drama.

Tonight, we might not understand the storyline, we might not foresee all the tensions and the twists and the turns in the narrative, and yet as it was for Esther and the Lord's people in their day, he's there in our story, he's there on every page about providence, especially when it's a painful providence.

And as I've said before, and I hope I always say this carefully and cautiously and compassionately, you know, the Lord allows painful providences to come into our personal lives, but it's not to drive us away from him, it's always to drive us to him in prayer, to depend upon him more and more.

The Lord allows painful providences to come into our personal lives, not to drive us away from him, but always to drive us to him. And even though we may not be able to see it, the Bible reminds us and reassures us time and time again that in the midst of our painful providences of sin or sickness or suffering or sorrow, the Lord says to us that he is working it all.

[36 : 57] He's working it all by his grace for our good and to his glory. And as I say to you so often, yes, it's easier for me to say it than maybe it is for you to live it.

But I want to remind you this evening that whatever is in your story, whatever has been written in your narrative, always remember that the Lord promises you that he is working it all together by his grace for your good and to his glory.

That's why William Cowper is my friend, he has written the story of your life and my life.

And the wonderful thing is that he is reminding us this evening through the story of Esther, through the story of someone else. He's reminding us that He is a gracious God who promises that He is working all things together by His grace, for our good, and to His glory. And so, friends, this is the plot and the place and the providence of this story. But we are being called this evening to look to our own story and to look to the one who is writing the story and to look to our gracious King, King Jesus, and see that He is the same, the same yesterday, today, and forever. He's the King that Esther loved and served. He's the King that our Queen loves and serves. And He's the same King that we need to love and serve all the days of our life. So may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray.

O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to Thee for the way in which history has been written. And Lord, when we look back, how we can see the fingerprint and even the hand of God upon it all, and know that Thou art the God who was there, not only in the light and these great moments of triumph and blessing, but Thou art a God who was there in the darkness, Thou art a God who was there in the depths and in the times and in the moments where people were struggling. And Lord, we bless Thee and we praise Thee that despite the passing of time, despite all the changes and circumstances and situations and centuries itself, and yet despite all of that, Thou art the one who has not changed, the Lord who proclaims to us in His Word, I am the Lord, I change not. Thou art our rock and our fortress, our shield and our high tower, and how the psalmist could say in the midst of his sorrow and his suffering, O God, give ear unto my cry, and to my prayer attend. From the utmost corner of the land, my cry to Thee I'll send. What time my heart is overwhelmed, and in perplexity do Thou may lead unto the rock that higher is than I. Lord, lead us to the rock this week. As we go into another week in life's journey, help us to keep looking to the rock of our salvation, the rock that is Jesus Christ, and know that He is safe, He is stable, He is secure, He will not move, for He is our great High Priest.

[40 : 51] Lord, bless us then, we pray. Watch over us, we ask. Lead us and guide us day by day, for we ask it in Jesus' name, and for His sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing the words of Psalm 23.

Psalm 23 in the Scottish Psalter, page 229. Psalm 23. As we know, this is the Shepherd Psalm. It's a psalm that was also sung at the wedding of Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. It was sung towards the conclusion of the wedding ceremony, just before they sang the national anthem, God Save the Queen.

And although many people didn't know the tune when it was sung in Westminster Abbey, Psalm 23 that day was sung to the tune, Crimmond.

That's not a hint to the presenter. But it's amazing that they sung it and not many people had heard the tune, Crimmond. So they sang this psalm, the Shepherd Psalm.

[42 : 01] And the Lord has been our Queen's shepherd all through her reign and through her life. And he needs to be our shepherd too, all through our life. We need to know him and love him and confess him, saying with David, The Lord's my shepherd.

I'll not want. He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by. And down to the end of the psalm, goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me.

And in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be. We'll sing the whole psalm to God's praise. The Lord's my shepherd, I've not want.

He makes me down to lie. In pastures green he leadeth me, the quiet waters by.

My soul he doth restore again. And me to walk the pain.

[43 : 38] Within the paths of righteousness. In for his own they say.

Yea, though I walk in death's dark veil, Yet will I fear none ill, For thou art with me on thy road, And stop me comfort still.

My table thou hast furnished, In presence of my foes, My head thou dost with oil anoint, And my cup overflows.

Goodness and mercy all my life, Child surely follow me, And in God's house forevermore, My dwelling place shall be.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, The love of God the Father, And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with you all, Never and forevermore. Amen. Amen. Amen.