

## All Souls' Day 2020 – Michael Brown

*“Prayers for the dead represent a spontaneous and generous impulse of the human heart.” (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury 1942-44)*

Today we have a psalm, a short reflection, prayers and end with a hymn.

### PSALM 23 from the Scottish Psalter 1650 as sung to the tune Crimond

1. The Lord's my shepherd,  
I'll not want.

3. My soul he doth restore again;  
and me to walk doth make  
Within the paths of righteousness,  
ev'n for his own name's sake.

5. My table thou hast furnished  
in presence of my foes;  
My head thou dost with oil anoint,  
and my cup overflows.

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

4. Yea, though I walk in death's dark  
vale,  
yet will I fear none ill:  
For thou art with me; and thy rod  
and staff me comfort still.

6. Goodness and mercy all my life  
shall surely follow me:  
And in God's house for evermore  
my dwelling-place shall be.

(Try looking back at some or all of the verses and altering them to represent relatives and friends you have “loved long since, and lost awhile”: e.g., ‘*Their* souls he doth restore again’; ‘And in God's house for evermore *their* dwelling place shall be’.)

## Blaise Pascal: Reasons of the Heart

The Frenchman **Blaise Pascal** (1623-1662) was a mathematical genius, a scientist, a designer of one of the first calculating machines that worked and inaugurator of a bus service whose profits were to support the poor.

On the night of 23 November 1654, Pascal had a remarkable experience which he recorded in a document kept secret until after his death. Here is part of what he wrote:

*“From about half past ten in the evening until half past midnight. Fire. ‘God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,’ not of philosophers and scholars. Certainty, certainty, heartfelt, joy, peace. God of Jesus Christ.”*

With its apparently critical comment about ‘philosophers, scholars’, we might think that after this experience, Pascal may have renounced his highly intellectual way of life. What he actually did was to expand some ideas he already had into a way of looking at the world in which thinking and feeling were put in their correct places, or as he termed it their correct ‘orders’. Many of these ideas were collected in a book called ‘Thoughts’ published after his death. Here are some of them:

- The heart has its reasons of which reason knows nothing
  
- It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason.
  
- That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason.

These are thoughts perhaps for a lifetime but definitely for today.

## PRAYERS

God our Father,  
Your power brings us to birth,  
Your providence guides our lives,  
and by Your command we return to dust.

Lord, those who die still live in Your presence,  
their lives change but do not end.

I pray in hope for my family,  
relatives and friends,  
and for all the dead known to You alone.

*[YOUR PRAYERS]*

In company with Christ,  
Who died and now lives,  
may they rejoice in Your kingdom,  
where all our tears are wiped away.

Unite us together again in one family,  
to sing Your praise forever and ever.

**AMEN.**

## HYMN

### *Verses From 'The Dream of Gerontius' by St John Henry Newman*

Praise to the Holiest in the height And in the depth be praise:

In all His words most wonderful: Most sure in all His ways!

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|---|--|
| 1. Firmly I believe and truly<br>God is Three, and God is One;<br>And I next acknowledge duly<br>Manhood taken by the Son.                  | 2. And I trust and hope most fully<br>In that Manhood crucified:<br>And each thought and deed unruly<br>Do to death, as He has died. |
| 3. Simply to His Grace and wholly<br>Light and life and strength belong.<br>And I love, supremely, solely,<br>Him the holy, Him the strong. | 4. And I hold in veneration,<br>For the love of Him alone,<br>Holy Church, as His creation,<br>And her teachings, as His own.        |

Praise to the Holiest in the height And in the depth be praise:

In all His words most wonderful: Most sure in all His ways!

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“Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
The distant scene; one step enough for me.

And with the morn those angel faces smile,  
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.”

*(Lines from 'Lead, Kindly Light' by St JHN)*