

Sunday 24 April 2022 Yarrow 10am

Welcome

Call to Worship - The tomb is empty - Jesus is alive!

‘God has raised Him from death, setting Him free from its power,
because it was impossible that death should hold Him.’ - Acts 2 v 24

Hymn 130

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim

Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim,
and publish abroad his wonderful name;
the name all-victorious of Jesus extol;
his kingdom is glorious, and rules over all.

God ruleth on high, almighty to save;
and still he is nigh, his presence we have;
the great congregation his triumph shall sing,
ascribing salvation to Jesus our king.

Salvation to God who sits on the throne!’
let all cry aloud, and honour the Son:
the praises of Jesus the angels proclaim,
fall down on their faces, and worship the Lamb.

Then let us adore, and give him his right:
all glory and power, all wisdom and might,
all honour and blessing, with angels above,
and thanks never-ceasing, and infinite love.

Charles Wesley (1707–1788)

Prayer and Lord’s Prayer

Almighty God, all of us who go to You for safety, who remain under Your protection can say for certain that You are our Defender and Protector.

You are our God, in whom we trust.

You protect us from all hidden dangers, we are always safe in Your care. Your faithfulness surrounds us and defends us at all times.

We need not be afraid of anything Lord!

You have promised that You will save those who love You.

That You will protect those who acknowledge You as Lord.

That You will answer all who call upon You.

That when we are in trouble, You will be right there with us.

That You will rescue us and honour us.

That You will reward us and save us.

Lord God, how good it is to praise You.

How good it is to thank You.

To sing in Your honour, O Most High God

To proclaim Your constant love each day.

And to tell of Your great faithfulness time after time.

Lord Jesus, we continue to give You our thanks for rescuing us from all our sins, for taking them upon Yourself and paying the price of sin on the cross.

We continue to rejoice in the best news ever - that the tomb was empty, that death could not hold You, that You rose from the dead and are alive forevermore!

May we continue to sing of Your victory, to tell others what You have accomplished and to live out our lives as Your faithful disciples.

And we continue our prayers as You have taught us:

Our Father in Heaven,

Hallowed be Your Name,

Your Kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On Earth as in Heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
And deliver us from evil.
For the Kingdom, the power and the glory
Are yours, now and forever. Amen

New Testament Reading - 2 Corinthians 4 v 8-14 (J.B. Phillips translation - Margaret Milne)

We are handicapped on all sides, but we are never frustrated; we are puzzled, but never in despair. We are persecuted, but we never have to stand it alone: we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out! Every day we experience something of the death of the Lord Jesus, so that we may also know the power of the life of Jesus in these bodies of ours. Yes, we who are living are always being exposed to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be plainly seen in our mortal lives. We are always facing death, but this means that you know more and more of life. Our faith is like that mentioned in the scripture: 'I believed and therefore I spoke'.
For we too speak because we believe, and we know for certain that he who raised the Lord Jesus from death shall also by him raise us. We shall all stand together before him.

Hymn 559

There is a Redeemer

There is a Redeemer Jesus God's own Son
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
Holy One

*Thank you O my Father for giving us Your Son
And leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done*

Jesus my Redeemer
Name above all names
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah
O for sinners slain

*Thank you O my Father for giving us Your Son
And leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done*

When I stand in glory
I will see His face
And there I'll serve my King forever
In that Holy Place

*Thank you O my Father for giving us Your Son
And leaving your Spirit till the work on earth is done*
Melody Green (b.1946)

Prayer - (Iona MacNeill)

Lord God, we give You our thanks that we can draw near to You at any time to bring You our prayers. To talk things through with You, to praise You, to thank You, to tell You how we are feeling and to bring our needs and the needs of others before You.

You are the One true God! The God who listens to us when we pray. The God who enters into conversation with us. The God who encourages us, who lifts us up when we are down and who puts our feet on solid ground.

Father God, we pray for those in our communities who have heard the wonderful message of Easter. We pray that they will think deeply about Your Son's death on the cross and His glorious resurrection and all that it means for them.

We pray that they will respond to the free gift of eternal life which Jesus offers to all who believe. And we thank You for those who are His faithful disciples here where we live. May they continue to serve Him in their lives and to serve those around them.

Lord, we pray for our children and young people who have just returned to school and for those who lead and teach them. We pray especially for all those who will be facing exams in the next few weeks. Give them your peace and reassurance and help them as they study to focus clearly on all they have learned.

We continue to pray for the people of Ukraine, those who are still living with the terrors of war and those who are coming to terms with living in a foreign country, far from home. Give them Your comfort Lord, reassure them of Your presence with them wherever they are and help them to encourage and support each other through these very difficult times.

We pray for peace in that land Lord. Guide our politicians and help them to listen to Your guidance as they work together to bring an end to this terrible situation.

Lord, we thank You for answered prayer. You have listened to us and You have acted. You have responded to our requests are we are so grateful for all that You have done for us and for those we have prayed for.

We ask for Your comfort on those who are weighed down with worry at this time. Worry about family, about work, about health, about friends, about finance or about the future. Reassure them Lord that You know exactly how they feel and how best to help them. Let them know that You are always ready to listen and encourage them to talk things through with You, so that they may hand over all their worries and concerns to You and know Your peace in their hearts and minds.

Lord, we bring all our prayers to You now, in the strong and powerful Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

Hymn 81

I to the hills will lift mine eyes

I to the hills will lift mine eyes;
From whence doth come mine aid?
My safety cometh from the Lord,
Who heaven and earth hath made.

Thy foot He'll not let slide, or will
He slumber that thee keeps.
Behold, He that keeps Israel,
He slumbers not, nor sleeps.

The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade
On thy right hand doth stay;
The moon by night thee shall not smite,
Nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul; He shall
Preserve thee from all ill.
Henceforth thy going out and in,
God keep forever will.

Psalm 121

The Scottish Psalter, 1929

Bible Teaching - Psalm 121 (GNB) 'God the Protector of His People'

PSALM 121

Just as we have just celebrated Easter, so those of the Jewish faith have just celebrated Passover.

Passover is one of the three main Jewish festivals, the others being Harvest and the Feast of Shelters.

Over the years the Jewish people would journey from their homes to Jerusalem, the Holy City, where they would gather to celebrate together. For safety and companionship they would travel in groups.

They were going on a pilgrimage, united in their desire to join together as God's people to worship Him.

And as they travelled along, mostly on foot, they sang. They sang to keep up their spirits and to praise The Lord their God.

What did they sing? Here is one of their pilgrim songs:

PSALM 121 (GNB)

The Lord Our Protector

121 I look to the mountains;

where will my help come from?

² My help will come from the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

- ³ He will not let you fall;
your protector is always awake.
- ⁴ The protector of Israel
never dozes or sleeps.
- ⁵ The Lord will guard you;
he is by your side to protect you.
- ⁶ The sun will not hurt you during the day,
nor the moon during the night.
- ⁷ The Lord will protect you from all danger;
he will keep you safe.
- ⁸ He will protect you as you come and go
now and forever

The leader of the pilgrims would recite the first two verses, then different groups would answer him with verses 3 & 4, 5 & 6, 7 & 8.

The title of the song in the Good News Bible is 'The Lord Our Protector.'

And we can see that the word Protector or protect is used many times in this Psalm. It is a recurring theme!

Protection was a major concern for the pilgrims. Danger was all around!

Robbers lay in wait (think of the story of the Good Samaritan). It was hilly & inhospitable country, with the constant heat of the sun & the freezing cold nights out in the open.

The words of this Psalm reassured them as they travelled along.

And these same words can reassure you and I as we travel along life's journey as God's pilgrims today!

The Psalm can be split up into four parts, two verses at a time.

So let's look together at this pilgrim song:

v 1 & 2 - "I look to the mountains (pause).

Where will my help come from?

My help will come from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.”

The mountains are scary, they are treacherous to cross, robbers might be lurking there, ready to jump out.

Who will help the pilgrims to traverse this terrain safely?

The Lord will help them, the One who made the mountains & seas & everything in them!

HE will help them to cross the mountains.

HE will ensure they come to no harm.

HE will see them safely through!

Perhaps YOU feel that you have a mountain to climb? When you look at the things you have to do, at the problems you have to face.

Do YOU say to yourself: who is going to help ME?

The answer is right here! Your help will come from The Lord. He is able, more than able to help you.

“Ask the Saviour to help you, comfort, strengthen and keep you. HE is willing to aid you. HE will carry you through!”

The Lord our God is a mighty God, an Almighty God. He created all that we can see and all that we can't see!

Ps 89 reminds us of this: “Lord God Almighty, none is as mighty as You; in all things You are faithful, O Lord...

You made the world and everything in it ...How powerful You are!

How great is Your strength!”

As does Ps 46: “God is our shelter & strength always ready to help in times of trouble.

So we will not be afraid, even if the earth is shaken & mountains fall into the ocean depths; even if the seas roar and rage and the hills are shaken with violence.”

The Lord is omnipotent, He is all-powerful and He is ready and willing to help His people as they journey through life!

But HOW will He help me? you may ask.

v 3 & 4 - “He will not let you fall; your Protector is always awake. The Protector of Israel never dozes nor sleeps?

The pilgrims were worried about falling off the high mountain paths, or of breaking an ankle on the rough terrain. They were also worried about what might happen to them in the darkness when they lay down to sleep.

The could be robbed & murdered in their beds, or eaten by wild beasts!

But they need not be afraid!

Why? Because God is watching over them!

He will not allow anything tragic to happen to them. He is their Protector, like a Heavenly Bodyguard, watching out for them day & night.

Even when they are asleep HE is awake! For He needs no sleep! And so they can rest assured that He is watching over them.

And it's exactly the same with you and I.

He is watching over US, day and night!

Ps 34 v 15 tells us that God keeps an eye on His friends!

And so WE can rest easy, for we have that assurance, that certainty, that The Lord our God is always looking out for us, always ready to step in when potential disaster arises!

v 5 & 6 - “The Lord will guard you; He is by your side to protect you. The sun will not hurt you during the day, nor the moon during the night.”

Not only is God watching over us, he is right there WITH us! It's not like He's watching us from afar on the Heavenly CCTV!

He's standing right next to us! Just like a Divine bodyguard, always ready to step in to protect us when we need Him!

The Bible describes God as “our Shield.”
And that is a good description.

He is like a human shield.
Someone who is standing right beside us, ready to step in when trouble arises, ready to take the blows that are meant for us.

And surely that's exactly what Jesus did for us! God became human in Christ and suffered in our place on the cross!

Isaiah 53 v 4 & 6 : “But HE endured the suffering that should have been OURS, the pain that WE should have borne.....

The Lord made the punishment fall on HIM, the punishment all of US deserved.”

Jesus, the Son of God, took all the pain and suffering that WE should have received.

He took it upon Himself. He laid down His life for you and me! Because He loves us!

“Greater love has no-one than this, that He lay down His life for His friends!”

A shield protects us from being hurt by blows.

So if God is like a Shield for us it means that danger, difficulties and disaster will still come our way.

As Christians we are not immune from such things, we still have to face them!
Such things will HURT us, but they cannot DESTROY us, because God our Shield and Protector will not allow them to!

Margaret read earlier from the JB Phillips translation of 2 Corinthians 4 v 8 & 9 -

“We may be knocked DOWN, but we are NEVER knocked OUT!”

King David, who wrote many of the Psalms, went through some very tough and very troubled times which brought him deep heartache and even threatened his life.

But he learned that The Lord was right there with him DURING those terrible times.

David wrote these words in Psalm 56:

“Be merciful to me, O God, because I am under attack; my enemies persecute me all the time.

All day long my opponents attack me. There are so many who fight against me.

When I am afraid, O Lord Almighty, I put my trust in You. I trust in God and am not afraid;

I praise Him for what He has promised.

What can a mere human do to me?”

The Lord our God is with US!

Remember the children’s hymn: ‘Be bold, be strong, for the Lord your God is with you!’

And so you and I need not be afraid! We need not be afraid of what mere man can do to US, we need not be afraid of what ANYTHING can do to us!

Whether in the extreme heat of the day, with the sun beating down on us, or in the bitter coldness of a moonlit night, the Lord our God is with us! He is with us day & night.

Remember the words of Jesus just before He returned to Heaven: “I am with you ALWAYS, even until the very end of time!”

Someone has written these great words of encouragement:

"From day to day, from month to month, from season to season, from year to year, the LORD IS WITH US in the many challenges and changes of life we will have to face!"

How good is that? We have Someone who is with us at all times, Someone who never sleeps, who watches over us day & night! Someone who is keeping guard over us!

And that Someone is God Himself!

v 7 & 8 - "The Lord will protect you from all danger; He will keep you safe. He will protect you as you come and go, now and forever!"

Another children's hymn goes: "My God is so big, so strong and so mighty, there's nothing that He cannot do!"

There is NO danger which Our God cannot protect us from! For He is the Lord, the Maker of Heaven and Earth! Nothing can or ever will, be able to separate us from His love

Paul writes in Romans 8 : "In all things we have complete victory through Him who loved us!

For I am certain that NOTHING can separate us from His love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below -

- there is nothing in all creation that will EVER be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord!"

As Christians, as God's people, we are safe, safe from all danger, because He is right there beside us.

As the old hymn puts it: "Safe in the arms of Jesus, safe on His gentle breast.
There, by His love o'er shaded, sweetly my soul shall rest!

We have all heard the expression: "Safe as the Bank of England!" In today's economical climate perhaps that's not a good comparison. For even the Bank of England could go under!

Of the expression: "Safe as houses!"

But once again that's not great because even our houses can fall down & depreciate.

But safe in God's care. Safe in the arms of Jesus - here is real safety, here is absolute assurance, here is a cast-iron guarantee!

In HIM, with HIM we are completely and utterly, 100% safe!

As we come and go, The Lord WILL protect us!

Some years ago when Adrienne and I were in Tiberias on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, we noticed that there were little boxes fixed high up on the doorposts of all the rooms.

On enquiring we were told that these were called mezuzahs and contained portions of Scripture.

Each time an Orthodox Jew entered or left the room, they would reverently touch the box to remind them of God's promises and His protection as they came and went.

As WE come and go through LIFE, The Lord WILL protect us. We will still endure many trying, painful & difficult times.

As we have often sung: "Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come. 'Tis grace has brought me SAFE thus far, and grace will lead me home!"

He has been with us every step of the way so far and He will continue to be with us.

He HAS led us safe thus far and He WILL lead us home.

So whatever mountains you have to climb in your life.

Whatever difficulties you have to face. Whatever problems you have to overcome -

Never, ever forget that the Lord climbs those mountains WITH YOU, that the Lord faces those difficulties WITH YOU, that the Lord overcomes those problems WITH YOU!

We are ALL travelling on a journey.

To quote from a popular song :

'The road is long, there are mountains in our way - but we climb a step each day!'

The Lord our God is with us, every step of the way, He truly IS our help and our strength, an ever-present help at ALL times.

He will safely see us through all of life's ups and downs, all its trials and tribulations, all its joys and sorrows.

And so we CAN be bold, we CAN be strong, for the Lord our God IS with us, day after day, night after night, month after month, year after year.

“I will never leave you, I will never give up on you.”

Those pilgrims travelling through the mountains to Jerusalem trusted the Lord their God to keep that promise.

And you are I must do the same!

His promise is to each one of us who believe in Him.

And we can be SURE that He will keep it!

Hymn 124

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation.

Praise to the Lord the Almighty the King of creation
O my soul praise Him for He is thy health and salvation
All ye who hear, now to His temple draw near
Joining in glad adoration

Praise to the Lord who o'er all things so wondrously reigneth
Shieldeth thee gently from harm or when fainting sustaineth
Hast thou not seen, how thy heart's wishes have been
Granted in what He ordaineth

Praise to the Lord who doth prosper thy work and defend thee
Surely His goodness and mercy shall daily attend thee
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do
Who with His love doth befriend thee

Praise to the Lord O let all that is in me adore Him
All that hath life and breath come now with praises before Him
Let the Amen sound from His people again
Gladly for aye we adore Him

Joachim Neander (1650-1680)

Translated Catherine Winkworth (1827-1878)

Benediction - 'And now may
the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with you all, now and forevermore.'

(3 fold Amen)