



## ***THE WORD FOR TODAY***

### **PSALM 121: “I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from?”**

The Psalms are songs for almost every circumstance you can think of. This one is “A Song of Ascents”, which implies that it is a song to accompany a journey upwards. It is sometimes taken as being for the journey up the various steps in the Temple at Jerusalem, or sometimes as a song for the journey up to Temple Mount through the city. We can perhaps take it as a song for our journey through life, heading for God’s glorious kingdom of heaven.

It is a song of reassurance from somebody with a strong faith in the God who cares for us all—and it is no less reassuring in this time of pandemic when our realities have been turned upside down.



Follow the words of this short Bible passage on seven panels around the church. The first is just round the corner on the north wall of this little building and the others are on the east wall of the church (right as you look from here) for panels 2, 3 & 4, and on the west wall (5, 6 and 7). The translation of the Bible used is the New International Version, and you can look it up on the internet under Bible Gateway.



**“I lift up my eyes to the hills—where  
does my help come from?”**

**1**

The hills are always with us in Liberton. We walk through the cemetery, or turn on to Liberton Brae, and Arthur’s Seat looms in front of us. If we walk along Liberton Drive the Pentland Hills come into view.

The hills don’t change—and perhaps that’s why the writer of this psalm looks to them for reassurance. Who is going to help us? Who is in charge of this world? He lifts his eyes to some higher authority. He seeks the God he has always believed in, who doesn’t seem to be in the present situation. Perhaps you have had doubts at times in this past year—where is God in all this? We need to remind ourselves that he is as unchanging as the hills.



***Lord, forgive me when I doubt your presence.  
Help me to know that you are there,  
that you are listening to my cry.***

***Now walk to the right of the church building to find panels 2, 3 and 4***



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# **“My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”**

**2**

So often, nature points us to God. The immovable hills, the first signs of spring, a rainbow after rain, a spectacular sunset or sunrise, all remind us that God does not change, that he keeps his promises, that he cares about his creation. Jesus said that God knows when even a tiny sparrow falls to the ground, (Matthew 10:29). He pointed out “ . . . the very hairs of your head are numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.”

What a wonderful reassurance it is to know that God cares about us! We have not been created and then left to get on with life. God is our life support system!



***Lord, thank you for the beauty of your creation.  
Thank you for the signs of spring even now in the gardens.  
Thank you for making me, and loving me.***



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**“He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”**

**3**

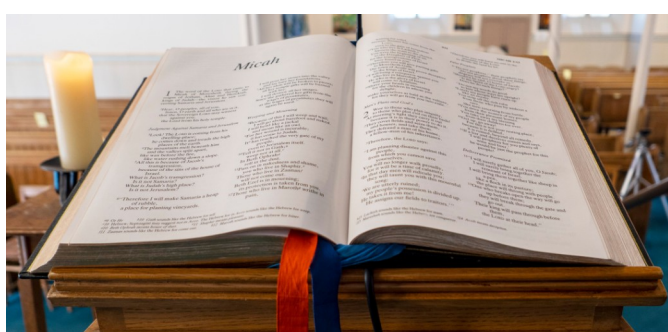
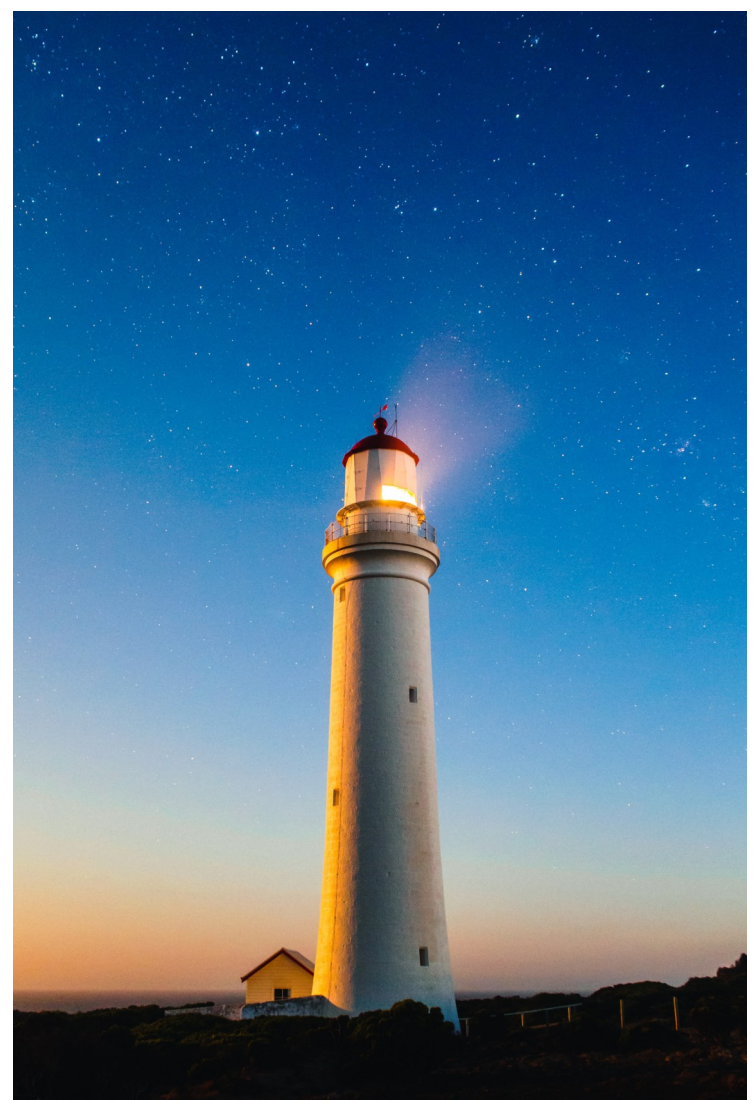
It's a good idea not to take all these words literally. A few feet have slipped recently, as the numbers in the Minor Injuries Unit and Orthopaedics at the Infirmary will testify!

When it comes to the big things—whether we are going to stay on the path shown us by Jesus for example—then we can be sure that God is watching over us. He will not go to sleep on the job, nor even have a little doze. The writer of this psalm had seen enough in the past of God's care for his people Israel to know that his love and care is there 24/7.

*Lord, thank you for being always awake to my needs.*

*Please keep me on the path your Son Jesus set out for me.*

*Save me from temptations and distractions and keep me focussed on you.*



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# **“The Lord watches over you . . .”**

**4**

No less than five times in this short Bible passage we are told that God watches over his people. What gives the writer the confidence that he can tell us with no doubt that it is so? In his letter to the Romans Paul says “I am convinced that neither death nor life . . . . Nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God . . .”

How do we become so convinced? How can we be so totally confident? Only by drawing closer to God every day and getting to know him in our lives.

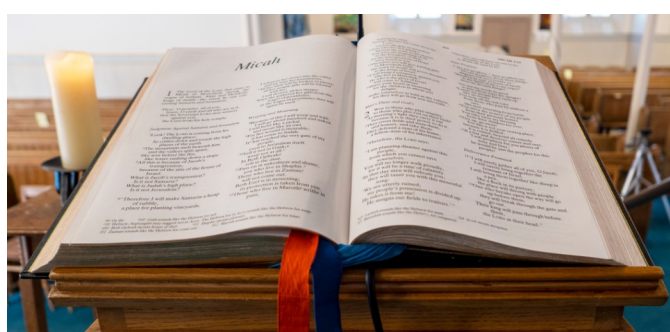


***Lord, thank you for watching over me.***

***Help me to have the faith  
that knows this is true.***

***Give me the peace that faith brings  
to my mind and heart.***

***Now walk along the back of the church and turn left to find panels 5, 6 and 7***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



**“—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.”**

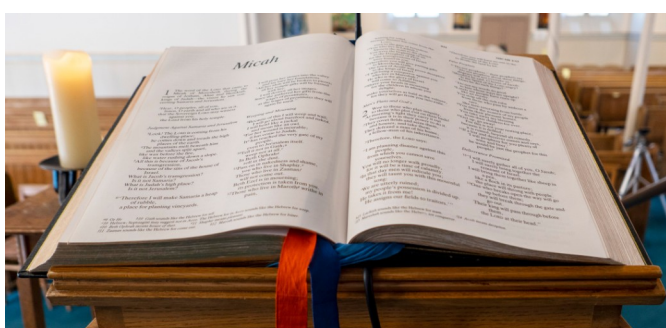
**5**

The burning sun was a problem in the Middle East, and shade gave protection from it. “Shade” then became a synonym for wider protection generally. Sometimes it is “the shadow of your wings” which captures the idea of protection even more vividly, as we can imagine birds sheltering their young. It isn’t a limited protection—it is defence against anything which distresses or threatens us.

What a comforting feeling of warmth and safety it conjures up!



***Lord, you are my shield and my shelter.  
Under your protective wings I can be safe.  
Help me to trust in your unfailing love and care  
and find peace.***



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**“The Lord will keep you from all harm  
—he will watch over your life; . . .”**

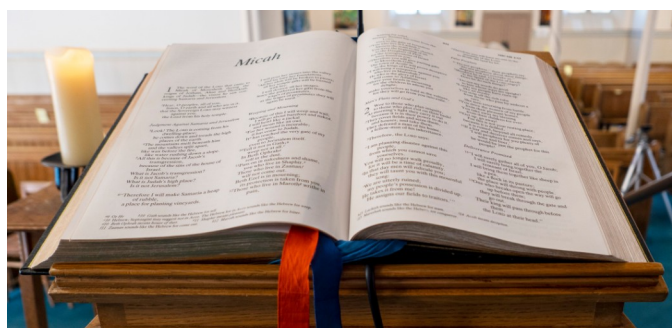
**6**

God gave us lives to live in the first place and our lives are precious to him. He wants them to be lives worth living. Jesus said (John 10:10) “I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full” God doesn’t just want to keep us from harm, he wants to enable us to live our lives to the full, and the way to learn how to do that is to understand what Jesus is teaching us about life and to try to follow him. He said that the most important commandments were to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves. Love is the way forward!



***Lord, thank you for sending Jesus to teach us how to live life to the full.  
Help us to follow him and find a life worth living,  
safe in your protection.***

***Panel no. 7 is on the church wall behind the cairn on the right***



***THE WORD FOR TODAY***



**“ . . . the Lord will watch over  
your coming and going  
both now and for evermore.”**

**7**

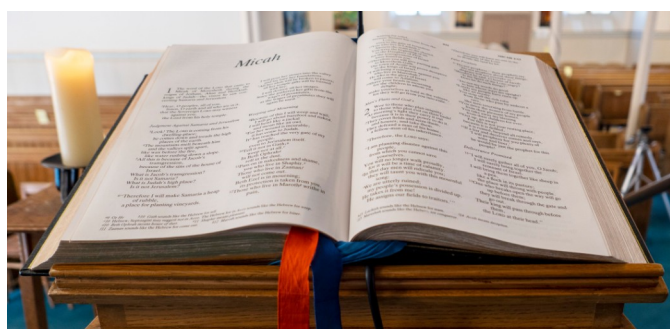
In Psalm 139 the question “where can I go from your presence?” is asked in awe, knowing that God is in fact everywhere we might think of going. This awesome God will be there to watch over us wherever we might be, and he doesn’t need us to tell him where we are, in body or mind. What a comforting thought it is that God knows just how we are feeling, when it can at times be difficult to put into words. Like the hills, God will always be there, and we don’t face the future alone.



***Lord, thank you for being with me wherever I am to watch over me.  
Thank you for the promise that you will be with me for ever.  
Grant me your peace in my heart and soul.***

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If you find it difficult to believe in the God you’ve been reading about—or if you would just like to know more—think about coming to one of our Alpha Courses, run on-line at the moment, open to anybody. Contact John Young, by telephone on 664 3067 or by email on [JYoung@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:JYoung@churchofscotland.org.uk) for any more information.



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