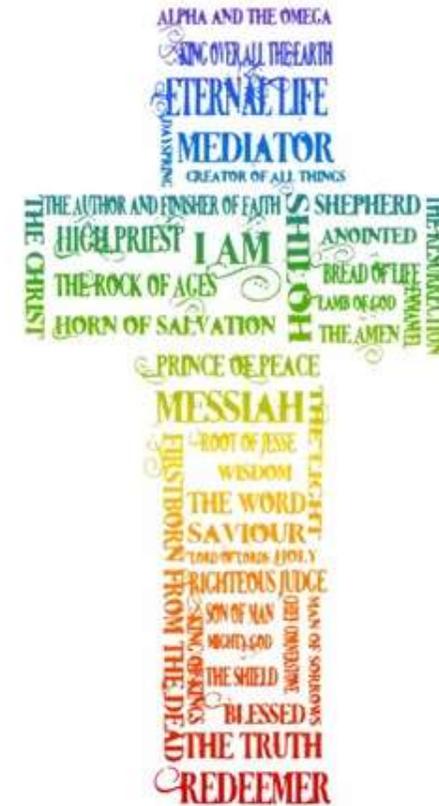


# Real Hope

Sharing Jesus, transforming lives



Daily readings from St Mary's and St Cuthbert's

## Happy New Year

It may be that the prospect of 2021 fills you with hope, or dread!

Will this year be better than the last?

Will we finally be able to hug each other again?

What will the impact of Covid-19 and Brexit be on our country?

Christmas reminded us that, wonderfully, God the Son came to earth to open the way to heaven. Despite this, however, there is a lot of uncertainty around as 2021 begins.

One thing that is certain, however, is the unchanging, reliable, eternal goodness of God:

“Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! His love endures forever.”  
(1 Chronicles 16:34)

St Mary’s and St Cuthbert’s are full of people whose lives bear witness to this amazing truth. Each one of us has a story to tell - of God’s love and faithfulness to us and of the way he has changed our lives.

What follows is a collection of 60 verses that mean a great deal to us – some shorter, some longer, all precious. There is space for any notes you might want to take, and every seven days there will be a special prayer to use in your devotions, if you’d like to.

It is our hope that this will encourage you to begin 2021 in the Word of God, and to lean on the goodness of the Lord in these uncertain times.

**Your word is a lamp for my feet,  
a light on my path.  
I have taken an oath and confirmed it,  
that I will follow your righteous laws.  
I have suffered much;  
preserve my life, Lord, according to your word.  
Accept, Lord, the willing praise of my mouth,  
and teach me your laws.  
Though I constantly take my life in my hands,  
I will not forget your law.  
The wicked have set a snare for me,  
but I have not strayed from your precepts.  
Your statutes are my heritage forever;  
they are the joy of my heart.  
My heart is set on keeping your decrees  
to the very end.**

**Psalm 119:105-112**

## **Day 1: Psalm 121**

*Fiona Poole*

As someone who likes to walk in the countryside and admire the view from the top of a hill, this psalm reminds me that it is good to get a different perspective. You become aware of how small we are in comparison to the great hills and valleys around you. I'm reminded that God has created all this beauty. It speaks of his creativity, his splendour, majesty, power, and attention to detail. And yet, 'What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (to quote another psalm: Ps 8:4). When life gets tough, it's easy to think 'What can be done?', 'It's hopeless.' 'What will happen now?' In these times, I remember that the God who created such splendour, is powerful enough to do the impossible. He can create beauty and order out of life's difficulties and chaos. We can trust Him. He knows what He is doing. Like the view from the top, God sees a different view. Verses 3-8 tells us that God is our Keeper, who watches over us, attends to us carefully, and will neither slumber nor sleep. Not only is God all powerful but He is ever watchful. God knows all about us: our thoughts, feelings, hopes, dreams and fears. Knowing this helps me to trust God when I pray – that He is working for good (even though, at the time, I can't see it), and will bring about something I hadn't comprehended, in a way I couldn't have known. "From where does my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth." v1

Notes:

## **Day 2: Luke 24:13-35**

*Mark Tomlinson*

I have always found it very easy to identify with these disciples walking along the road, heartbroken and confused because of all the events of Jesus' arrest, trials and death. That wasn't what they had expected to happen. Although remembering some of what Jesus had told them, their grief didn't allow them to remember His promises, especially that He would rise from the dead and be the 'blessing for all the nations'. When Jesus joined them on the road, prevented them from knowing who He was and did a Bible Overview with them, from the Old Testament, I get as excited as they did... "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?". Every time I understand something from the Bible, I know it isn't because of my own intellect or cleverness, but because God is opening my eyes and allowing me to see and that makes my heart burn with excitement! I hope it does for you as well

Notes:

**Day 3: Isaiah 26:3-4**

Val Oliver

These verses speak the truth and give comfort and hope for the present and the future!

Notes:

**Day 4: Psalm 23**

*Caleb Holmes, Katherine Birch and Paula Finnie*

This is one of the first ones I learnt and I like it because knowing God is my shepherd means I'm looked after by someone who cares about me.

- Caleb

Total classic of a verse and pops up everywhere too so it feels like a constant reminder- just so comforting, "I will fear no evil". Imagine that: there is no evil in this whole evil world that can frighten the psalmist- awesome stuff!

- Katherine

Notes:

**Day 5: 1 John 3:1-2**

*Alex Jackson*

I can almost feel the excitement and the wonder of John as he wrote these verses. What manner of love is this that we should be called children of God, and that is what we are! We who were once alienated from God and who once walked in darkness have now received what I believe is perhaps highest privilege - adoption into God's family, to be God's own children. The love that God our Father has shown to us is so high and immeasurable but it is true.

These verses speak to me of the precious doctrine of election and how we no longer belong to this world but to Him who loved us. This world is not our home, but we now have one in heaven, prepared by the Lord Jesus who bought us. And when He appears, "it will be paradise. His face forever to behold; His face forever to behold".

Notes:

**Day 6: Psalm 94:19**

*Sarah Parikh*

This pandemic has been a troubling and worrying time, but we can be sure that God will comfort us and that we are secure in his presence

Notes:

**Day 7: John 16:33**

*Rachel Pepler*

This verse is a comforting reminder to me that firstly we can, and should, expect trouble. We shouldn't be shocked when we go through difficult times. But secondly, and most definitely the greater thing, is that we can be sure of Christ's victory; Jesus has already overcome the world, beaten sin and death.

Jesus was speaking these words to His disciples right before His arrest, trial and crucifixion, and even in the knowledge of what suffering He was yet to face He provided such comforting words giving absolute assurance that it was already finished. What selfless love!

Notes:

**My God, my strength, in you will I trust, my buckler and the horn of my salvation and my high tower. Therefore, ever faithful God, let your waking eyes be upon me, and prove yourself my defence from the power and attacks of the great enemy; be our watch and guard, surround us with your protection as with a wall, that nothing can harm us, for in you alone is our salvation – to you do I raise my eyes, from you alone comes our help.**

**Johann Habermann**

**Day 8: Philippians 4:4-7**

*Ellen Wells and Celia Rowe*

This is my 'go to' verse when I am facing uncertainty or something challenging and I am starting to feel anxious about it and I need a reminder about what to do: pray about it! And it turns out Paul's words are true - peace comes with knowing you have given something up in prayer and it is now in the Lord's hands. This goes well with the wonderful words from the song What a Friend We Have in Jesus: 'Oh what peace we often forfeit, oh what needless pain we bear. All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.'

- Ellen

I have several favourite bible verses but I often come back to this one it seems as I have a tendency to worry. This verse helps me to turn my anxiety into prayer and reassures me of God's love and his work in our lives through his son Jesus Christ for his glory. It reminds me to be grateful for his blessings, proves that God is in control and that we can trust him in everything and talk to him about anything. It speaks to my heart and gives me peace of mind!

- Celia

Notes:

**Day 9: Romans 15:13**

*Ros Whittaker*

It just amazes me that all we need to do is trust God and keep our eyes fixed on him and he does everything else. It reminds me of my grand-parents little dog Mandy who would sit up on her hind legs for absolutely ages on the command 'Trust' because she had absolutely no doubt she would be rewarded with a treat when she heard the words 'Paid for'!

Notes:

**Day 10: Matthew 11:28-30**

*Tammy Porter*

These verses mean so much to me as I came across them as a new Christian many years ago. The knowledge that the creator God cares that much for me, that I don't have to deal with everything myself is amazing. Such a refreshing idea from that of society where you are taught to be self-sufficient and not rely on anyone. What a relief!

Notes:

**Day 11: Daniel 3:16-18**

*Neale Hayward-Shott*

I have a very simple view of the Bible, possibly because of teaching Sunday School for several years, possibly because I'm a bear of little brain. Either way this statement by Daniel's friends reflects a straightforward belief and trust in our sovereign Lord. The boys understand that God is powerful, far more powerful than any human king, but they don't take it upon themselves to make The Lord's decisions for Him. They trust that whatever The Lord decides to do will be the right thing. And they are more interested in doing what is right to bring glory to The Lord than to save themselves

Notes:

**Day 12: Romans 8:31**

*Chris Poole*

This verse means to me that through suffering through anxiety, God is still with me, provides and loves me completely.

Notes:

**Day 13: Philippians 4:13**

*Ian Ashworth*

This was the memory verse at my confirmation service in St Mary's in the early 1980's from the bishop. It's really helpful to me because it is short enough to remember! and is a reference point to a promise from God in my life which is relevant in all situations and over the years has encouraged and reminded me of God's goodness and grace through my life.

Notes:

**Day 14: Psalm 46:10**

*Adele Beeston and Katherine Birch*

When things are challenging in life I often try to manage the situation by myself, that's when things start to unravel even more! This verse reminds me to just stop, to listen to God. and to rely on His strength, not mine.

- Adele

Another great reminder to me to stop running around like some sort of maniac... Just be still and spend time with God... I need to hear this a lot in my life!

- Katherine

Notes:

**Almighty and everlasting God, you are always more ready to hear us than we are to pray. You give us more than we desire or deserve. Pour out your mercy upon us; forgiving us of those things that weigh us down and giving us those good things we are not worthy of. For we ask it through the merits of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.**

**Collect for the 12<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

**Day 15: Romans 8:38-39**

*Mel Navesey*

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notes:

**Day 16: Jeremiah 29:11**

*Binnie Thompson and Dina Harris*

The reason why Jeremiah 29v11 is a favourite verse is that it reminds me that God loves me and has a wonderful plan for my life even when things aren't going the way I want them to go. It feels quite apt at the moment with anxieties surrounding the current pandemic. God is in control.

- Dina

Notes:

**Day 17: Proverbs 3:5-6**

*Elizabeth Duxbury, Lesley Williams and Christine Hawthorne*

The more I study these verses, the more powerful and effective they are in strengthening my walk of faith. Trust in the Lord means 'I lean on him, am confident in him'. Why wouldn't I when he is our creator and all-knowing God? He sees 'The big picture'. Our heart, the bible tells us is 'the wellspring of life'; it affects our actions, our priorities, so we must guard it and recognise that it is influenced primarily by our thoughts. The Message version of the bible says 'Don't try to figure out everything you do - God's the one to keep you on track'.

- Christine

Notes:

**Day 18: 2 Corinthians 4:7**

*Mike Newman*

This verse reminds me of:

- My own weakness - physical and spiritual
- The immense privilege of being a Christian - to know Christ
- The unfathomable beauty of Christ - this treasure
- Where my true strength should always lie - the all surpassing power of God.

Notes:

### **Day 19: Romans 8:1**

*Nick Singleton*

I could have chosen any number of verses from Romans 8 as favourites e.g.: “We are more than conquerors”, “Our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” etcetera), however I think this one tops it. In fact, the last verses in Romans 8 are saying the same thing in a different way that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

In the West we live in a world of exams and assessments. If you are a Doctor, you take numerous exams and at annual appraisals you look at how things are going. As Christians we can look at our lives and see if we are living up to our calling. Even as Christians we still sin. This could lead us into despondency that we are not good enough. Satan can put seeds of doubt into you. But the good news of the Gospel is here in this verse. If we have accepted Christ as Lord, we are no longer condemned as Jesus has paid the price of our sin by being a sin offering on the cross. That means that we can relax. “My yoke is easy”. We can feel joy. We know we are accepted as God’s children. Jesus gives us His Spirit so that we can live in the right way. We won’t get it right all the time, we still sin but He is changing us. But the bottom line is that we won’t be condemned because Jesus has paid the price. Alleluia. And in one of my favourite hymns: ‘And can it be?’ The last verse says it all:

No condemnation now I dread,  
Jesus and all in Him is mine,  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th’eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Notes:

### **Day 20: Ephesians 2:1-10**

*James Johnson*

These ten verses are the gospel in a nutshell. We were dead in our sins, incapable of doing anything but decay. ‘BUT’ we were raised to life in Christ so that we could do good works and have faith that comes only from him, not from ourselves. I love this passage because it is the Christian faith. We don’t have to guess or tease it out. It’s just right there.

Notes:

**Day 21: John 3:16**

*Lois Holmes and Becki Bell*

I like this verse because the Juice Puppets helped me to learn it and it reminds me what God has done!

- Lois

This verse means a lot to me as it shows how much God loves us all by sending his own son as a sacrifice for our sin even though he was perfect and without sin, even during the same trials we face here on earth in human form.

- Becki

Notes:

**God, we thank you that you are the only God with scars. That this is the God we serve: who knows our pain to an infinite degree, and who rose victoriously, and who promises us that this is not the end of the story for us.**

**For all who put our hope in you, God, we will receive a resurrection, a new body, a new earth. And we long for that day: we groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. God, we groan, and we look to you, and we know that even when we don't know how to pray as we ought, your Spirit intercedes for us with groanings that are too deep for words—that are in accordance with your will.**

**And so, Lord, we lean on that this morning, and we ask that you would take our groans and take our weeping and take our pain and turn them into beauty, turn them into praise. This is something that only you can do, O God, so we look to you.**

**Quina Aragon**

**Day 22: Luke 23:39-43**

*Hayley*

The man hanging next to Jesus on the cross was a criminal and having been found guilty for the crimes he committed he was in the process of being executed in one of the most awful ways that mankind has designed. We only see a tiny snapshot of him, we don't know his name or what he was like, but I reckon we can safely say we're seeing him in the worst moment of his life. Though that isn't the whole story because as he's dying in unbearable pain he is made alive in Christ. His life has been transformed, he has been adopted into God's family and his place in the new creation is secured. Although I could say I'm nothing like this man, in reality I can't help but see myself in him so clearly. He had absolutely nothing to offer Jesus, he was a criminal, naked and an hour or two from death, what use could he be to Jesus? Why would Jesus ever want him? Yet this man came to Jesus in faith and in his love Jesus saved him, just like he saved me when I was dead because of my sin with no way of helping myself. Unlike the criminal I don't know when I'll die, it could be an hour or several decades away. But just like the man I know exactly what will happen when I do, I'll be with Jesus in paradise.

Notes:

**Day 23: Romans 3:23-24**

*Dom Rowe*

I really like these two verses because it sums up the truth of the gospel really well – 23 tells us the world is broken, there is not one 'good' person for all have sinned, - this helps me to strive for the perfection of Jesus but not to despair when I inevitably fail so that I can pick myself up and try again. And we will eventually fail because ALL fall short of the glory of God which is quite bleak until you get to v24 which then tells us of the Redemption that comes freely through Christ. All have sinned - but all are justified through his grace and love. And it comes freely so that all we have to do is accept the gift that is offered to us. It is reassuring to know that even though we fail and we fall short, we are still loved and Saved through Christ. The verses just sum up the gospel really neatly.

Notes:

**Day 24: Psalm 27:14**

*Lesley Williams*

Wait for the Lord;  
be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord.

Notes:

**Day 25: Psalm 121**

*Alison King and Nigel Hooper*

This was my school psalm, so we had to learn it and recite it at numerous assemblies. Being someone who loves mountains and used to climb a lot, the first 3 verses had particular impact! On becoming a Christian, the words then had deeper meaning – reflecting God’s loving nature to protect me but also reminding me that He is the maker of all creation.

- Nigel

Notes:

**Day 26: Habakkuk 3:17-18**

*Sue Southgate and Val Oliver*

This is my lockdown version of a situation (in my case) nowhere near as serious as Habakkuk's was.

Though there are no birthday parties to enjoy

And no services in church with our Christian family,

Though there are no meals to share at home or out with our friends,

And no singing together in worship,

Though we cannot hug or kiss our friends and family and Covid stops us

visiting our loved ones in hospitals and nursing homes,

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

I will be joyful in God my Saviour!

- Sue

Notes:

**Day 27: Deuteronomy 10:12**

*Aileen Latham*

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God ask of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul...

Notes:

## **Day 28: Psalm 46**

*Irene Singleton*

I find this psalm very encouraging:

“God is our refuge and our strength” (Verse 1).

The psalmist describes catastrophic natural disasters and extreme political chaos.

In Cheadle we are not likely to experience earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides and raging storms at sea though people were seriously affected by flooding last year including my parents-in-law. We are not likely to experience violent political situations though when I lived in Kenya the government was overthrown and there was danger and uncertainty for a time.

Life can be difficult for various reasons – bereavement, loneliness, illness, financial problems and so on- particularly at the time of a pandemic. It is good to know that we can rely on God’s protection and strength.

In Verse 4 we read about “a river whose streams make glad the city of God”. This is a beautiful river rather than a destructive torrent. It makes me think of a lovely, peaceful scene. I feel God’s presence.

At the end of the psalm we read:

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Verse 10).

We should thank and worship our God who loves and protects us.

Notes:

**O God, the strength of all that put their trust in you, mercifully accept our prayers; and because, through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do nothing good without you, grant us your grace to help us to keep your commandments and please you in both word and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

**Collect for the 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Trinity**

**Day 29: Philippians 1:6**

*Fiona Poole*

In a Church as big as ours, it's easy to compare ourselves with others and think: 'I wish I had their knowledge, wisdom, passion, compassion, servant heart, generosity etc'. This verse reminds me that we are all works in progress. We are not the finished article; we are not perfect. God is still working within us – if we will let Him. I've been a Christian for around 46 years, yet the more I read the Bible, the more there is still to learn about God and about myself. I've learnt to try not to compare myself (too much!), as we are all on the same journey but at different points along the way. The great thing is that we can learn from each other and build one another up as we share what God has been teaching us – helping others on their journey. Each time I feel uncomfortable because I fall short of what God wants me to be, I try to remember that God is showing me how to change, and through His Holy Spirit is continuing the good work He began.

Notes:

**Day 30: Isaiah 26:12**

*Steve Whitaker*

We spend so much time thinking about our achievements, or lack of, so this verse rightly gives God the credit and reminds us what could have been if we had chosen to involve Him.

Notes:

**Day 31: Psalm 16:8**

*Lesley Ashworth*

Stan preached on Psalm 16 very early in in the pandemic and this verse just gripped my heart as one I needed to hold in to in the weeks and months ahead. To be honest, I felt pretty shaken by the whole situation and quite wobbly in many ways. This verse reminded me to take the focus off myself and my feelings and thoughts and focus on God, which would (and did) give me security. Being Christ-centred really!

Notes:

**Day 32: Micah 6:8**

*Jodi-Beth Chidlow*

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy  
and to walk humbly with your God.

Notes:

**Day 33: 2 Corinthians 5:7**

*Liz Woods*

I love this - I think I have a pretty simple faith - can't really explain it but I know He is there. I've felt Gods presence in my life when I was at my worse and my best – my dad was very seriously ill in hospital with little chance of survival, I sat at his bedside and felt God's arms around me as I prayed through the night, he pulled through much to the amazement of the doctors. I know that God created this beautiful world for us, I know Jesus died on the cross for me and that He loves me, I don't need to understand or explain God to believe in Him.

Notes:

**Day 34: Romans 12:4-5**

*Katie King*

For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Notes:

### **Day 35: Ephesians 6:10-18**

*Helen Tomlinson*

This passage has always had a special place for me after I studied it at a teenage Christian holiday and it has served me well since then, especially through challenging times in my life.

We have shared this with our house group and all try to arm ourselves with God's armour on at the start of each fresh day. This helps us to remain strong in our faith, especially at times of temptation. The passage provides us with a practical toolbox and guidance on how we live our lives during tough times. We can rest with God and know that the forces of evil can never steal from us our relationship in Christ.

Notes:

**We pray you, increase every good desire which we feel already in our hearts; let us always live in a way that is appropriate as disciples of Jesus Christ. Incline us to be more and more in love with your commands, until they are written on our hearts. Stir up our wills to love them, and to cling to them as our life and hope.**

**John Wesley**

**Day 36: Joshua 1:9**

*Jo Davids*

My journey with this verse began as I was preparing to go off to university, it was written inside a card given to me wishing me all God's blessings on my new adventures. It helped me then to step out in faith and courage and has been with me ever since. God has taken me and my family to different places, even stopped us from going where he did not want us, and each time has shown us how to live for him wherever we are. He led us to St Cuthbert's in 2004, me to the Parish Office in 2015 and these last 12 months has shown us how as a family he wants to work in us and through us for his glory.

Notes:

**Day 37: Psalm 61:2**

*Mel Navesey*

From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint;  
lead me to the rock that is higher than I.

Notes:

**Day 38: Philippians 2:10-11**

*Christine Blakeley*

These verses encompass God's greatness, our certain hope and the drive for mission that all who bow the knee that day will truly know and serve the Lord

Notes:

**Day 39: Ephesians 3:20-21**

*Stan Tomalin*

These verses remind me of just how mind-bendingly awesome God is. Not only can he do more than we can ever ask, or even more than we can imagine - he can do immeasurably more than any of us can even imagine. Whatever comes to mind, God's power can just blow that out of the water. What God can do is so big that if we could ever grasp it, it would make our minds melt! And even more amazingly, that power is at work within us for our glory! These verses remind me to never fall into the trap of ever thinking small thoughts about God.

Notes:

**Day 40: Psalm 37:4-6**

*Jon Drayton and Rob Kates*

Take delight in the Lord,  
and he will give you the desires of your heart.  
Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in him and he will do this:  
He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn,  
your vindication like the noonday sun.

Notes:

**Day 41: Isaiah 53:4-6**

*Becki Bell*

This is a reminder that we are important to God, we are his people and his creation and proof he is still there for us now just as he was then.

Notes:

**Day 42: Psalm 100**

*Sarah Holmes*

This Psalm is a great reminder of God's love and faithfulness. It's also special to me because we had it at our wedding!

Notes:

**Let no riches make me ever forget myself, no poverty ever make me forget you; let no hope or fear, no pleasure or pain, no accident without, no weakness within, hinder or discompose my duty, or turn me from the ways of your commandments. O let your Spirit dwell with me forever.**

**Jeremy Taylor**

**Day 43: Hebrews 12:1-3**

*Rachel Pepler*

Jesus endured the hatred of those He came to save and accepted the shame and suffering of the cross, because He knew that He would have the eternal joy of sitting at the right hand of God.

When I find myself distracted by things in the world about me, or become downtrodden with the trials and tribulations of life, these verses are a reminder that our goal is the same as Jesus', and I need to fix my eyes back on Him until I've finished the race.

Notes:

**Day 44: Exodus 14:14**

*Katherine Birch*

What else is there to say? Stop fighting! The Lord WILL fight for you! I love everything about this verse. There's no room for wishy washy musings here- its definitive and its hugely encouraging.

Notes:

**Day 45: Job 42:2***Ellen Wells*

Job is a really hard book to read but imagine how much harder it would have been for Job to live through it. And yet when we reach the end of the book Job is able to see that it was all part of God's plan and praise him for it. Am I ever going to go through anything like Job did? I hope not. But that doesn't mean life isn't hard sometimes. When life gets tough I can turn to this verse as a reminder to 1. Keep praising God and 2. God is always in control and has a plan!

Notes:

**Day 46: Psalm 139***Lindsey Campbell*

As a knitter, crafter and arty person, I can identify with the "creative" elements of God's character. "You knit me together in my mother's womb" speaks of the skill and detail in every cell we are made of. When I knit something (especially an item for a new baby), I'm thinking of that person in every stitch. The item is created especially for them, with love in every single stitch. Similarly, "you hem me in, behind and before": In crafting terms, hemming makes something secure, and stops it fraying around the edges, just as God's protection stops us from fraying around the edges.

Notes:

**Day 47: 1 Peter 5:7**

*Caroline Salisbury*

Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

Notes:

**Day 48: Hebrews 11:1**

*Steve Whitaker*

If I were asked to define 'faith' it would probably fill a page, but here it's defined so wonderfully in just one sentence.

Notes:

**Day 49: Psalm 91**

*Claire Taylor and Lesley Williams*

In my early 20's I became seriously ill and at that time my Dad introduced me to this Psalm. I eventually returned to good health but reading this Psalm each night helped me to cope at a difficult time in my life and still brings me peace today.

- Lesley

Notes:

**In common with so many others, I seem to live at a “poor dying rate” when I might have “life more abundantly.”**

**I know the possibilities of conformity to Christ are only to be measured by the exceeding riches of your grace, and the exceeding greatness of your power, and yet I sometimes seem content without a full participation in the glorious experience which your love offers.**

**Lord, enlighten and quicken me, I beg you! Put forth in me the mighty grace which will make my daily life a proof that you are working your own will in me, and giving me to know at least in some measure, “what is the exceeding greatness of His power towards us who believe.”**

**Susannah Spurgeon**

**Day 50: Philippians 4:5-7**

*Gill Hooper*

This has always been a favourite passage of mine. It has helped me in times of worry and anxiety with the wonderful promise that the peace of God, which is greater than anything I can even begin to understand, will guard not only my heart, but also my mind. I need to hold onto this promise, especially now when times are uncertain.

I would normally quote this passage from verse 6, but I recently listened to an online talk which focussed on four words in verse 5 – The Lord is near. How powerful these words are and how comforting to know that He is always near, no matter what we're going through. Wow!

Notes:

**Day 51: John 16:33**

*Dean Finnie*

I love the simplicity and the matter of factness about this verse. In this world you will have trouble. Full stop. Not you might have trouble but you will have trouble. I always think of the verse when the age old discussion about why bad things happen to good people debate. Quite simply it's not about bad things happening to good people but rather just the simple fact that in this world you/we/me will have trouble. End of. Trouble is nothing more than a simple fact of the human condition.

However, Jesus then goes on to encourage his disciples with one of the most amazing promises: "But take heart! I have overcome the world". This should have us doing cartwheels! We can be encouraged knowing that the battle is won, Jesus has overcome, so regardless of what trouble may come our way, He has already overcome and we can draw strength to face the challenges by taking heart in Him.

The Christian faith is no guarantee of an easy life or a quiet life, in fact it should be quite the opposite looking at the things Jesus and his disciples taught. But regardless of whether it's raining or the sun is shining the simple truth of John 16:33 remains undimmed.

God is awesome!

Notes:

**Day 52: 1 Corinthians 12:12**

*Rob Munro*

Notwithstanding that I am charged as a minister to preach the whole counsel of God and not have favourite bits... my favourite verse is probably 1 Corinthians 12:12 "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body – so it is with Christ!"

It is one of the first verses I remember studying as a new Christian, but it has always amazed me and encouraged me how God brings into his family such a wider diversity of people, with all sorts of gifts and talents, but by his Spirit makes us one in Him. That means every person matters; everyone has been gifted to contribute in some way – however large or small that is; and every one of us is crucial for the faith and encouragement of the fellowship. I love it because it keeps me humble – even a minister is no more important than anyone else in the body of Christ; but it also keeps me attentive to others – because we are all the poorer if someone isn't enabled to use the gifts God has given them to build us up – and my job and joy is to help God's people be who He has called them to be – one in Him!

Notes:

**Day 53: Isaiah 6:1-8, John 12:41**

*Anthony Holmes*

700 years before Christ, Isaiah has this astounding vision of the Lord, who's so majestic that even just the train of his robe fills the entire temple. But here's the punchline - John tells us that Isaiah saw CHRIST in his heavenly glory. I'm very happy with the idea that Jesus was 'fully man', but this passage reminds me vividly just how 'fully God' he is too!

Notes:

**Day 54: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 18**

*Rob Campbell*

Having an academic background, it's fun to research and learn, and easy to have confidence in your own knowledge.

However, it's also true that: the more you know - the more you worry - the more you realise you don't know - the more you rely on your knowledge and try to fill the gaps. Actually, trusting in God is a challenge when you try to fully understand the mysteries our faith.

Following a brain injury that has reduced his ability to study and research, Rob is far more able to "trust in the Lord with all his heart and lean not on his own understanding."

- Lindsey

Notes:

**Day 55: Luke 2:19**

*Steve Whitaker*

Mary's devotion to her Lord is displayed by her wisdom and humility, which should help shape our Christian lives.

Notes:

**Day 56: Isaiah 33:17**

*Ian Chidlow*

This is a relatively new passage for me. I've read the Bible, but we all know that verses often pop out at us on the umpteenth time of reading, and we wonder "How have I have not noticed that before?!"

I love a meaty bit of doctrine. I really, really enjoy chatting through the 'deep things of God,' and studying theology. And don't even get me started on church history! But at the end of the day, for about a year now, I've been coming back to this verse.

"Your eyes will behold the King in his beauty."

Honestly, this verse does something to me that an afternoon reading church history will never do – it hits me somewhere right at the centre of my being and tugs at a desire that all of us have, to be in the presence of the One we were made for, and gaze on his beauty for the rest of our days. I can barely put it in to words. This verse perfectly describes what I want deep down, what I long for, what will complete and satisfy me forever. It gives me chills to think that it's true.

"Your eyes will behold the King in his beauty." To say that I can't wait is a little bit of an understatement.

Notes:

**O Lord, in whom is our hope, remove far from us, we pray, empty hopes and presumptuous confidence. Make our hearts so right with your most holy and loving heart, that hoping in you we may do good; until that day when faith and hope shall be abolished by sight and possession, and love shall be all in all.**

**Christina Rossetti**

**Day 57: John 1:1-14**

*Jon Drayton*

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Notes:

**Day 58: Romans 5:3-4**

*Bethan Holmes*

I like these verses because they show how God uses our suffering for good!

Notes:

**Day 59: Matthew 6:34**

*Katherine Birch*

I'm a great worrier and if I didn't stop myself I would spend all my days worrying and never get anything done... this is the reminder I need to focus on the here and now...

Notes:

**Day 60: Great Is Thy Faithfulness (Lamentations 3:22-24)**

*Abi Blakeley*

"Great is Thy faithfulness," O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

*"Great is Thy faithfulness!" "Great is Thy faithfulness!"  
Morning by morning new mercies I see;  
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—  
"Great is Thy faithfulness," Lord, unto me!*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!

Notes:

Praise the Lord, my soul;  
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.  
Praise the Lord, my soul,  
and forget not all his benefits—  
who forgives all your sins  
and heals all your diseases,  
who redeems your life from the pit  
and crowns you with love and compassion,  
who satisfies your desires with good things  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's...

...The Lord is compassionate and gracious,  
slow to anger, abounding in love.  
He will not always accuse,  
nor will he harbour his anger forever;  
he does not treat us as our sins deserve  
or repay us according to our iniquities.  
For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
so great is his love for those who fear him;  
as far as the east is from the west,  
so far has he removed our transgressions from us...

...Praise the Lord, all his works  
everywhere in his dominion.

Praise the Lord, my soul.