**Home Service Sheet for 5th March 2023**

**Call To Worship      John 3:14-17**

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, You have revealed Yourself to us through raising up Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. By looking to Him in faith and with repentance it is Your good and gracious pleasure to grant us salvation to eternal life. Lord, we thank You and praise You for the wondrous gift of Your Son, and for the forgiveness that You offer to us in Him. Your love for us is truly amazing, deeper and more far-reaching that we could ever possibly hope for or imagine. Help us today to be reminded of Your grace and love, and help us to respond to it in thanksgiving and obedience. This we ask now in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Hymn                                     Safe in the shadow of the Lord**by ***Timothy Dudley Smith***

<https://youtu.be/EWSJ7xeYlv8>

1 Safe in the shadow of the Lord, beneath his hand and power,
I trust in him, I trust in him, my fortress and my tower.

2 My hope is set on God alone, though Satan spreads his snare,
I trust in him, I trust in him, to keep me in his care.

3 From fears and phantoms of the night, from foes about my way,
I trust in him, I trust in him, by darkness as by day.

4 His holy angels keep my feet secure from every stone;
I trust in him, I trust in him, and unafraid go on.

5 Strong in the everlasting Name, and in my Father's care,
I trust in him, I trust in him, who hears and answers prayer.

6 Safe in the shadow of the Lord, possessed by love divine,
I trust in him, I trust in him, and meet his love with mine.

**The Lord’s Prayer**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

**Bible Reading                    Psalm 121:1-8**

I lift up my eyes to the hills.
    From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
    who made heaven and earth.

He will not let your foot be moved;
    he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel
    will neither slumber nor sleep.

The Lord is your keeper;
    the Lord is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
    nor the moon by night.

The Lord will keep you from all evil;
    he will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
    your going out and your coming in
    from this time forth and forevermore.

**Reflection**

From the windows at the front of our home in Riddlesden we can see part of the hill on which the village is built. We can’t see much beyond the properties built on Ilkley Road, but nonetheless it is a pleasant enough view of the hill. Beyond that is the start of Ilkley Moor which would take you over the top by Keighley Gate and then down into the town of Ilkley. There is something rather lovely about the view of hills as we look up towards them. Sometimes they are in shadow because of the sun, and other times their peaks may be shrouded in clouds. Yet we know that they are there and will remain part of the landscape for the foreseeable future.

In our Bible reading today, the Psalmist writes of looking to the mountains and hills. Perhaps these are the hills surrounding Jerusalem, including the Mount of Olives on which Jesus would be arrested. Maybe he is referring to other hills elsewhere in Ancient Israel? What we can be sure of, though, is that these hills or mountains redirected his attention to God. Do we ever feel closer to God as we look at the beauty of flowers, the variety of insects and animals, or the majesty of great landscapes? As we read elsewhere in the Scriptures, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky aboveproclaims his handiwork.” (Psalm 19:1) Creation can and will point us towards the One who made it in the first place – Almighty God!

As the Psalmist looks at creation he is prompted to ask a question – “From where does my help come?” Sometimes we may well ask ourselves similar questions, especially when times are tough. The Psalmist answers his own question firmly by writing “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” God is our strength and refuge, our ever present help in times of trouble (Psalm 46:1), and by remembering these wonderful truths revealed to us in God’s Word we can and should be encouraged. The Psalmist goes on to remind us of how intimately God is involved in our lives, “He will not let your foot be moved”.

God cares for us, loves us, protects us and watches over us. Nothing that we do is hidden from Him, and there is nowhere we can go to escape His presence (Psalm 139). This should be a great encouragement and comfort to us, as God’s people. The Psalmist also reminds us that God does not sleep or take a break from watching over us. God cannot be caught off guard, or away from His position because He has promised to always be with us and never forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:8). If this was true for the Psalmist, how much more so is it true for Christians this side of Pentecost, in whom the Holy Spirit dwells?

Perhaps the most wonderful promise is found in verse 7 of this Psalm. Here we read “The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.” What does this mean in practice, though? Does this mean that bad things will never happen to us? Of course not, as we undoubtedly know from our own life experience and from the words of Scripture. For example, we read in the letter of James, “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.” (James 1:2-3) Troubles and persecution are a normal part of the Christian life, and although God promises to be with us through them, He does not promise to give us an easy life. This must mean something else, then.

The focus on God keeping our life is probably the biggest clue to what the Psalmist means here. This is not about this passing life, but rather about eternal life. The Psalmist looked up to the mountains, but our sight needs to be focused elsewhere. Jesus said, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” (John 3:14-15) Eternal life is found by looking to the Son of Man, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, in faith. However bad this life may be, God is with us and has made the way for us to be with Him forever where He will protect us, care for us and be our Saviour. To Him be the glory! Amen!

**Prayer**

Thank You Father God that You are our ever-present help in troubled times. Thank You also that by the blood of Christ we have access to Your throne of grace, for love, mercy and forgiveness of sin. Loving God, we thank You for the many friends, family and loved ones that You have placed in our lives. We ask that You would protect and care for each one during the coming days, weeks, months and years. Lord, You are our Fortress and our Shield, our Stronghold and our Protector. Thank You for the many precious promises that You have given us in Your Word, including the wondrous one that ‘those who dwell in the shelter of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty’. Thank You, Lord. Hear this prayer for we ask it in Jesus’ Name, amen.

**Benediction**

Gracious God, lift our eyes up to see You as You truly are. You are our hope, our salvation, our protector and ever present help in times of trouble. Help us to keep our eyes focused on You each day that we might walk in Your ways and seek Your glory. In Jesus’ Name we pray, amen.