

ALTON BAPTIST CHURCH

eService

Sunday 31 January 2021

Lift up your eyes

Welcome

We hope you will be greatly blessed as I have during the preparation in the way our Lord leads and guides us all.

So, wherever you are - in His house or in your home or elsewhere - we will know of His love and presence; as nothing can separate us from the love of our God.

Opening Prayer

O Lord we ask that you give us open minds and hearts as we come to You at this time of worship with You and others. That you will strengthen our belief in You as we listen to the YouTube videos, read your Word, speak with you in our prayers and as we consider what Your Word has to say to us to encourage and enrich our lives.

Our 1st hymn

Open my eyes that I may see

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIuRTBycoyE>

Prayers of Praise and Forgiveness

- We thank you for coming to earth to save us from our sins.**
- For your mercies and provisions for daily needs.**
- That you will forgive us for our sins.**

Reading for today

Psalm 121

A song of ascents.

**¹I lift up my eyes to the mountains –
where does my help come from?**

**²My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.**

³ He will not let your foot slip –

he who watches over you will not slumber;

⁴ indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵ The Lord watches over you –

the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ the sun will not harm you by day,

nor the moon by night.

⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm –

he will watch over your life;

⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

2nd hymn

He watches over you

<https://youtu.be/KsYeTCpVwx0>

Intercessory Prayers

- **Our previous minister Chris and his wife Ruth are both ill she following a severe stroke. We pray that Our Lord in knowing their wishes - His will be done.**
- **Guidance for our civic leaders as they navigate the best path during this COVID-19 pandemic and our relations with the EU..**
- **Guidance for our spiritual leaders to have the boldness of action that COVID-19 will not overwhelm their thoughts and actions.**
- **Safety for those of our 'emergency services' / NHS *et al* that they are kept safe from COVID-19 and physical attacks by people.**
- **I am sure some other national / world / local matter will turn up between now and Sunday.**

3rd hymn

How lovely on the mountains

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6TfPrQH97w>

Let us look at His word.

The writer of the psalm makes a bold unqualified statement of their action. "I lift up my eyes to the mountains" -. We must lift up our eyes and look at God. Do not go around looking down at the ground; that is where all the rubbish collects. Works of beauty are not usually found on the floor; well maybe mosaics perhaps?

Writers in the Old Testament imagined God living in the mountains that were impressive, majestic, beautiful and awe-inspiring. How great is that! Hoorah – Hallelujah.

How often do we see TV adverts selling us one of those scenic mountain railway journeys in far-flung places. The furthest such from the UK is down the northeast coast of the South Island New Zealand. For much of the journey it seems it is on the beach pushed there by sheer mountain cliffs and then it moves onto the Canterbury Plain with the magnificent Southern Alps in the distance, and even in high summer, (as we saw this time a year ago), there can be freshly fallen snow on the mountains. But on one such journey we made, nothing could be seen as most of the journey was in thick fog; we might as well have been on the Alton to Waterloo train!

I felt very sorry for the four coaches of tourists who had paid a lot of money for this once in a lifetime scenic view ride, but they were not going to experience that joy. The brochure pictures from the train window were correct; but did not tell the whole truth. (Did you notice in the last hymn that all of the pictures of the mountains were taken on clear blue sunny days. No fog in sight.)

I am sure we have all experienced something similar, that what was promised did not materialise and we were left feeling cheated like the train tourists. I want my money back.

So we can sometimes experience this with God when we feel he has left us and we appear not to be able to feel His presence. We cannot see God's mountain. We need to be assured of God's presence amongst us and of His goodness. His handiwork – the mountains – is as good as anything else. In New Zealand mountains are everywhere because they exist because the country sits geologically on the most active fault. Quakes occur all the time and we experienced a major quake – quite frightening. We do not need to go to NZ to see God's handiwork, we in Hampshire can become complacent and overlook His handiwork in our most beautiful countryside; it is all around us. Lift up our eyes to see Him everywhere. This is our "mountain" in which God dwells.

There will be those days when our view of God's mountain is obscured by the fog or our sin, the evil one has blown in as a fog of doubt and confusion so we cannot see God. We must not be depressed and like the tourists feel cheated as we need to be assured that because we cannot see His mountain He is not there. -- He is. -- We must pray in earnest for the fog to be lifted. He is faithful and is always with us. Be assured as in Matthew's Gospel the final words are of Jesus speaking –*.....And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*"

Even Jesus needed to pray to His Father for guidance and reassurance on the night before His Crucifixion. Jesus knew that His Father was there and we must know that too.

Let us be assured by this psalm of God's presence.

In the subsequent verses the psalmist details the virtues, actions and the benefits our God provides – Help – prevent foot from slipping – watches over us and He does not slumber – we will not be harmed – finally

“The Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

(without end – an unimaginable length of time!)

We have a gracious - God The Father - Jesus The Son *and*- The Holy Spirit.

4th Hymn

Praise God from whom all blessings flow

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuiAdWrIbIM>

Closing Prayer

Revelation 4:11

**11 ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honour and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.’**