

## “EAGLE’S WINGS”

Based on Psalm 91  
*A Favourite Passage of  
Margaret Stamp*

The Lenten season is several months behind us now. It is the time of year when I pull back from the usual tract of sermons and spend some time contemplating the Psalms. While some appreciate the change in conversation at the front of the church, others struggle with the material. For we know that the Psalms tend to be more reflective, thoughts from the inner heart of the poet, or plaintive calls for relief and respite from pain and suffering. The Psalms pull our minds inward, to the darker spaces in our heart, the shadows that often lurk on the edge of our vision, shadows we would rather pretend are not there. The ancient hymns lend themselves well to the Lenten season, but are no easy task for the seeking soul. Some are quite happy to see Easter celebrations come into view, for that means we preachers get back to more predictable rants!

Which makes it an interesting observation to note that this summer, when you, the congregation, were given the choice of Bible passages for our summer messages, you have chosen to head right back into the Psalms or similar material. I

was expecting an easy summer of floating through the odd parable, or story of Jesus’ teachings. You know the kind of scripture lesson I mean: the kind where we all feel warm and fuzzy and leave the pews singing “Jesus Loves Me” under our breath.

But no! Today, we find ourselves once again back into the Psalms. Which tells me, that when the layers of daily life, the façade of social niceties, and the inner cloak of Presbyterian stoicism have been peeled away, your heart longs to be close to God’s. Which is a good thing. A very good thing indeed.

Last week’s psalmist found the unmovable and unchangeable nature of the mountain to be a place where he found the comfort and the steadfastness of his God. Today’s psalmist finds similar comfort in the image of a bird, spreading its wings to full extent and sheltering all in its midst.

*He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge (v4).*

Perhaps it is like a mother quail, who fluffs out her feathers at the first sign of danger and sweeps the young chicks under the safety of juniper bushes,

brushing her wings from side to side, and gently calling to her young. Perhaps it is more like an eagle, whose grand expanse of wings, sharp eyes and ready talons force fear into the hearts of all who might challenge his authority. Either way, *you* feel protected, safe, and cared for, shielded from the troubles and turmoil of the world beyond the wings.

Because there is a world beyond the wings, isn’t there? There is a harsh world amongst the beauty of the landscape called life. Occasionally, that harsh world knocks. Prepared or not, ready to move through it or not, the wheel of life continues to spin. We have no choice, but to spin with it. It was no different to the ancient poet.

*You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday.*  
(v5,6)

Listen to the language used. The fear of the unknown and unseen was very real to the Psalmist. In a world with little understanding of germs and the spread of disease, death was a most unwelcome friend, sneaking up, often, unawares. Combat injuries, childbirth, infection all had a mystery

about them that did little to soothe the soul of a grieving child, husband or army colonial.

Our reasons to fear may have changed over the generations, but fear itself has not. In our day, we still fear change, death, loss of control, future decisions. Some might even argue that fear of losing ourselves, our values and purpose, is contributing to the rise of indifference in some parts of society. It is in fact, a fear of facing our inner self, and choosing to care for it. It builds instead a wall: between ourselves and our compassion towards others.

But as always, our Lord has the final word in these soul filled matters. While the Psalmist can reassure himself and others around him that God will not let

them “strike [their] foot against a stone” (v12), it is in fact God’s voice that has the final say in our ancient hymn today.

*“Because he[she] loves me,” says the Lord, “I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name. He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.” (v14, 15)*

Hear the Good News my friends. Our God will protect us, be available to us, guide us through our troubles, and deliver us to the other side of difficult decisions. He will honour us. Think about that for a minute. We speak so much in church about living and acting in a way to honour God, but we are reminded today that our

God is delighted to honour us, just the way we are.

*With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.” (v16)*

Our God will satisfy us, content us, and wrap us in a warm blanket of salvation.

Is the world feeling a little too much for you to handle today? Do you feel vulnerable? Are you afraid, not of things that go bump in the night, but of the very real fears that each of us carries, and few of us speak of? Rest with God. Trust God. Let Him protect you.

*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.]I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.” (v1,2)*