



Sunday 7 June to Sunday 14 June



Sunday 7 June 2020

Shelter

by Ruth Olsen

'Those who live in the shelter of the Most High ...' (Psalm 91:1).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

Where do you live?

The NIV uses the word 'dwell' in this verse. The Macquarie Dictionary has the associated meaning of 'live' as 'to dwell or reside', and for 'dwell' it says 'to abide as a permanent resident'. To 'dwell' has a sense of engaging more fully and deeply, with roots that go down, permanent, anchored. I have lived in many different locations, but it has taken time for my 'roots' to start going down before I could say that I 'dwell' there.

My Study Bible has a cross-reference from 'shelter' to Exodus 33:22. Moses asked the Lord to show him his glory (Exodus 33:12-23). The Lord said, 'OK ... but no-one may see me and live ... I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by ...' (Exodus 33:18,20,22). The Lord provided and gave shelter to Moses. There is trust and intimacy in that relationship. He does the same for us in and through his beloved son, Jesus!

Now in these times of current upheaval, we have opportunity to grow in trusting, and thereby knowing, the Lord as our shelter in and through Jesus. I join in Paul's prayer, 'that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith ... that [we] being rooted and established in love may ... grasp ... and know ...' (Ephesians 3:16-19).

Lord, help my roots go down deeper in you. Amen.

Monday 8 June 2020

Rest in his shadow

by Ruth Olsen

'Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty' (Psalm 91:1).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

What happens for you when you live somewhere for a longer time? For me, I start to feel 'at home' and a sense of belonging as some relationships grow. A process of time and being 'real' is needed for any relationship to grow and deepen and for us to then find rest there.

One thing I have learned is that the Lord has 'big shoulders'! I can be honest with him about whatever scares me, or is annoying, painful, or causing me grief. The psalmists would often 'let it all hang out', and that did not scare the Lord away. He is not shocked by our thoughts and feelings, although we might be! Instead, when we are real and honest with him, that's where we will discover his faithfulness. There we grow in resting and 'sheltering' in him and his promises.

Isaiah speaks of the Lord Almighty covering his people with the shadow of his hand (51:16; 49:2). It is a description of protection that is now opened to us by Jesus. We will see more of the Lord's assurance of protection as we journey through Psalm 91. The more we settle in and dwell in the shelter of the Most High, the more we will be enabled to rest in trusting him!

Lord, cause me to find rest in your shelter and shadow. Amen.

Tuesday 9 June 2020

Refuge

by Ruth Olsen

'This I declare about the Lord: he alone is my refuge, my place of safety ...' (Psalm 91:2).

[Read Psalm 91:1-8](#)

Try speaking that out loud, so that you hear yourself say it. Do so again and again. Let it move from you just saying it, to you actually declaring it out loud, right where you are. Pause for a moment and consider: what has happened through you doing what you just did? Why not talk with him out loud about that? For you are speaking, and declaring, words of faith, relationship, and taking him at his word.

Why can you do this? Because, as the psalmist says, and we can join in: 'He is my God, and I trust him'. By your speaking and declaring, you have moved your focus away from thoughts of fear, anxiety, or uncertainty regarding the current upheaval of life in our world, and you have fixed your attention to him who holds you in the palm of his hands. Jesus says that no one, nothing, can snatch us out of his hand, nor out of his Father's hand (see John 10:27-30). Can you picture yourself resting back and relaxing in his hand or leaning against his chest? That's the nature of the close relationship that Jesus offers us, to know his personal love and care (like the psalmist knew), as well as his corporate love and care for people.

Lord, I bless you that you are my refuge and place of safety! Amen.

Wednesday 10 June 2020

Safe in his hands

by Ruth Olsen

'For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease' (Psalm 91:3).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

I can imagine that, as a kid, you experienced that sinking feeling of having been trapped. A kids' game is one thing; deliberate deception and entrapment is another. The NIV translation of the Bible calls it 'the fowler's snare', a metaphor for danger from an enemy. That's no fun! From an enemy is one thing, but betrayal by a friend is another – as Jesus experienced from Judas, a disciple who wanted to force Jesus into action through not understanding that God's ways are different from those of the world (Isaiah 55:8-9). Troubles, traps and temptations happen in life. But there, because he knows where you are, look for the way out that the Lord provides so you can hold steady and trust him in that situation (1 Corinthians 10:13).

For example, take any deadly disease, such as the current invisible intruder. The NIV uses the word 'pestilence', to which the Macquarie Dictionary has 'a deadly epidemic disease; that which produces or tends to produce epidemic disease'. It's infectious, destructive to life, and injurious to peace and morals. You get the picture. These things happened in the psalmist's era as well. His response: as you live and dwell in the Lord's shelter, surely, he will protect you! Even if there is a second wave, and even if we die from the coronavirus, we are still safe in God's hands.

Lord, thank you that our lives are in your hands! Amen.

Thursday 11 June

Mother hen

by Ruth Olsen

'He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings' (Psalm 91:4).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

What a wonderful picture! We are his chicks, running to him like to a mother hen for protection, scrambling up in under his wings, tucking in under his feathers. Have you ever watched chickens do that? I have. Those chickens are very intentional and determined, squawking all the way if they are afraid! At other times, the mother hen calls them, and they come. They know their source of protection and provision. I have read of a mother hen giving her life to protect her chicks during a fire. Although she died, the chicks ran out from under her feathers and wings. That's dedicated covering and protection!

And that is how the psalmist describes the Lord covering you and me. We can tuck in close, feel his warmth, and listen for his heartbeat. He loves you and me even more than a mother hen loves her chicks. After all, he has given her that instinct for her young. He invites us to trust him, to grow in knowing deep closeness with him at such a time as this. Then this time of testing, of clarifying our focus, is not wasted! 'In everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding' (Philippians 4:6,7 NIV).

Lord, thank you that we find shelter in you! Amen.

Friday 12 June 2020

God's faithful promises

by Ruth Olsen

'... His faithful promises are your armour and protection.' (Psalm 91:4).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

If you have made a promise to someone, can you keep that promise, even when pressure is put on? Of course, it depends on the nature of the promise. We might say, 'I promise everything will be okay'. How do we know it will be okay if it's something we have no control over? Perhaps a different response is needed.

Yes, we are limited. Our desires and intentions are hopefully sincere, yet we are still limited. We fail each other. We can cause hurt, especially if we are in a situation of potential pressure, such as self-isolation or lockdown. There we need to press pause and assess, 'What am I focusing on here? Lord, help me, please!' Solomon once said, 'Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs' (Proverbs 10:12).

The Lord backs up his promises. His grace is all we need to help us (2 Corinthians 12:9-10). By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life, by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself (2 Peter 1:3). He tells us to not worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him. Then you will experience his peace that exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard our hearts and minds as we live in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:6-7).

Lord, thank you that your promises never fail! Amen.

Saturday 13 June 2020

Do not be afraid

by Ruth Olsen

'Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day. Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you.' (Psalm 91:5,7).

Read Psalm 91:1-8

When we dwell in trusting the Lord, especially so in during any time of upheaval and testing such as now, we will discover for ourselves the reality and truth of what the Bible says about him. He is our rock, our anchor in stormy seas. Yes, although there's uncertainty, threat, death or trouble around us, by holding onto him and his promises, he enables us to learn to become an overcomer. When he brings us through again, we will realise we have learned to know both him and ourselves in new ways.

Testing times like these are opportunities for growth. They are times to practise giving our fears to him, receiving his peace, beginning to recognise his presence with us and his sustaining and enabling power at work in us and through us. The Lord's desire is for all people to come to know him and his promises in Jesus (1 Timothy 2:4). We all need his mercy and forgiveness, for without Jesus all of us sit in the 'wicked' camp! Let's pray urgently for others, that this current 'season' may become a turning point for many, to experience the truth of him who does not condemn but forgives any who ask him (John 3:16-17). We represent him to others. Let's give our fears to him, and in exchange, receive his love for others.

Lord, thank you for your Spirit at work in us and through us. Amen.

Sunday 14 June 2020

Thank God for radishes

by David Folker

'Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change' (James 1:17).

Read James 1:1-17

Like many Australian families during the lockdown, we signed up to have a box of fruit and vegetables delivered to our home each week. We are never going back. One of the trade-offs for such convenience is that each week you get a couple of surprises. This week it was radishes. Yes, radishes. I don't think I've ever tried them before. No one in our family had, so I went to a bit of effort to cook them with as much flavour as possible.

Part of our night-time routine is to pray together. On this particular evening after dinner, with all the sincerity in the world, my daughter thanked God for radishes. And the bunnies that eat them.

We have so much that we can learn from children. Jesus himself told us that none could enter the kingdom of heaven unless we become like them (Matthew 18:3). Is this the reason why?

Children are bursting with wonder for the little things. I sometimes think that as we get older, we have a propensity to magnify our concerns instead. Sure, there are a lot of worries at the moment. Possibly more so than any other season in our lives to date. But there are many blessings too. Sometimes they are so small that we fail to notice them. That doesn't mean they aren't there. Start each day with a fresh perspective and go searching for the blessings with eyes like a child.

What are your radishes? Thank God for your radishes today.

Dearest Father, your blessings are new every morning. Thank you that goodness and mercy will follow me all of my days. Help me to see every drop of your favour on my life. May each fresh revelation point me to your everlasting love. Amen.