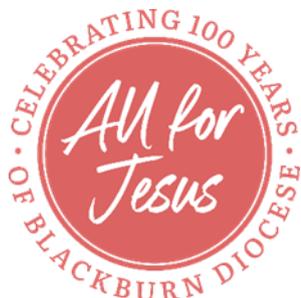


+WEEKLY SERMON

communicate@blackburn.anglican.org



Soar on wings like eagles

"Those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not become weary; they will walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

I enjoy watching birds! I wouldn't say that I am a 'twitcher'. I certainly don't dash into my car and drive miles, followed by hours of standing in a muddy field, telescope in hand, waiting for a glimpse of the lesser spotted widgeon bird, or whatever it might be. However I do, quite often, go to places specifically to see birds, not caged in aviaries but flying wild. One of my favourite birds is the osprey. A trip to Wales just isn't complete without going to see Idris and Telyn, or some of their lesser known cousins at other nesting sites.

Ospreys are huge birds, in our sometimes wet and windy summers the mother bird shelters her young under her wings and if she should be sitting on the nest in bright sunshine, her wings provide an excellent parasol to stop the young birds overheating.

But the best time to watch them is when they soar with graceful ease in clear blue skies. OK, when I see them it's often in grey skies with a hint of rain, but you get the idea! They wheel across the sky in apparent freedom. Sometimes they are off to find food, or maybe their excellent eyesight has spotted a possible intruder so they fly with purpose to check them out and protect the nest. Whatever the reason, when Ospreys fly it appears effortless and graceful.

Whenever I see them I think of the verse from Isaiah which speaks of 'soaring on eagles wings' (*Isaiah 40:31*)

Standing, or sitting and watching birds allows time for us to 'soar on eagles wings' just as birds use thermal currents to save energy, we can rest in the Holy Spirit and relax away from the strains and stresses of the world. To focus on God's creation, perhaps in a new way.

When watching birds you are grounded in the present moment, watching, waiting, wondering, all your attention on the birds on the nest or in the air. Active, expectant, waiting; a time to say thank you to God for all that he has created and for all the good things that he gives us. Isaiah was reminding the people that they needed to focus on God, to allow him to guard and guide them, and we can do far worse than follow that example.

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Rev Carole Garner, Associate Priest, Parish of Oswaldtwistle

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