

God bless your house and all who dwell in it.

What can you see from your window? Some of us can get a glimpse of the river from one of the windows in our homes or a view across fields - but for many the view is a building – often someone’s home, sometimes a shop or workshop.

Windows are our frame for life at the moment. That thought struck me forcibly today as I read the second psalm set for Morning Prayer. Its opening words are “I lift my eyes to the hills”

And I was suddenly very aware that none of us in Burnham will be lifting our eyes to the hills for some time. Our view of the world is framed by our windows or by the skies that we see from our gardens. Our worlds have shrunk.

I know we don’t have the mountains of the lake district – but our small, local hills give us wonderful views.

In my mind I can go back to the days when I would take my Mum out in the car for a drive round the Dengie, perhaps for afternoon tea. Whatever we did, and whichever way we went, we always made sure to stop at St Lawrence, by the church, and relish the view across the Blackwater estuary and then make our way home, often in a long detour, via the lower road into Althorne to see the amazing view right across to the Thames estuary [on a clear day].

It was then I realised that, although confined in our homes, except for a brief moment of exercise or essential shopping, we are blessed by the many ways we can expand our views. Old photos, programmes on television, using one of the many face-to-face programmes on the computer, iPad or mobile phone – all these can take us into different scenery, or a different home at almost any time.

They are all windows into our world, but they are also windows into an understanding of God

Just as the psalmist says...

“I lift up my eyes to the hills-- where does my help come from?”

He finds in his view an answer

“2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.” And with it the reassurance...

“3 He will not let your foot slip-- he who watches over you will not slumber;”
...so others have discovered the endless activity of God as they looked through their windows.

R S Thomas – the Welsh Poet – wrote about the view from his window

Like a painting it is set before one,
But less brittle, ageless; these colours
Are renewed daily with variations
Of light and distance that no painter
Achieves or suggests. Then there is movement,
Change, as slowly the cloud bruises
Are healed by sunlight, or snow caps
A black mood; but gold at evening
To cheer the heart. All through history
The great brush has not rested,
Nor the paint dried; yet what eye,
Looking coolly, or, as we now,
through the tears' lenses, ever saw
This work and it was not finished?

...and describes it as the endless work of God, a world unfinished, still being enhanced, changed, renewing daily the view we see.

If we take time to read this poem slowly, concentrate on unravelling the words, we are drawn into a vision where dark clouds that look like bruises are swept away by the light, and where snow caps, looking black in the shadows are turned golden by the sunset.

This is happening outside our windows now – the view is changing, whether it's changed by leaves on a tree, by curtains open or shut, by the way the light lifts the colour of the brickwork or the rain darkens the road, someone walking their dog, birds on the telephone wires – in every moment of every day, God's brush-strokes touch our lives. Touching us through our view from the window, the views in our minds, and the views we receive from a variety of media.

Heavenly Father open our eyes and minds to your presence all around us. Help us to see you in the ordinary and the everyday. Inspire in us a sense of the beauty which surrounds us, in the curve of a face, the glow of a flower, in work patterned hands. Help to know that your brushstrokes are seen in our smiles and our kindness, sunlight to heal the bruises of the clouds and to turn the dark peaks golden. And reassure us with the comfort of your presence. Amen

And remember that Psalm 121 finishes with a promise

“The Lord watches over you; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.”

Timothy Dudley Smith paraphrased that psalm in the beautiful hymn below.

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
In the press of a busy day
As green hills stand in a dusty land
So God is my strength and stay

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
To a calm that is mine to share
Secure and still in the Father's will
And kept by the Father's care

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
With a prayer as I turn to sleep
By day by night through the dark and light
My shepherd will guard His sheep

I lift my eyes to the quiet hills
And my heart to the Father's throne
In all my ways to the end of days
The Lord will preserve His own

It is a beautiful reminder of God's loving support throughout the day, throughout life.

God bless you and all those you love and pray for, this day and always.