

8th October 2020

Wings

**“Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength:
they shall mount up on wings as eagles ...”**

Bible, Isaiah 40:31

Over recent months my wife and many others have been riveted by the live-streaming from ornithological nest-boxes of eggs being laid, days of incubation, chicks hatching, the feeding of a brood, and the preparation for fledglings to leave their nests. Blue-tits, starlings, kestrels and owls have all been under scrutiny, and watching the footage is fascinating.

Living close to the sea as we do, we're surrounded by birds in flight and on the rocks by the shoreline. Twitchers come regularly to log, photograph and view oystercatchers, cormorants, swans, heron, ducks, and the like. Along the coast, the bird sanctuary of Aberlady Bay is a magnet for birdwatchers. Swooping and diving, soaring and feeding, spreading their wings to the sun or simply bobbing on the waves, the coastline birds are a fascination and delight for many.

Wings are needed for flight. Which of us has not been amazed by a hawk hovering above us as we drive along a motorway? Why do I love watching a gull appearing motionless as it's held by an offshore wind above my local harbour? No wonder Isaiah used the metaphor of those who "mount up with wings as eagles" in service of their God.

But the bible is also full of imagery of wings for protection and love. The prophet Malachi points to a God who has "healing in his wings". The Psalmist who writes of the "silver wings of the dove" and "wings of the morning", speaks of a God who "shall defend thee under his wings" and a God to be praised: "Under the shadow of thy wings shall be my refuge".

Sometimes when we fly upwards to new explorations of life and love, we need the wings of hope, purpose and challenge. But sometimes we need to stay in the nest and spread our wings in nurture or find nurturing wings around us whether we're fledglings or not – wings of compassion, justice, awareness and unremitting care. What wings will we need today?

A prayer for today

On the wings of the morning, by the wings of soaring eagles, under the wings of a brooding mother, you care for me, challenging, enriching and nurturing God. Amen.

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