

Saturday 12th January



Blessings from God

*May the LORD give strength to his people!
May the LORD bless his people with peace!*
Psalm 29:11 (NRSV)

I don't know how you feel about the book of Psalms. Maybe you love the imagery and poetry within them. Maybe the raw emotions speak to you. Maybe you dislike them, their language confuses you, and the emotions are a little too raw for you to handle. However you feel about the Psalms, there is a lot we can gain from the phrases within them.

As we stare into the New Year, the words from Psalm 29:11 are a blessing to us. They ask God to give us strength. Strength to face whatever the challenges of the New Year may be. Strength to deal with the ups and downs of life, the things we anticipate and the things that are unforeseen.

The lines also ask God to bless us with peace. We often read this as calmness, freedom from war and strife – all good things to enter a new year with. Yet the Hebrew word *Shalom* is what is written in the original text, which we translate as 'peace', yet it is much more. *Shalom* is about wholeness, health, prosperity, safety, happiness – what a blessing for a new year!

There are many hymns which speak of the peace of God, such as *Peace, perfect peace is the gift of Christ our Lord* by Kevin Mayhew, which speaks of the blessings which God bestows on us. There is also *We pray for peace* by Alan Gaunt, which recognises that peace is from God, but we need to be active in that peace too.

*God of peace,
We thank you for the blessings that you shower upon us;
for the strength which you grant us to face whatever may come our way;
for your peace, which passes all understanding, and fills our whole life.
Give us the strength and courage to work towards shalom for all people,
so that all may find wholeness, blessing, prosperity and the many other blessings we receive from you.
God of peace, be with us as we journey through this new year, and always.
Amen.*

Prayers for January 2019 by Revd Claire Rawlinson
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