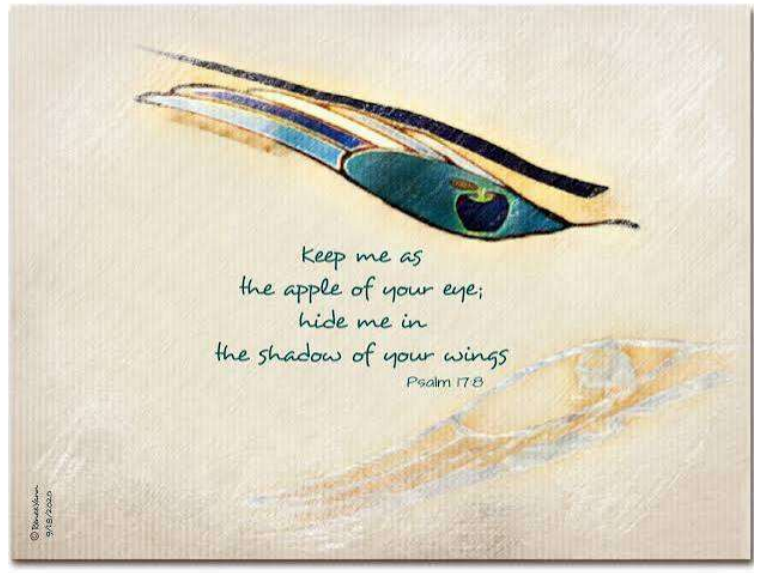




**ST NINIAN'S
UNITING CHURCH
AUGUST 5TH 2026
PRAYERS AND
REFLECTION**



Psalm 17

**Prayer for Deliverance from
Persecutors**

A Prayer of David.

¹ Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry; give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

² From you let my vindication come; let your eyes see the right.

³ If you try my heart, if you visit me by night, if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress.

⁴ As for what others do, by the word of your lips I have avoided the ways of the violent.

⁵ My steps have held fast to your paths; my feet have not slipped.

⁶ I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words.

⁷ Wondrously show your steadfast love, O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

⁸ Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,

⁹ from the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.

¹⁰ They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

¹¹ They flush me out; now they surround me; they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.

¹² They are like a lion eager to tear, like a young lion lurking in ambush.

¹³ Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them! By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,

¹⁴ from mortals—by your hand, O Lord— from mortals whose portion in life is in this world. May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them; may their children have more than enough; may they leave something over to their little ones.

¹⁵ As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

OPENING PRAYER

A participatory prayer to start the reflective process:

- Sit in stillness for a few minutes taking note of any thoughts, fears, or gratitude that may come to mind. Label them softly and release them to God.
- Speak a single line from Psalm 17 that resonated most, read aloud or in your heart, and let it guide your day.
- If you keep a journal, write a brief prayer of trust or one sentence of commitment to walk uprightly today.
- May this contemplative moment steady your heart and renew your sense of being held in God's loving and caring heart.

PRAYER POINTS OF THANKSGIVING

Thank you God for: your steadfast love and faithfulness that surround me daily.

for being my rock, my redeemer, and the one who knows every word on my lips.

For the light you bring in darkness and the shelter you provide in trouble.

PRAYER POINTS OF PRAISE

Praise God: for your protection and upholding me in times of stress and anxiety

For being my faithful guide, keeping me on the straight path

Safety when I'm resting and maintain a watchful eye over me.

PRAYER POINTS OF CONFESSION

It's time to confess: any deceit or deceitful ways in speech or action, and ask for truth.

To owning patterns of wandering from your paths and going my own way.

I acknowledge there are times when I neglect to show mercy to others, failing to reflect your steadfast love I have received.

WORDS OF GRACE

'For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die, but God shows his love us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Romans 5:6-8

REFLECTION

We could say that we're familiar with the sentiment of this particular psalm but not actually the psalm itself. It's found in one those sections of the scriptures that is normally skipped past. However, it speaks in a tone that feels both ancient and intensely present to us, followers of Christ, in our time. In a world of guarantees

promised by headlines prompting us to make urgent decisions, appearances by social influencers pushing their agendas or those who are paying them to do so, this psalm invites us into a different narrative of certainty where trust isn't grounded in any thing that has been crafted, created, or managed by people, but in the character and steadfast care of God.

It starts with a plea for God to hear and take note of the cry for mercy. As a contemporary believer, I hear the rhythm of honest wrestling similar to those ancient cave dwelling desert fathers from so long ago who also feared being misread, the pressure to perform, and the impulse to protect oneself at any cost. Psalm 17 speaks to that tension: search me, test my heart, and protect me from deceit. It acknowledges that integrity isn't a one-off decision but a daily commitment requiring confession, a desire to change, and humility before a God who knows everything about me including my thoughts even before I speak them. In an age of social media and instant communication where every motive is open to misinterpretation and every action magnified, this prayer for a truthful heart is especially piercing.

The imagery of guarding and shelter, God as the apple of the eye and as one who shelters under wings offers great musical scores and words that touch the heart of worship but go further than that in also offering tangible security in a fragile era. Yet this protection isn't a withdrawal from the world but a reorientation toward it. It's asking us to walk tall, to avoid deceit, to be guided by truth. In a society that often values perception over reality, psalm 17 challenges us to live with transparency, to let mercy temper justice, and to refuse to weaponise truth for advantage. The call to integrity isn't a private witness, it's a life that reflects God's faithfulness in the ordinary and the costly moments alike.

David's meditation on God's nearness in both fear and peace resonates deeply in a time of mental and emotional strain. The assurance that God hems us in behind and before, laying a hand on us with 'gentle strength' reorients fear into trust. It's a reminder that true safety isn't just physical, but the conviction that reality is under a sovereign, compassionate watchful eye.

Ultimately David's psalm is for us today an invitation to remain anchored in God's hopeful, steadfast love, to live with integrity in our moments of pressure, and to let God's justice and mercy shape how you/we/I respond to others. It beckons us all to take our rest in God's care, to speak truth with mercy, and to walk in the light that outlasts fear so that life has the opportunity to become a quiet, steady testimony to God who sees, keeps, and loves us to the moon and back and beyond.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Holy Lord, today I intercede for those wounded by fear and deceit, surround them with your protection as the apple of your eye. Shield us in the streets, workplaces,

and homes, and turn the hearts of the silent toward truth. May your steadfast love uphold justice, even when we're unable to see the outcome. Shelter those who are vulnerable under your wings, grant mercy to the unjust, and empower us to walk uprightly, speaking truth with mercy, trusting your watchful care now and always. In the name of the risen Christ Jesus amen.

Psalm 17 – 'IN THE STILL HOURS'

In the still hours I call you, Lord of the true heart, where shadows whisper and courage falters, hear the honest petition broken on my lips: keep me upright, shield me from deceit.

You, who search me at night and test me at dawn, you know every path I tread, every word I shape. Keep me as the apple of your eye, under the shelter of your wings I rest and rise.

Let mercy answer what my fears cannot confess; let justice walk beside me, gentle as a friend. Guard me from violence dressed in quiet smiles, from lies that glitter yet wound the innocent.

If danger presses in, I turn toward your light, a lamp in a world of noisy noise and shifting codes. Your truth guides my steps; your love hems me in, and I feel your hand—steady, sure, near.

When fear swells, I breathe your promise: you are my refuge, my stronghold, my song. No fortress of the night can blind your care, no plot of the wicked unmake your faithfulness.

So I rest in what I cannot fully see, trusting the keeper of all my days. May my life reflect your steadfast love— a quiet witness, a steady flame.

Answer me, O God, and I will praise you; not for ease, but for your unwearyingly faithfulness. Under the shadow of your wings, I sleep and rise, kept by you through all my days.

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