

## Hills and Mountains – An Introduction



**Pendle Hill** - Len Williams - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

I spent my teens and early twenties in the Ribble Valley, Lancashire. From where I lived, I could see the ruins of Clitheroe Castle securely sited on the top of Castle hill. Climb to the top of the castle mount looking eastward you would see, on a clear day, Pendle Hill rising 1827 feet, 557 metres above sea level.

The hill has a number of notable 17<sup>th</sup> century events associated with it, the Pendle witches lived locally and their later trials, all but one in at the Lancaster Assizes in 1612, of the 11 who went on trial 10 were found guilty and hung. The mathematician, natural philosopher and astronomer, Richard Towneley who at Towneley Hall, near Burnley, east of Pendle Hill, Lancashire carried out the barometer experiment in 1661 and John Fox's vision, which is records in his autobiography, chapter 6.

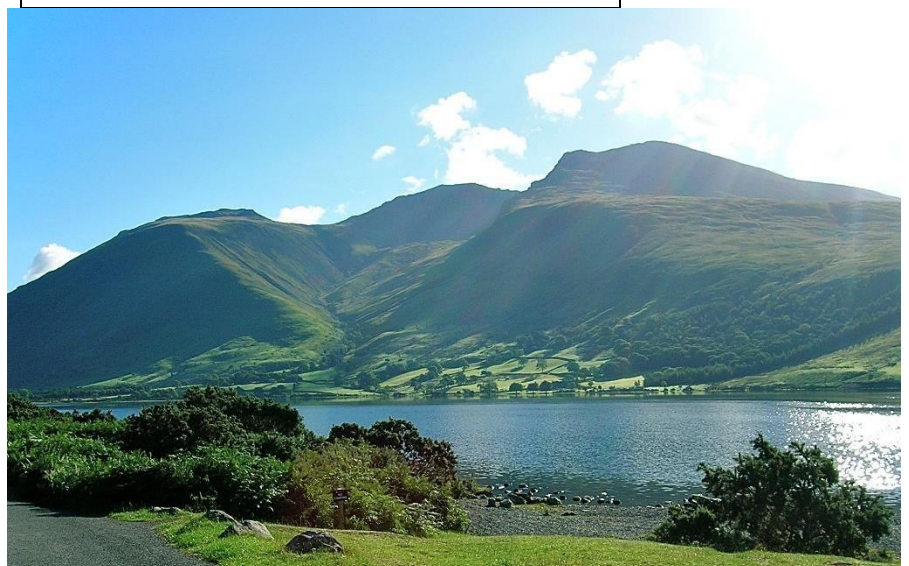
'As we travelled, we came near a very great hill, called Pendle Hill, and I was moved of the Lord to go up to the top of it; which I did with difficulty, it was so very steep and high. When I was come to the top, I saw the sea bordering upon Lancashire. From the top of this hill the Lord let me see in what places he had a great people to be gathered.

Within a couple of hours, I could be in the mountains of Cumbria or North Wales. Hills and mountains are very much part of the geography that surrounded me. Having said that, I was not absorbed by them, they were there, and I suppose I took them for granted'.

**Scafell Pike**, England's highest mountain  
Thorneh at English Wikipedia - Public domain

Hills and mountains have similarities but also there are differences, mountains are often seen as higher than hills. Mountains are often more striking with pointed peaks with hills having a more rounded appearance. Hills often rise alone from their surroundings,

whereas mountains can be part of a range. Up to the 1970's any natural feature in the landscape that rose more than 1000 feet above sea level was a mountain. That is not the view today.



For many hills and mountains are places of pleasure, exercise, and challenge. They trek and climb over them and become one with them. They are places of rugged beauty and places to be respected.

For others, hills and mountains they are places to be viewed from a distance, via a screen or the page of a book. I'm in this group now but when I was a student at Cliff College, a Bible College in Derbyshire and part of the Methodist Church I would occasionally run along this 'Edge' which was part of the hills behind the college. It was good exercise, but it was more than exercise there were times when I rested on the rocks it became a spiritual experience, but I don't think I used that expression. I would talk with God out loud, in the two years at college I never met anyone when I was on Curbar Edge so I could talk and even shout, I would rehearse sermons. The most significant time were the times sat in silence and in that silence, there was the 'still, small voice of calm' so to speak focusing my prayerful thoughts and giving space for that still voice to be heard. It was always good to pause, marvel and wonder at the views from 'the Edge', their beauty, size were inspiring

Across the millennia people have been drawn to hills and mountains. They have become places where religious experience touching the hearts and minds of people.

### **Rocks on Curbar Edge**

John H Darch - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

During Lent we will be visiting a number of hills often called 'Mounts' that have been the scene of religious experience and teaching as recorded in our sacred texts.

By way of preparation let us have a short time of prayerful reflection. Let us lift up our eyes to the Lord.

As always, I suggest you find your favourite space for this time of prayerful reflection and



**Slow down, breath calmly, be comfortable and relax.**

**Light a candle, turn off your phone. Be ready!**

We start with a prayer of confession. We all miss the mark and Lent gives us an opportunity to become more aware of those times when we get things wrong, we miss the mark, we sin.

## A prayer of confession as we approach the season of Lent.

Forgive us Lord for our apathy, for our lack of courage to speak out.

Lord have mercy.

Forgive us when we walk past and don't offer help.

Christ have mercy

Forgive us when we get it wrong.

Lord have mercy.

### Rock outcrop on Curbar Edge

Andrew Hill - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

### Hearing words of

**forgiveness.** Lord, Your forgiveness is total there is no notebook, post-it notes to remind you of that moment when we missed the mark, sinned.

You take our confession offered with hands outstretched and gently like the loving heavenly Father that you are put it to one side to be forgotten.



No grudges, no itching for judgement

No resentment or ill-will

Not like us who find it easy to say sorry but so hard to forgive absolutely

Forgive us, Father that we are often more willing to accept forgiveness than to forgive.

(John Birch - adapted from a version on the Worship Cloud)

We sing along with the Chet Valley Churches Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise: The first verse of Psalm 121 picks up the theme of the unchanging nature and protection of God for his people.

The words of the hymn appear on the screen via the YouTube link.



<https://youtu.be/4oGuGzCFEWI?si=IYIDzjDsgYnNky2>

As we turn to the words of Psalm 121 be prepared to read it through slowly. I suggest that once you have read the Psalm through read it again but pause after each verse

**Psalm 121 (1-8) NKJV**

I will lift up my eyes to the hills • From whence comes my help?  
2 My help *comes* from the LORD, • who made heaven and earth.  
3 He will not allow your foot to be moved; • he who keeps you will not slumber.  
4 Behold, He who keeps Israel • shall neither slumber nor sleep.  
5 The LORD *is* your keeper; • the LORD *is* your shade at your right hand.  
6 The sun shall not strike you by day, • nor the moon by night.  
7 The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; • He shall preserve your soul.  
8 The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in • from this time forth,  
and even forevermore.

**Let us pause and reflect on the help our Lord offers.**

*I will lift up my eyes to the hills— From  
whence comes my help?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
Who made heaven and earth. (v1,2)*

Lord, help us to lift our eyes up to you that we would look to you for help and strength. When we focus our eyes on ourselves or on the comforts of this world, draw our eyes back to you. God in your mercy: Lord, hear our prayer.

*He will not allow your foot to be moved;  
He who keeps you will not slumber  
Behold, He who keeps Israel  
Shall neither slumber nor sleep.(v3,4)*

Even as we grow weary, Lord, we know that you do not. Sometimes the help you offer us is an invitation to rest. Too often we refuse this gift saying, "There is no time!" May we not forget that like the heaven and the earth, time is also your creation.

*The LORD shall preserve your going out and your coming in From  
this time forth, and even forevermore. (v8)*

Lord, you are always with us, and all of our circumstances are under your control and authority. When the sun seems too hot please lead us to the shade you offer. When the nighttime seems too dark, help us find the light by which you guide us.

Lord... our help, maker of heaven and earth.

Lord... who does not sleep.

Lord... who provides both shade and light.

Lord... keeper of our life: our going out, our coming in.

Lord... who keeps us.

For full version go to - <https://lifeinthelabyrinth.com/2018/09/04/prayer-psalm-121>  
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When asked about how to pray Jesus gave these simple but profound words, so let them be our prayer:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name;  
Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done; on  
earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as  
we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. Amen Our closing hymn is Abide with me from the Chet Valley Churches. This hymn is influenced by the second verse of Psalm 121 which speaks of God's presence with us in times of trouble.

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/NTT5HGsaO-Y?si=CQMZGcG8VqL8oS55>

Lord, pour your Spirit upon us in a gracious, healing way. Make us agents of reconciliation as we live and may we bring a blessing to those we meet. Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen

Fr Derek Akker

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(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James. Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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