

## **“My Help Comes From the Lord”**

### **Psalm 121**

I have sat or stood next to many of you in a hospital bed or in the surgery prep area when I've read to you the 121<sup>st</sup> Psalm. I've told you that the psalmist reminds us that God is present, watching over you, and that your help comes from the Lord. We've prayed that God work through the doctors and nurse's hand to give you healing and new life.

I've also read Psalm 121 at the bedside of folk who are dying to help with saying goodbye and to give comfort to family gathered around.

So on this Second Sunday in Lent, we turn to the front of our Red ELW and we read responsively Psalm 121. . .

“I lift up my eyes to the hills.” If you turn with me to the next page and Psalm 125:1-2. “Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but stands fast forever. The mountains surround Jerusalem; so you surround your people, O Lord, from this time forth forevermore.”

The hills do surround Jerusalem and Jerusalem itself stands on Mount Zion surrounded by the Kidron Valley. On the other side of the Kidron Valley, east of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. Standing on the Mount of Olives you look west to see Jerusalem on Mount Zion, you look east to see the barren Judean hills with the small town of Bethany and other villages nestled in the valleys between the hills.

About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up the Mount of Olives, facing Jerusalem and Mount Zion, is the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus would often bring his disciples to pray and to escape the city. The Garden of Gethsemane is in the middle of a huge cemetery that completely covers the rest of the hillside. It is a holy place where you can lift up your eyes to the hills in prayer.

It is the place where Jesus took his disciples after washing their feet and sharing with them the bread and wine of Holy Communion, to get them out of the upper room in the city to a quiet and holy place where they could lift up their eyes to the hills in prayer. In Luke 22, beginning with verse 39, we find these words . . . <sup>39</sup>He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. <sup>40</sup>When he reached the place, he said to them, "Pray that you may not come into the time of trial." <sup>41</sup>Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed, <sup>42</sup>Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done.

"I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?"

"In my professional opinion, abortion is your best option."

Jeanne and Greg Krebs could not believe what they were hearing from their doctor. "You've had so many problems thus far in the pregnancy, and you're just into your second trimester. I really feel it would be safer to abort the fetus now, before more problems arise. Besides, there's a strong likelihood your child will have severe disabilities."

"I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?"

Jeanne and Greg looked at each other, knowing what the other was thinking. “That’s just not an option for us, doctor,” Greg said. “We’re Christians and believe God has created all life with a purpose. We’re committed to having this baby.”

That was more than 30 years ago, and the couple from Canton, Ohio, gives thanks for their decision even though their son, Chris, was born with immature lungs, cerebral palsy, and is profoundly disabled.

“It hasn’t always been easy,” said Greg, a college professor of anatomy and physiology. “But there’s a mixture of joy and heartbreak in raising any child; joy with the accomplishments, heartbreak with the setbacks. One of the biggest frustrations in raising a handicapped person is the prejudices he has to face.”

“We lift up our eyes to the hills; from where is our help to come? Our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.”

“Jeanne and I are both deeply devoted to our faith. We truly believe God is doing the right thing all the time, even though the timing and circumstances don’t always make sense to us. God has used our son to teach us so much about His Son, Jesus Christ, and His love and faithfulness in our lives. He has used Chris just as he is.”

“When Chris was 7 years old my wife worked in a hospital and I had taken Chris with me to pick her up. She was late getting off, so Chris and I waited for her in one of the family

rooms. Another man, probably in his 60's, was waiting for an appointment. He was pretty scruffy looking and rather smelly.”

“I went to the nurse’s station to ask how much longer my wife would be, and when I returned Chris was sitting by the man. He was sobbing, and I wondered what Chris had done to offend him. I began to apologize.”

“I’m sorry if my son said something unkind that upset you or made you uncomfortable. He really doesn’t mean to be inappropriate.”

The man replied, “Unkind? Unkind? Your son is the only person who has hugged me in the last 20 years!”

“I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?”

“I realized at that moment Chris has a more Christ like love for this man than I did. God has a funny way of accomplishing things. We can’t always understand the what, when, or why of a situation, but He always has it better coordinated than we think. Chris is living proof of that fact.”

“My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.”

Psalm 121 is a song of trust in the Lord’s help. The help takes the form of protection and preservation in the face of overpowering adversaries. Our help comes from the Lord in raising

our children in the face of birth defects, learning disabilities, prejudice, and all of the temptations of a secular culture.

Our help comes from the Lord in our struggles with cancer, heart disease, AIDS, and other diseases that threaten our life.

Our help comes from the Lord when we feel our marriages drifting apart, our children drifting away, surviving the anger and grief of divorce, in confronting the alcoholic, the gambler, the shoplifter, or the sex addict, our help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

In the face of overpowering adversaries, our help comes from the maker of heaven and earth rather than coming from what is made. Rather than totally depending on a new drug, or a new therapy, or a new vitamin, or a new self-help book, or a new car, or a new spouse, or a new church – in the face of overpowering adversaries our help comes from the maker of heaven and earth rather than coming from what is made.

Psalm 121 identifies the Lord as one whose power in help and in blessing is unlimited. It points to the maker rather than to what is made.

We begin our Apostle's Creed with the confession: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

What does this mean? I believe that God has made me and all creatures; that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them; also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and

children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil; and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me, for all of which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.

Psalm 121 and our Apostle's Creed point to the maker rather than to what is made.

“My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe. The Lord shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.”

May the peace of God . . .

#856 – How Great Thou Art

Worship and Praise #159 – You Are My God

Casting Crowns – Praise You in the Storm