

## ***My Help Comes from the Lord - Psalm 121*** **Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

### **Notes from the Sermon**

A couple years ago Heidi and I had a chance to take a trip to the mountains for a few days, so we splurged and rented a Jeep. There is really nothing like driving through and on top of the mountains in Rocky Mountain National Park with the top down. The majesty, beauty, and glory were spectacular, jaw dropping. Of course, there were also moments when we pulled into a parking lot for a trail. At those moments the mountain that was before me took on a different flavor. While I still saw the beauty, I also anticipated the pain of trying to hike up a bit of it, as well as the potential dangers of narrow trails on the side of the mountain and even animals who might come out of nowhere. If I sprained my ankle half-way up there was no way my bride was going to be able to carry me down.

Psalm 121 starts with a declaration about looking up to the mountains. As a Psalm of Ascent, the Psalm anticipates a journey through, around, and in some cases even over the viewed hills. The Psalmist is not pausing to enjoy the beauty of the mountainous hills that lie ahead, he is thinking about the difficulty and the dangers. A traveler from Jesus' hometown of Nazareth to Jerusalem for one of the pilgrimage festivals would journey around 65 miles on foot. The final ascent from Jericho to Jerusalem was a 15 mile trek with a 3500 foot ascent. Many of these trails would have difficulty, narrow spots, dangers for the traveler. Some of them would be carrying babies and small children, and helping older travelers navigate the trip. But these hills also contained other dangers. Often marauders and thieves would set themselves up on these hills waiting to attack and rob travelers who journeyed roads and trails (for example, Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan). Furthermore, these mountaintops represented another issue altogether, as priests and leaders for pagan idolatrous religious would set up shrines to their gods on these hills. Known as "High Places", these shrines often offered free sex and all the joys you desired in the name of the worship to Baal, Molech, or any other of the myriad of idols the Israelites embraced. It would be so much easier to shorten the trek and stop at one of these shrines to worship a god who would give a person exactly what he or she wanted in the moment.

The hills here are not places of beauty, they are filled with treachery with the potential of wrecking the journey and keeping the traveler from the festival, from Jerusalem, from the presence of God. So the cry, "Where does my help come from?" This is a good question. As with all of the poetry in the Psalms and Bible, the meaning goes far beyond the literal, it speaks to all of life. God has called us on a journey, a trip to the presence of God, to the celestial city. But the trip is filled with hills and valleys (we aren't in Kansas or Illinois on this journey). The hills are filled with danger, they are difficult, our foot can slip, and there are people and things that can end us. As we journey where does our help come from?

Here's the thing about these hills, the truth is that they actually ruin self-reliance and exaltation. The good ole American answer to, "Where does my help come from?" is, "My help comes from within! I am enough. I can do this." But the mountains in life are the places where the insufficiency of our self-reliance is tested. Our self-worship will not work when evil comes our way, and our self-reliance will lead us to run up any and every hill away from the True Jerusalem. The Psalmist gives us the only answer that gives hope and provides any true purpose for life. Our joy is in both the journey and destination, and the only hope we have when we look to the mountains is this, "Our hope comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth." As you read this Psalm notices two things. First of all, recognize how many times the divine name "LORD" is in this Psalm. Whenever you see the name "LORD" (in all caps) in the Old Testament it is a translation of the covenant name for God, the name we know as Jehovah or Yahweh. The God of Israel is the maker of

heaven and earth, and therefore created the mountains. But this God is also the God of covenant, the one who came and entered a relationship with His people. He is not just a distant and impotent deity, He has proven His love by saving His people. Second, notices the number of times the word “keeps” is in the text. This word means to protect, defend, guard, to stand as a soldier who is defending. One translation uses the phrase “your protector” to translate it. In fact, as poetry, the Psalms center is the first clause in verse 5, “The LORD is your keeper.” Psalm 121 is a song of trust, knowing mountains are ahead the traveler forges forward, marches to Zion. But she does so knowing that her defender, the protector, his warrior is Jehovah. He never sleeps, holds our feet in place, provides shade when the sun is awful, and guards us from evil. And He guarantees the destination for the journey, He is the one who will get us there. What a Savior! Do you trust Him in the hills?

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Job 22	Job 23	Job 24	Job 25	Job 26	Job 27	Job 28

Reading from this past week: Psalm 121

Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Psalm 122

**Family Worship**

Song - *He will Keep You*

[https://youtu.be/EzJkC0-CSng?si=k\\_V8VFYpkkVNQeR3](https://youtu.be/EzJkC0-CSng?si=k_V8VFYpkkVNQeR3)

Gospel Project

Unit: Jesus Can Forgive Anyone

Story: We are part of one church

Big Picture Question: Who can be saved?

Answer: Anyone who trusts in Jesus can be forgiven of their sins and be right with God.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5

New City Catechism

Question 22: Why must the Redeemer be truly human?

Answer: That in human nature he might on our behalf perfectly obey the whole law and suffer the punishment for human sin.

Verse: Hebrews 2:17

Scripture

Psalm 121

- How would a traveler view the mountains ahead? What dangers lie in those hills?
- Why would depending on your own strength be insufficient and lead us to helpless despair when mountains of life come our way?
- What does the Psalmist mean when he says, “My help is from the LORD?” How do we express faith in this truth during the journey of life?
- What was the meaning of the Psalm when Jesus sang it? How is He the true fulfillment of the truths found in this Psalm?

Prayer

\*Pray for our military and give thanks for those who have served our country.

\*Pray that we would look to the Lord to be our help when we encounter the mountains of life.