

“From Where Will Our Help Come?”

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills

- from where will my help come?

My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

God will not let your foot be moved;

God who keeps you will not slumber.

God who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

The LORD is your keeper;

the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

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March 1, 2026

Rev. Michael P. Catanzaro

I.

I had the feeling, before I even wrote one word, that this would be “one of those sermons.” *From where will my help come?* Now that, my friends, is some kind of question. The Psalmist just slips it in there, right at the beginning, and before you can even think about it you are swept up by the answer: *Our help comes from God, the creator of heaven and earth, the shade at our right hand, the keeper of our life.* G-O-O-D answer...so good in fact that we completely forget about THE QUESTION.

II.

It is not to be or not to be but, rather, *from where will my help come?* that is the question. Not, *when* will my help come? You hear this one throughout the scriptures. How long must I *wait* for deliverance? Not *why* won't help come? As in, why do you withhold your mercy? Or, are you too busy to notice us? In these instances one's prayers, hopes, and faith are placed in a God who is *known* to be there, *assumed* to exist, or *believed* to matter. The puzzlement, lament, and fear comes in the waiting for help, or in the apparent withholding of help which is either promised or has been expected.

A *much* bigger and *far* more basic question is being asked in the 121st Psalm: *From where* will my help come? Is there even someone or something out there to help me?!? Or, am I completely and absolutely on my own!?!?

III.

Now, you might read this Psalm and conclude that the writer is simply asking a rhetorical question for the sole purpose of providing an opportunity to answer. From *wher^e* will my help come? Well of COURSE, *my* help comes from God. This is actually a very appropriate exegetical or interpretive move and it may very well be the right conclusion to reach. That said, doing so makes for a far less interesting question, and a far shorter sermon. Since I know all of you simply hate short sermons we will, instead, press on and look at the *other* way to frame the question.

IV.

Imagine a person, even yourself, being confronted with a relentless stream of life's little misfortunes. It is a struggle, that is for sure. You are holding on, though. You are doing your best. You are keeping it together your head is above water. Then, one day, *catastrophe* strikes (pick a catastrophe, any catastrophe at all). What do you do? *Panic*? Probably. Get *angry*? Usually, for a time anyway. *Deny* it? Only if your lucky, and only for a while. Get *depressed*? Certainly not unheard of. On the whole, however, the most common response to great tragedy is the wandering mind, and the far-off stare...*I lift up my eyes to the hills*

In that moment, there is really only one question, phrased any number or different ways, which a person wants and will need to ask: *From where will my help come?* Now, brother, let me tell. Sister, believe me when I say. If you don't *already* know the answer to *that* question when you ask it, *you* are in a world of hurt.

V.

I have been in parish ministry for 32 years. Certainly long enough to get a few things figured out. One of those things I have concluded is this: if you are sitting here today you have distinguished yourself from a great number of other humans beings with which you share this planet. Not because you are above daily misfortunes, you aren't. Not because you have some special protection that will keep you from catastrophe, you don't. Instead, you have a place within your head and heart where your faith might find a home and a hook upon which to hang its hat. You know from where your help will come. Let me tell you, this will make *all* the difference in your life.

VI.

If you have had a chance to peruse our church's March Newsletter you know that we are entering a very busy season in the life of our congregation. It is Lent, so of course our usual Maundy Thursday Communion and Easter Services lay ahead. Beyond these, though, the next two months will be somewhat jam packed. We will celebrate the 219th anniversary of the founding of our church this coming Friday. Elders and Deacons will be ordained and installed next Sunday. Our 26th annual Women's Worship will take place three weeks from today during which we will name the 2026

Woman Of The Year. The last Sunday in March we will celebrate Palm Sunday, and enjoy a potluck meal following worship. On April 19th we will have our 23rd annual All-Church Read. Then, the very next week roll into our Spring Rummage Sale and Sneak Peek. And, of course, we kick off all these things with today's Ham Dinner.

VII.

Given everything that is already happening this spring at the church, I admit I surprised myself by also scheduling a Service of Healing and Wholeness two weeks from today, on Sunday March 15th (the Ides of March). We have not held such a service in over five years, since the start of COVID in 2020. Before this, though, it was a fairly regular feature of the Lenten season here on the Park. In many ways, then, this is a final and fitting step in our return to normalcy following that scourge and the suffering it brought upon the entire world and to our very lives.

For most of us, the notion of asking God to heal the hurting, afflicted, and broken is anything but normal with respect to the way we typically understand and express our faith. In stark contrast, such a rite represents an *audacious* request: that God would be a very real and tangible presence in our lives and in the mind, body, and spirit of those of us seeking healing and wholeness.

VIII.

The practice of anointing is an ancient one. It is used to set apart those who might rule, to consecrate men and women for divine service, and as an offering of God's love and mercy in a soothing balm and healing salve. In the laying on of hands, we act with a sense of sacred authority to impart God's blessing *through* us to those who might seek it. In so doing we seal the promise of God's help for both body and soul. That from this time on, and forevermore, God will keep their going out and their coming in.

While the Sacrament of Baptism may be what most moves us in the way we *feel* our faith, and the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is that which best allows us to *understand* and *expresses* our faith, it is the Rite of Anointing and Laying on of Hands which provides the *greatest examination* of the faith we claim to hold.

IX.

While physical manifestations of the various aspects of our faith may be expressed in assorted rites and sacraments of the church in order to create a helpful context in which we might examine and affirm that faith, the most fundamental question we can ask of ourselves as human beings is inescapably brought to us without pomp or practice, and with great ease and very little effort in each new moment we live on this earth. It is the very same question which is both asked and answered today in the 121st Psalm: *From where will our help come? Our help comes from God.*

Most of the time we are content to float along on the wisps and winds which are the answers we have found through our faith. Today, though, the Psalmist reminds us that every once in a while it is important to lift our eyes to the hills that we might remember the question. Amen.