

Being Lifted to Lift: Our Lenten Journey with Psalm 121

This Lent we embark on a journey through Psalm 121. Verse 1 sets the tone for us: *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?* The answer follows by pointing us to God who “lifts us up.” To be lifted up, is to be given hope! One of the joys of being a grandparent of a now two-year-old granddaughter is seeing her light up when she sees her Opie and Omie. Ben and Courtney tell me, when they leave their house to come to ours, Margot is filled with joyful expectation. The first thing that happens when they arrive is seeing her rush to us yelling Opie or Omie and reaching out her arms to be lifted-up and met with kisses and hugs and lots of love! I pray that we would have that same heartfelt exuberance when it comes to approaching God.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all share the story of Jesus with the little children saying, “*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them.*” I picture Jesus lifting up the children in His arms and blessing them. Are we not all children of God? God knows what we need, and His almighty arms are there to lift us up, no matter what situation or struggle in life has tried to hinder us.

In Isaiah 41:10 we hear these words: *Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* God lifts us up into His Almighty arms so that we may lift up one another. In our Midweek Lent messages on Wednesdays, our focus will be on lifting others up. Matthew 25 will be our point of reference as we dwell on the Acts of Mercy of feeding the hungry, and thirsty, clothing the naked, visiting those who are sick or in prison, and giving a cup of cold water in Jesus’ name. I Thessalonians 5:11 share: *Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.* As people of faith, we find joy by lifting one another up as God has lifted us up, filled with hope and grace! As you dive into these forty-six devotions may you come with joyful expectation of being lifted-up by God and by one another!

A blessed Lenten Journey to all!
Pastor David

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Doyle Moellering

I lift up my eyes to the hills —from where will my help come?

If you do a Google search for images of Psalm 121, you will inevitably come up with numerous pictures of majestic mountains, usually with a brilliant sunshine lighting up the sky. It is an image of a magnificent, powerful God, watching over us from on high.

Several years ago, I read a book by Mark Hall, the lead singer for Casting Crowns. He recalls a mission trip to Israel where he traveled to the very area it is believed this Psalm was written. The location is a valley surrounded by hills and mountains. It is believed the Israelite army was camped here and the enemy armies occupied all the surrounding hills. Everywhere the Israelites looked, they saw their enemies occupying the hills around them. In that context, the verse takes on an interesting slant: *I lift my eyes to the hills - from where will my help come?* It's as if he is saying, "Everywhere I look, I have these huge problems that are trying to overwhelm me. Where is my help coming from?!"

Haven't we all been there? The problems of this world surround us, just trying to overwhelm us. Maybe it's that unreasonable boss that makes your job miserable. Maybe it's a health issue of a loved one or even yourself. It could be personal debt that has built up to be a mountain or a marriage that ends in divorce. We want to scream "God! Why don't You help me?!" And then we feel guilty questioning God. But we've all been there, even Jesus. "...He took with Him Peter and James and John and began to be distressed and agitated." Mark 14:33b Jesus was facing a struggle we can't even begin to imagine. And in his anguish, He said, "Abba, Father, for You all things are possible; remove this cup from me." Mark 14:36a It's like He was crying out, "God help me! I'm not sure I can do this!"

I think God is big enough for any question or doubt. Sometimes, we don't always get the answer we want, when we want, but God is always there for us. As Matthew West says in his song, *Strong Enough*, maybe that's the reason we sometimes have to reach that point of giving up. "*Cause, when I'm finally at rock bottom, well that's when I start looking up...and reaching out.*"

Heavenly Father, Thank You for being there when we are down in the valley, down at rock bottom, that we can lift our eyes, our doubts, our prayers to You. And when we reach to You, You reach for us. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song:
Strong Enough by Matthew West available at
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Thursday, March 7, 2019

Alan Williams

I lift up my eyes to the hills —from where will my help come?

When we were considering retiring, we looked at several places. Having served in the church in Alberta for nearly a decade, we flew to Calgary and proceeded to look for land along the Rocky Mountain plateau. With several friends in Alberta and the beauty of the Rockies, we considered settling there. We found distance and cost to be prohibitive. We considered New Mexico but kept coming back to the Hill Country of Texas. I have served hospitals and congregations in both west and southeast Texas, but there was something about the hills and Psalm 121:1 that kept coming to mind. So, we focused on the Hill Country. The property we purchased was a miracle, such that I thought about putting the words “Psalm 121” on our gate.

What is it about Psalm 121:1 and the Hill Country that touches my spirit? I believe it to be a constant reminder of God’s love and presence. If people don’t come with a God connection, they are met with disappointment and may even try to change what drew them here in the first place. The more time I spend in the hills, the more I want to fill my day with other connections to His presence, like spending time in God’s Word, listening and singing along with Christian music, and praying. These actions keep me conscious of His presence as He promised to be with us all (Hebrews 13:5 and Matthew 28:20). I want to recognize barriers in me that keep me from knowing Him more. If it’s worries, then I need to cast all my cares on Him who cares for us. (1 Peter 5:7)

What about you? Is there anything that keeps you from growing closer to the God who loves you beyond understanding? Let the hills remind you that He is near and stands at your door and knocks. (Revelation 3:20)

Come into my heart Lord Jesus. Come in today, come in to stay. Amen

Friday, March 8, 2019

Larry Davis

I lift up my eyes to the hills —from where will my help come?

One Soldier's Prayer
February 22, 1991 6:00pm

It's after sunset, the eve of our battle.

I realize God has given me all that I have.

I know that my time is when I am called by Him.

I rest in the knowledge that He will care for those that I love and may have to leave behind.

I know that Jesus died for the sins of mankind and that I have asked and received his forgiveness for mine.

I wish no ill will on the enemy I must face.

I have continually prayed that what lies ahead may never come to pass.

I pray that what war should happen may never happen again.

I know that without Christ in this world we will always have devastation and sorrow in our midst.

I leave this page with comfort that the Lord is with me in these days ahead and always.

I pray that my loved ones draw closer to Christ as life is hollow and pointless without Him.

I know I may leave them in Christ's hands as there is no better shepherd to watch over them.

Amen

Saturday, March 9, 2019

By Claire Nevins

I lift up my eyes to the hills —from where will my help come?

The first year I attended Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp was in the summer of 2016 as an incoming freshman in high school. When our bus pulled into the mountaintop site in Hillside, Colorado, the first thing we noticed was a conspicuous, ominous gray cloud that stretched across the perfect blue afternoon sky. We later discovered that this wasn't an ordinary cloud. Rather, it was a billowing pillar of smoke forged by one of the many massive forest fires that raged through the Colorado mountains. We were told the fire was too far away to be dangerous. However halfway through the week we were evacuated from the campsite to a nearby church. As we looked up, seeing the fire and smoke all around us, the verse readily came to mind, "I lift my eyes up to the hills- from where will my help come?" After we had made our way back to Texas, we heard about the miracle. The fire had engulfed all the area around the camp but somehow Rainbow Trail was preserved.

This experience is a great metaphor for the many "fires" we face in our lives. In the midst of our struggles, it seems that all we can do is look up to the sky and cry out, feeling helpless and lost. It may seem that our laments are lost to the wind, but what we need to remember is that no call is unheard by God. As Casting Crowns puts it, "Every tear I've cried, You hold in Your hand. You never left my side, and although my heart is torn, I will praise You in this storm." Trust God to protect you from the fires and carry you in the eye of the storm- for only He is where your help will come.

Loving God, we know that You listen to every prayer and hear every cry. Help us to remember that You are our one true salvation, and only You can carry us over the waters. Hardships, dangers, and sorrows will always seem to surround us, but allow us to hold on to Your guiding light and be that light for others. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song:

Praise You in This Storm by Casting

Crowns available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Sunday, March 10, 2019

McKenzie Moellering

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

I don't know about you, but when I get stressed or overwhelmed, I carry it all in my neck and shoulders. Sometimes, it gets to the point where I feel sore and heavy. I start overthinking and letting the source of my stress control my thoughts.

As you may or may not know, I am a reporter at the Fredericksburg Standard newspaper. Every week, I write thousands of words about community events, high school basketball games and the happenings of our county government. Usually, I can write about just about anything. When I picked this verse, I figured it would be easy and I could come up with something but as I thought, nothing came to mind, so I ignored it until the deadline neared. I again, felt stressed and heavy, "What on earth am I going to write about?"

I do some of my best thinking when I am out exercising. I sometimes write my county government story in my head, before I have even listened to the entire meeting. During a run, the song "Shoulders" by KING & COUNTRY came on. The first words of the song are "*I look up to the mountains, does my strength come from the mountains? No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven and earth, and the mountains.*" BAM! What a God moment. In a time when I felt stuck and had no words, and was carrying all this stress on my SHOULDERS, God reminded me to let go and let God.

As I reflected, I realized there are so many moments when just a five second prayer can take the weight off my shoulders. I ask Him to get to my destination safely or I pray for first responders when I hear sirens in the distance or when I feel weighed down.

God is always going to be there to take that weight off our shoulders and carry it on his, all we have to do is ask. I pray that when you feel a moment of stress or confusion or panic, you pray for God to lift it from your shoulders and place it on His.

Dear God, Our help comes from You. You're right here, pulling us through. You carry our weakness, our sickness, our brokenness, all on Your shoulders. You are our rest, our rescue. We don't have to see to believe that You are lifting us up on Your shoulders. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song:
Shoulders by KING & COUNTRY available at
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Monday, March 11, 2019

Stephanie Behrends

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

On Monday after Thanksgiving, I returned to work to be greeted with a termination notice from my employer of 20+ years. My job had been eliminated as if I really didn't matter to them. To say that I was devastated was putting it mildly.

Those following days are still a blur, but I do know because of my Faith, I instinctively turned to God in prayer as well as my pastors for guidance. I did not know what to do next, other than the obvious, and that was to find another job. This was going to be a difficult task in our small town. I was beginning to believe that I would have to leave town to achieve an income to support myself and the pending loans to support my son in college.

There were many of my Christian friends that stepped up and asked how they could help. I am forever grateful to them for showing me God's love through their friendship. Everywhere I turned, I saw signs from God that He would take care of me and that He would deliver what I needed when I needed it. Scriptures appeared everywhere. The most prominent found me in the middle of my crying and helpless moments:

- *BE STILL and know that I am GOD. Psalm 46:10*
- *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11*
- *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to Him, and He will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6*
- *Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. Mark 11:24*
- *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7*

It has been two months and I still have not found full time work, but I'm okay now knowing God will provide what I need. Everything will be okay.

Gracious God, Thank You for Your provision, protection, and peace. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song:

What a Friend We Have in Jesus sung by

Alan Jackson at youtube.com

Tuesday, March 12, 2019

Kim Wilson

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

Each and every one of us will face various challenges and difficulties in our life, some more devastating than others. When facing a trial in our life, we can easily turn to other things such as drugs, food, alcohol, etc. Because of sin and our nature to gravitate towards it, life can sometimes feel like a burden or a terrible event we have to face on a daily basis.

One of the most difficult trials to face is the death of a child. All my life I have been told that a parent should never have to bury their child. However, our community has had to fight through this trial on many occasions. I can only imagine the heartache the family feels at such a time, I ask myself how families are able to deal with and not scream at God in anger. At these times, my greatest hope is that we understand that our help comes from the Lord.

Even at the death of a child, each of us can turn to the Lord. Rather than asking why this trial was laid in our path, we pray that He give us His peace and understanding. Our Lord does not wish for our young people to die because He loves each of us with His whole heart. Our help in every situation we face will come from the Lord and we must put our trust in the Him.

Our life as a Christian is about going to God in all things. We will walk, breathe, drink the same water, and face the same dangers as all others. However, we know that the difference is that with each step we take, the Lord will help us and guard us from evil.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter where you are in your Christian journey, God is waiting for you to ask for His help. He is just a prayer away. Amen

Gracious God, Remind us in our trials, whether small or devastating, that You will be with us. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song:
Blessings by Laura Story available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Wednesday, March 13, 2019

Amanda Phelps

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

God, who made both heaven and earth, has helped me so much throughout my life. From overcoming some of my daily fears to the passing of a loved one, He has been there to help me. When I am about to try out for any part in choir, sing my solo in front of a judge, or perform in front of a crowd, I get very nervous. I always ask God to be by my side and help comfort me while I am singing. It is like having a security blanket wrapped around me. God helps me to calm down and focus on what I need to do.

God has shown me His support, help, and comfort in many different ways throughout my life. When I was 8, my grandpa, who I loved very much, passed away. Without God being by my side, I would not have been able to move on and celebrate my grandfather's life. There are still many days when I find it hard to not cry because I miss him so much, but I remember that he will always be with me and God is here to comfort me.

God made all the people of earth and heaven all in His name and for all one purpose. We as Christians are here to spread His word and do all good things in His name. Without God, we would not be here. Without God creating heaven, we would go to hell and evil would get to us. God helps us through our rough times and will always be there for us no matter what.

Dear God, Thank You for helping us throughout our rough times. You created all things good in Your name. In Your name we pray. Amen

Thursday, March 14, 2019

Norm & Sandra Nevins

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

What a powerful, comforting and uplifting statement! The theme is God's protection of His people. Since He made heaven and earth, we know He is all powerful and can help, guide, comfort and protect us.

This verse was one of Sandra's father, Walter Meier's, favorite scriptures during his short life. Walter was drafted into the armed services toward the end of World War II. Sandra was seven and her sister, Joyce, was an infant. Naturally, Walter was concerned about his safety and the welfare and safety of his family. He took great comfort from this scripture. He trusted that his "help comes from the Lord."

Just before Walter was deployed to take part in a possible invasion of Japan, the atomic bombs brought the war to an end. Praise God! He was then sent to Japan as part of the occupation forces. There he was exposed to radiation from the bombs.

After the war, he moved his family to Fredericksburg where he taught middle school math and history. Walter loved the Hill Country and was at peace here. The hills were a constant reminder to him of this scripture and, in particular, verse one, "I lift up my eyes to the hills."

Unfortunately, the radiation exposure in Japan led to a brain tumor that took his life at age 39! His faith never faltered and he served the Lord until his death as Sunday School Superintendent at Bethany Lutheran Church.

Psalm 121 has also become one of our favorite scriptures. We all can take comfort in knowing, "*My help comes from the Lord.*"

Our Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your many promises to us. Through scriptures we know You are there for us no matter what life may bring us. Please help us to spread the good news to others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Friday, March 15, 2019

Becky Zatopek Senter

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

My life as a Christian began at Holy Ghost Lutheran over 60 years ago. Weekly attendance at both church and Sunday School was very important to my family and we had our special pew to sit midway up the left side of the church. Prayer was of utmost importance in our home, before meals and at bedtime.

I have always considered my German heritage a true blessing. Faith is important to these people, and the Fredericksburg I grew up in, was a tight-knit community. After losing my mother last November, I was amazed at the outpouring of love and support from old friends and acquaintances. For that reason, my husband and I relocated from Fort Worth to Fredericksburg to retire.

The Bible tells us we will have trials and tribulations. I remember years ago having sinus problems and was referred to a specialist. An x-ray revealed an unusual bony mass that I was told might require a biopsy. Now, I am prone to worry, and I had a few sleepless nights as I prayed over what I should do. Driving home from work the next night, I pulled up behind a car with tags stating, "PROV3:5." Naturally, I grabbed my Bible the minute I got home and read, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.*" Proverbs 3:5 I went back to the doctor who reassured me, saying I was most likely born with the abnormality. A repeat x-ray six months later showed no change.

I faithfully read two favorite Christian authors, Max Lucado and Sarah Young. The importance of meditating on the Word of God, allowing it to permeate our lives and the decisions we make cannot be understated. When we listen with our hearts in this way, we can't help but draw closer to the heart of Christ and be transformed and renewed by the Living Word.

Lord, We pray that even when our situation appears to be impossible, our work is to "lift up our eyes" and place our hope in You. Our hope will not be vain, and in the Lord's timing, help will come. In Christ's name we pray. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song **My Help** by Gabrielle Ariana available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Saturday, March 16, 2019

Darline Cunningham

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

Blessed! I was very blessed to be born into a Christian family who taught me from a young age that the Lord is my all in all! I was taught to love Him with my whole heart, honor and seek Him always!

By attending Sunday School, church, Lutheran schools, Bible study and daily home devotions, I was taught and believe that the Lord is the creator of all things and that I should seek, find and trust Him in every aspect of my life.

In December of 2005, our only son suffered a massive stroke and died at age 40. I could not understand why God would take this godly, sweet man, leaving a young wife and two young children. It was a very difficult time for our family and as his Mom, I really struggled with why God would take him so young.

Psalm 121 has always been one of my favorites. As I was reading this Psalm one day, the Lord touched my heart with the realization that He not only created the heavens and the earth, but He created ALL things, including my Todd. It became clear to me that nothing we have truly belongs to us. Everything and everyone are on loan to us and really belong to the Lord. I realized that rather than mourning the years I would not have Todd on this earth, I should lift up my eyes to the hills in thankfulness for the 40 years of wonderful memories to cherish. I am thankful that the Lord is always walking with me, He never leaves me, never slumbers or sleeps, and is always holding me. Most of all, I am thankful for God's gift of His only Son, Jesus. HIS only Son who He allowed to suffer, die and rise again so that I will be able to share eternity with MY only son.

Thank You, Lord for all of creation. Thank You for being the CONSTANT help in our lives. Father, help us to always lift our eyes to the hills, to our God of ages past and our HOPE for years to come. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen



For more reading, see **When I Feel Like a Fraud** by Kristi Woods, July 15, 2016, at proverbs31.org

Sunday, March 17, 2019

Laverne Cuddy

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine
O what a foretaste of glory divine.
Heir of salvation, purchase of God
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

It was the words to this song and so many others that served as a great comfort to me as our family experienced a mind-numbing crisis several years ago. Adding to this time of crisis, came a diagnosis of cancer visited upon my husband, not once, but twice. What followed were sleepless nights, what ifs, and doubt that things would ever be the same.

As we look back on that time, we often ask ourselves, “How did we get through it all?” Did we sense God’s presence as we battled through each day? Did God seem far away? Would sleeplessness, a nightly companion, ever seek residence apart from us?

As I had been doing all through the crisis, I turned to prayer without ceasing, remembering God’s promise in Hebrews 13:5, “*Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.*” Indeed, God did not leave nor forsake us. He remained present in the prayers and constant encouragement of friends in Christ, friends like you who read this message today. I thank God for each one of you and I remind you that our God who watches over us does not slumber and keeps watch over our every step.

Precious Lord, You are so faithful to carry us through every crisis, every heartache. Each day is filled with evidence that You are ever near to us, protecting us, guiding us, and loving us. May we never waiver in our trust in You. It is in the name of Jesus that we pray. Amen.

Monday, March 18, 2019

Sandy Birdlebough

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

As I thought and prayed about this verse, I must admit that I wasn't getting much inspiration. The only image that came to my mind was hiking. When you are hiking a rocky trail, you have to be careful where you put your feet, or you might end up on the ground. If the path is narrow and rocky with sharp drop-offs, the consequences might be much more than you counted on. Life is like that. We can step on rocks that make us tumble and only then do the consequences become apparent to us.

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary states that these verses use the Hebrew word *shamar* to convey the image that God is our guardian. He is on watch each minute to protect us from our missteps. Unlike we humans who are prone to fall asleep during our shift on duty and be unmindful of the path and its pitfalls, God never sleeps and is ever watchful. He places our feet on sure ground. As I get older, that becomes more and more important. My balance isn't as good and sometimes I'm not sure where my feet are. I still think I can jump up and over those rocks just like I used to. Ha! Part of God's watchfulness is giving us wisdom as we age, so we can anticipate some of those "rocks" on the path ahead of us.

God assures us that He will always be on duty. Whether the path is steep and rocky or smooth and easy-going, He "neither slumbers nor sleeps."

Dear Lord, Thank You for the many times You have kept us sure-footed and unmoved in our faith. Thank You for staying awake and walking beside us. Help us stay awake with You on the path to Calvary and keep us sure footed in the path You would have us walk. Amen

Tuesday, March 19, 2019

Katie Murphy

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

Anxiety has always been a big part of my life. I was a very anxious little girl, who grew up into an anxious teenager, and even into adulthood anxiety has been a constant companion. Ever since I was little, anxiety has been explained to me as having a fight or flight response that is triggered by some of the most everyday occurrences. My gut reaction to these triggers is often to flee, to move my feet as fast as they can take me away from the things that cause my anxiety.

I love this verse because it reminds me that even when anxiety doesn't sleep, neither does Jesus. When anxiety makes me want to run as far away as I can, I am reminded that in those times it is okay not to flee or run or even move, but to remain still in knowing that He who keeps me will never slumber. In Christ, peace comes not from distraction and distance, but in trusting that the Lord has my feet, my heart and my mind firmly planted as I draw ever closer to Him. And nothing, not even the scariest and most anxious of thoughts, can make me move.

I am an anxious person; that is a fact about me that will not change. I am a human and I sometimes feel myself start to falter, my feet start to be pushed and moved, my mind start to tire and worry. What a beautiful thing to know that even though I get tired, my Heavenly Father never does.

Dear Jesus, Thank You for the reminder that through life's pushing and pulling and movement that You are always there to keep our feet from moving in fear. Give us strength in those moments where we want to flee to trust where You have placed us and to draw close to You. Amen

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

Sam Keller

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

As I read this verse, I think of how precious sleep is and how no one wants to give it up. How many times have you stayed up to take care of a sick child or to finish something that didn't get done that day? I have ventured into the world of goats and livestock guardian dogs to help take care of them. At the moment, I have one at our house that is in between goat herds. She has decided that we are now her "herd" and that she must protect us at night. She stays awake all night and guards our pastures from unseen dangers. Although the barking drives us mad, I was thinking how grateful her usual goat herd is for her protection at night. They can rest easy knowing that she is watching over or keeping them. I like to think of God as our protector and always watching over us from the dangers of sin. God is constantly vigilant over us so that we do not always have to be on the "look-out". First Samuel 2:9 says "*He guards the steps of His faithful ones, but the wicked perish in darkness; for by His own strength shall no man prevail.*" What an awesome reminder that we are never alone!

Lord, I pray that we recognize that You are always watching over us and protecting us. Amen.

Thursday, March 21, 2019

Kim Jung

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

November 13, 2018 is a day I will remember for a long time. That's the day the word cancer entered my life.

While researching Psalm 121, I ran across this translation in the Berean Study Bible, "He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber." Personally, I prefer this wording...PROTECTOR. Yes, the medical field is amazing, treatments are refined, and cure rates are higher, but even with all that, I wanted protection. Protection from scary moments, protection from pain, protection from doubts and questions, protection from burdens on my family. Who better to protect me than my GOD?!

Daily, we should call on God for protection. As Warren Wiersbe stated, "The safest place in all the world is in the will of God, and the safest **protection** in all the world is the name of God." Oh, and how He protects us – even on the darkest of days. Protection has many different looks. It might be our family. It could be our church home or, even the friends we surround ourselves with to share highs and lows. Heck, it might even be co-workers. It could be a favorite pet or book. Look around you – where do you receive reassurance and refuge? Where does your strength come from? Even on days when we feel that we're slipping and our strength is gone, drop to your knees and ask God for safekeeping. Ask Him to lift you up and be your shield against the darkness that sometimes moves within us. And, don't forget to ask for prayers – God puts people in our lives for just that purpose.

God, I thank You for all You've given me. I pray for Your continued blessings and protection. I pray Your presence will always be with us wherever we go and no matter what happens, for I know You never slumber. Help me to give back to You by helping and protecting others. Amen

Friday, March 22, 2019

Alex Ludwig

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

Have you ever felt like you were stuck against some obstacle that was just too big to get around? Like something was pressing upon you, beating you down. And making you feel different, and apart from everyone else?

God has a plan though. The situation may seem dire, but God is in control of all things. His will is the most triumphant of all. If you are facing sin of any size, shape, or form...let it go. God is in control of all things. Even if you feel alone, God is right there beside you. Ask the One who loves you most, for help in this time of need, salvation in this time of temptation, and love in this time of hate.

God wants you to stand up to your obstacles, and He will stand with you, *“He will not let your foot be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber.”* This is a fact about God Himself, that if you let Him be your keeper, He will never cease in His protective care over you. We all need someone who, in a time of crisis, will be beneath us to uphold us. God has volunteered before we have even asked, so go to Him.

However, you cannot just read one verse of scripture and fully understand it. Reading the context in which a verse is written can allow you to get so much more out of it. Psalm 121:2 states *“my help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.”* Simple verse, right? Chances are you have heard it before, or if you haven't read that verse, it is still reaffirming something that you already know. But again, you have to look into the heart of the words and apply them to your life. From a young age we learn, “if you make/create/do something, you are responsible for it.” So God is responsible for the earth, and what is on it, too. God loves you, and He created this beautiful world for you to live on.

Dear God, In Your power we can stand up to the fiery temptations of hell and come back stronger than ever. Help me to always stay trusting in You. In Jesus' holy name I pray. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song
Build My Life by Housefires available at
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Saturday, March 23, 2019

Jane Remmert

He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

When our son was born, we were in Germany and I had absolutely no experience or knowledge of newborns. Family that could have helped were all far away. When we brought this fragile, little human being home to a small village, miles out of town where no one spoke English, I was truly scared! I kept my eyes on his every breath just to be sure he was okay and all was well. Eventually, exhausted and unable to keep my eyes open, I would fall asleep. But God who is always with us and knows all our needs and weaknesses, never sleeps or slumbers. He is always watching over His children. So, we should try not to depend on our own strength nor put our hope in ourselves or the things of the world. If we do, we will surely slip! To navigate the ups and downs and the rocky road of this life, we need to stand on the promises of God found in the Word and take everything to Him in prayer.

The hymn below was written in 1886 by Russell Kelso Carter, inspired by his time in the military. I can remember singing this in my grandmother's little church when I was a child.

*Standing on the promises I cannot fall;
Listening every moment to the Spirit's call;
Resting on my Savior as my all in all;
I'm standing on the promises of God!*

The next hymn, written in 8th century Ireland, reminds me to sleep peacefully, knowing that God, who has no need of sleep, is always watching over me. These words will be my closing prayer.

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art;
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

Precious Lord, Let us rest in knowing that You are always awake and watching over us. Amen

Sunday, March 24, 2019

Jan Unger

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

What would happen to us if God fell asleep?

It is a terrifying thought, really. If God were asleep, He would not be in control of the universe. All the laws He set in motion would be suspended. We would just float away if the Law of Gravity ceased to function. If the earth stopped rotating, the side facing the sun would bake, while the dark side would get colder and colder. Crops would not grow. And among humans, the knowledge that nobody was in charge, even for a short time, would lead to increased lawlessness.

When I visited Nepal, I stayed in a Lutheran hostel. Each morning we awoke and worshipped the Living God. We often heard the sound of little hand bells ringing in the house next door. I asked our pastor what the bells meant. He replied that the bells were to awaken the gods, so the people could make their prayer requests heard! Their gods were at humankind's beck and call! They cannot be very powerful gods, if that is the case. And what if people couldn't wake them up in a time of dire need?

First Kings 18 tells how Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to prove whose god was stronger. Each side prepared a sacrificial bull and set it on a pile of wood. Each then called upon their god to light a fire under the sacrifice. The prophets of Baal called upon their god all day long, but nothing happened. Elijah mocked them and suggested that Baal was perhaps asleep and must be awakened. Elijah's prayer was promptly answered, proving that our God is powerful and always awake and alert to hear us. (Read this interesting and amusing story in I Kings 18:21-40.)

Our God never slumbers nor sleeps. He is always on duty, maintaining creation and keeping watch over His own. You can count on Him to be present whenever you need Him or want to talk to Him.

Lord, Keep us mindful that, even when we sleep and take our rest, You are watching over us and protecting us from the enemy. Amen

Monday, March 25, 2019

Nancy Rickerhauser

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

It was Friday afternoon and I hadn't been home from work since the previous morning, over 34 hours earlier. After a full day seeing patients I spent the night at the hospital, delivered three babies and then headed back to the office for another work day. Sleep had been minimal and I was moving and thinking sluggishly, dreaming of closing my tired eyes and falling into a comfortable bed and praying for perseverance and wisdom to care for the patients God brought to me.

Sleep is a critical part of a healthy life for all of us. While we sleep, our bodies are actually hard at work to restore and rejuvenate us physically and mentally. Not getting enough sleep can lead to depression, weight gain, poor concentration, worsening of other diseases and even early dementia. It's no surprise that we need to sleep close to one hour for every two that we're awake!

And yet . . . our God does NOT need to slumber or sleep. Our loving Father watches over us, hiding us under His wings as a mother hen shelters her chicks, never needing to rest. At night I love to claim the promise of Psalm 4:8 which states, "*In PEACE I will lie down and sleep because You alone Lord, make me dwell in safety.*" And Proverbs 3:24 encourages us, "*When you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*" God CARES about our need for deep sleep and true rest because He designed our bodies. And He has promised us that WE can sleep in peace because HE does not need to, and He will watch over us while we sleep.

Dear Lord, Thank You that You care about every aspect of our lives, including our body's need for deep, restorative rest. Thank You for Your promises to watch over us because You DON'T need slumber and You desire for us to experience sweet, peaceful sleep. Amen

Tuesday, March 26, 2019

Karen Henricksen

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

“*He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*” Wow, one can obtain so much comfort from this verse by being reminded how diligently God keeps watch over us, His children! Nothing, nix, nada deters our Heavenly Father from watching over us 24/7 for eternity! He never grows weary or tired and never gives up on any of His children.

This persevering lifeline is available to us in any stage of our life, any situation we are in or come across, and yes, we can call on Him whenever we feel the urge...day or night! We can be confident that He perpetually walks in our presence to hear our calls, cries and praises.

His unconditional love and amazing grace should be “all the comfort” we should ever want. The “worldly securities” do not even come close to the comfort of our omniscient Heavenly Father who continues to watch, no matter what, when, where or why. May His steadfast watch continue to be a comfort in your lives!

Heavenly Keeper, Your watch over us gives me such comfort and peace. May we seek You, our Keeper, in all we do. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song
By Your Side by Tenth Avenue North
available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Wednesday, March 27, 2019

Daniel Hofmann

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

This Psalm always reminds me of my days working at Camp Chrysalis. If you've ever been, you know there's a large cement cross on top of the bluff overlooking the entire campground. During morning and evening worships, we'd sing Psalm 121, changing the words slightly:

I lift my eyes up,
up to the big cross
where does my help come from?

We'd literally have to lift our heads up to look at the cross and consider the power and beauty of God. Adding the element of tangibility always made the words feel extra-true to me. Honestly, the entirety of camp made The Word feel extra-true to me. From the high energy of running breathlessly across the field, to singing the campers to sleep after a long day. It's those moments- the late-night ones between asleep and awake- that are brought to mind when I consider Psalm 121:4.

Going to sleep requires relinquishing control. You are essentially admitting you feel safe enough in your environment to let your guard down completely. At camp, when the kids in my cabin would (finally) fall into their dreams, I would sometimes walk around to each bunk and consider the gentle yet heavy weight I was shouldering in caring for them. They could talk a big game during the day- and trust me, some did- but come lights-out every night, these kids who didn't know me at the beginning of the week were now silently telling me that, in that moment, their help would only come from me.

God wants us to relinquish control to Him. Try as we might to steer our lives the way we see fit, as much as we want to believe that we are enough for ourselves, we will only be able to be at peace when our Savior is handling the wheel. He will watch over us, but we as His children- His lovable, sweet, petulant, sarcastic children- need to let Him. We must be able to lift our eyes to Him, trust He's got us covered, and rest in His care. And unlike a spent college student- God will never need to sleep on the job.

*Dear Jesus, You are the one our help comes from. Remind us to lift our eyes up from trying to control things on our own, and trust in Your Promise. While we rest in Your care, we praise Your Name!
Amen*

Thursday, March 28, 2019

Kay Steinbring

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

This Christmas I enjoyed spending time with each of our adult children, individually. Surprisingly, one said, "Let's make a puzzle." He shook his head "no" to the 1000-piece and 500-piece puzzles and chose some 100 and 200-piece puzzles. The first one had been a favorite of all three kids growing up, obvious by the battered box and worn pieces. Somehow it was hard to make progress; we couldn't even complete the border. Turns out about 33 of the 100 pieces were missing! We were disappointed; our son said, "Let's just throw it away; we're missing too many pieces."

Have you ever felt like that? I have. Sometimes I just want to quit trying when a situation, job, problem, or relationship seems too hard to fix. Maybe I've worked or prayed about it for years. Today's key verse gives a different perspective, "*He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.*" I can trust that the God who saved Israel, His chosen people, (that includes you and me) will take care of us. He is not sleeping but is patiently "*working all things together for good for those who love Him,*" Romans 8:28a. Again, we read, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding,*" Proverbs 3:5.

We can be sure that God has all the pieces to the things that are puzzling, difficult, or confusing in our lives. God knows what the final, beautiful picture will look like. Our part is to keep placing the pieces when and where we can and to ask God for His help. How do we do that? By being obedient to His commands as Jesus told us in Mark 12:30-31, "*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.*"

Dear Lord, we don't know what You are making with our lives but help us trust You. You are not sleeping. Help us love You and our neighbors and leave the rest to You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Friday, March 29, 2019

Henry Kammlah

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

Sometimes during difficult times, we may think that God has forgotten about us and our daily challenges. For instance, our job may require more time than we are willing to give. However, on occasion, we have to do whatever it takes to get the job done. I once spent three years on a job that I absolutely hated mainly because it took 80 to 90 hours per week just to keep my head above water. I think God might have been reminding me how easy I had it in my previous job which I did not appreciate. After three years I finally found another job that was again ideal and this time I did appreciate it. I spent 22 years on that job and finally retired.

When we feel God has abandoned us, we should read Proverbs 15:3 which says, “*The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good.*” When times are difficult, and we feel like God is not paying attention, we should go to God in prayer and ask for wisdom to navigate the storms of life. In the Bible, it says that if we ask God for wisdom, He will give it.

God watches over us, looking for both the good and the bad. I am currently reading a one-year Bible. It is surprising that of all the kings that ruled over Israel, it seems only David tried to live according to God’s rules. However, he was certainly no saint. He slept with a woman not his wife, causing her husband to be killed in battle after the woman became pregnant. God did take care of David because he always asked for forgiveness and tried to do better. As far as the other kings of Israel, God allowed many bad things to happen because the kings and people of Israel drifted from God and worshiped idols, which greatly angered God. God went as far as allowing Israel to be overtaken and enslaved by other countries. Eventually, after the people asked for forgiveness, God would give them back their freedom. I guess the moral of the story is when in trouble, ask God for help. When you have sinned ask God for forgiveness. God may not answer your request immediately, but He will not forget you.

Dear Father, Please give us the wisdom to deal with the storms of life. Give the leaders of this planet the wisdom to stop wars before they begin. Be with those who are less fortunate and protect our police, our first responders and our military as they go about their duties protecting us. Amen



Read these additional passages:

- 1) Proverbs 15:3
- 2) 2 Chronicles 16:9
- 3) biblestudytools.com

Saturday, March 30, 2019

Lisa Bullion

He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

These temporal bodies of ours require sleep; we don't function well without it. We are so very different from our Maker. Yahweh, the great I Am, our Creator doesn't sleep, nor is He overtaken by drowsiness. He doesn't drift off during our prayers. Isn't that wonderful? As the young mother of a sick child, as the receiver of a call bearing sad news of loss, as the daughter sitting beside her father as he took his last breath, I have been awake during the darkest, blackness of a long and weary night. My body ached for sleep. My mind faded into a fog of slumber. This body formed from the dust yet still in His image, breathed into by His Holy Spirit, this body must sleep. We simply cannot escape sleep. We need rest, -- deep, renewing, restoring sleep. BUT God does not!

I really enjoy the "BUT God..." moments. God is not bound by our rules, nor our understanding. He is not bound by time, nor place, nor man's limited perspective. To me, to be sleepless in the deepest, dead of night seems utterly desperate. BUT God sees through the night. *"Indeed, the darkness shall not hide from You, but the night shines as the day; the darkness and the light are both alike to You."* Psalm 139:12 Did you catch that? Both the night and the day are the same for our God. His watchful eye never fades, day or night. Just as He does with Israel, He keeps us as we walk through the fiery trials of life. BUT God remains cool and calm. He watches over us as we struggle to make sense of the challenge before us. BUT God sees the path through it all. The night is still black, BUT God is undaunted by darkness.

So, rest. Close your eyes and rest well. Rest solidly and soundly on the fact that Yahweh is wide awake, watching over you, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

Thank You, great God above all, that You never grow weary and will never be caught off guard! Amen

Sunday, March 31, 2019

Judy Nardini

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

She was just a little girl. One that not many knew. She was not from a wealthy family, in fact, a poor family. Fifty-seven pennies were found under her pillow the night she died. This little girl had made an attempt to become part of a Sunday School class in her hometown to only be told she could not because there was no room for her. Well, she began saving her pennies in order to “help the Sunday School class have more room.” A couple of years later, she became sick and within a couple of weeks, died. Beneath her pillow they found a small, tattered book with the 57 pennies and a piece of paper on which she had neatly printed, “To help build the little school room bigger, so more children can go to Sunday School.” The note and money were taken to the pastor and he told his congregation the humble story. This triggered a spontaneous wave of gifts and giving, which ultimately became a church with seating for over 3,000 and many Sunday School rooms. And just to think it began with the nameless little girl who set out to do something about a need. Her beautiful, unselfish, dedicated attitude is what started this project. All it really takes is one person with concern and dedication followed and mixed with one more ingredient...love. God needs only a willing person and watch it happen again!

Let me tell you why I chose this sweet, true story to share. WE all have lots of ups and downs in our lives, but this little girl wanted to help others, even as young and poor as she was. My hope is that as others read this during Lent, they will be able to rise up and look above their wants and needs. God gave us his best. Let us do the same for others.

But Jesus called for them saying, “*Permit the children to come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.*” Luke 10:16 NAS

Gracious God, Send Your Holy Spirit to guide us to helping others as You have helped us. Amen

Monday, April 1, 2019

Yvonne Fox

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

As I sit here thinking about this verse, I am drawn to the ministry I am involved in which ministers to the elderly of our church in nursing homes and the homebound. With each person I have visited, (two of which have gone home to be with the Lord), I am just in awe of how they are facing the end of their lives – yes, they know who their keeper is! I can't say how many times one of them have told me they are ready to go, they are just waiting on the Lord. What a statement! What a commitment to God in knowing and believing in His promise – He is their Lord and keeper and the shade that covers and protects them.

On one of my last visits with one of my nursing home ladies, she told me she just knew the Lord had a plan for her. All her siblings were gone and she was the last to go, and still waiting. I told her I admired her faithfulness and she, being so ready to see the Lord, quickly told me (at 97 her mind is sharp as a tack and quick!) we must all be ready and prepared whatever the age! She was so right, what trust in her faith.

I have always had a special place in my heart for the elderly, so much history to share, so much learning in their words. Even as a child I enjoyed visiting the elderly folks in our neighborhood, listening to their stories, sharing a cookie or two, sometimes many more! Once one of my “longer” visits with an elderly neighbor lady got me in big trouble with my parents, but that's another story!

I heard a sermon once on Christian faith, faith like the elderly. The sermon was about how the Bible states how we as Christians, our faith will be tested. The message really hammered it home that the Bible says Christian faith will be tested. It does not say it *might* be tested, but it *will* be tested. We see this today in our world, where in some countries Christians are punished or even put to death for their beliefs and their faith.

The Lord is our keeper, He is the shade at our right hand, we shall not be shaken. Be strong faithful Christians. Be ready faithful Christians.

Lord, When our faith is tested, help us to turn to You and have faith that You will keep us. Amen



Read these additional passages:

Psalm 121:5

Psalm 16:8

Tuesday, April 2, 2019

Allen Ersch

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

I think back to when I was in middle school playing sports. When we had evening events, I had to walk home nine-tenths of a mile on College Street. I feared this because I was afraid of walking alone in the dark. I remember feeling more comfort as I got closer to the occasional street light. I held close to Psalm 23:4, I would repeat it to myself over and over.

A few decades later, I walk three to five miles before daylight on a county road, no flashlight, no phone, no earbuds, just me and whatever comes to mind. There is an occasional crow or a rooster or deer feet bustling through the leaves, but mostly peace, my “white space” (Juliet Funt, Global Leadership Summit 2017). Many mornings my mind is drawn to the pure white light from the stars and the moon, God’s creation. What an awesome display of light, all part of creation. Oh, that moon, even on the cloudy days its light works its way through the seams of the clouds. It is just like God’s promise in Matthew 28:20. It is like that in our lives. When we have those cloudy days, God is still there, we just need to look for the seams in the clouds.

The Glory of God in His creation brings a comforting feeling in my heart. The life I will have when I leave earth will be forever more peaceful than the “white space” I enjoy today. Not of my doing but through the sacrifice of God’s Son on the cross. Each day my eyes open, God has a purpose for me.

God did all this for you and me. John 3:16-17 says it all, it is there for you. Merle Haggard shares in his song, “*And He walks with me, and He talks with me, and He tells me I am His own and the joy we share...*”

Gracious Father, Thanks for revealing Yourself to me in such a special way, You promised to be with us always and remind us that we simply need to open our eyes to see You. Amen

Wednesday, April 3, 2019

Kimberly Brasher

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The call came, I leave my family in Texas, I jump on a plane, rent a car, drive to the hospital, and there I am sitting in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, in Alabama, looking at my baby, for the third time in my life as a parent. I have been the mother to two other babies in the NICU. The other two babies made it through, with long and frightening struggles, but made it. I am sitting in the NICU, in complete denial that this is happening AGAIN!!! We are adopting our fourth child. His birth mother had stellar prenatal care and a perfect bill of health. The machines are beeping, alarms going off, lights going off and on, monitors giving readings. What hurts the most is seeing him this way and knowing that I cannot hold my baby.

Then the worst thing that could happen, does! The nurse walks over and says, " You are his adoptive mother, right?" I kindly respond, "Yes." She then proceeds to ask me the following, "Are you going to keep him, even if something is wrong? Most parents walk away from adoption if the baby ends up here in the NICU, and he is pretty sick." My motherly response was, "Of course we are keeping him, he is our son."

Little did the nurse know the deep history of our family. As a former NICU nurse, I know a thing or two, about the NICU. I am prepared for the good news, the bad news, the steps forward, the steps backward, the unknown.

What this nurse also did not know, is the most important of all. God had prepared us to be Knoxx's mom and dad. God knew in His great plan that we could do it. We were armed by God. We have Faith. We have prayer. God knew that everything we had endured and gone through in the past, made us the best choice to be the parents to Knoxx.

Now this did not mean that it would be easy or that all was going to turn out perfect. God does not promise this. On the contrary, I believe it is the exact reason we are the parents to four children, three of which fought for their lives with the help of medical teams. And all the while we praised God and thanked Him for the journey.

Lord, Help us to trust in You as our keeper. Let us have Faith in Your plan and let us continue to seek and praise You in the valley and on the mountain top. Amen.



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song **Weak Made Strong** by Cornerstone available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Thursday, April 4, 2019

Ron Rickerhauser

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

There is a rather famous photograph of a man standing in a doorway of a lighthouse just as a wave is crashing into the other side. Perhaps you've seen it. If not, I encourage to look for it. While it may appear to be photoshopped, it is not. The photo was taken by a photographer named Jean Guichard who hired a helicopter that day so he could take pictures of the waves crashing into the La Jument Lighthouse. The keeper of the lighthouse, Theodore Malgorn, heard the noise of the helicopter hovering around and stepped outside to have a look. When outside he realized a giant wave was smashing into the tower, so he rushed back inside to the protection of the stone lighthouse, which consequently saved his life.

While the many ships that pass through the treacherous waters off the coast of Northern France depend on the constant presence of the La Jument Lighthouse to guide them away from danger, the keeper relies on the inner confines of the tower for his own protection. As the lighthouse keeper maintains the light so that others are warned of dangers, he is protected from dangers himself by the strength and comfort of the lighthouse tower.

Just as the keeper maintains the light for the safety of others, we are to maintain His light so that others may feel His presence. It is in Him that we find comfort and strength so that we are all we can be to serve others.

Lord, may we be the light that others see to guide them and comfort them as we rely on Your strength and constant presence to comfort us.

Friday, April 5, 2019

Elizabeth Ludwig

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

As elementary educators we experience our own versions of “STAR” testing. As our teacher evaluations approach us, we look upon the starry night sky, and pray to our Heavenly Father to give us courage, and His peace through our “testing.”

My first year of teaching was in May 2001. My teaching journey would begin with third graders, and I absolutely loved it! They were children with inquisitive minds, interesting conversations, and were eager to learn what I prepared to teach them. I was having the time of my life, and I couldn't believe I was getting paid for it!

My first principal, Mrs. Johnson was always supportive, and a very straight-up lady. I always appreciated how she would *hint* to us about how lovely the weather was. She'd say, “What a nice day for a stroll down third grade hall!” That was my cue for PANIC mode! I'm not sure why I put myself through all that added stress other than I just wanted to pass my evaluation test!!

As a child of God, I look upon my Holy Father for comfort and assurance. I looked to Him for all the things I would need to help me get through this “test” as I perceived it. I remember arriving that morning looking for a corner in my classroom then down I spiraled, onto my knees. I surrendered it all to Him. I knew Father God would *lift* me up in a way only He can.

As I am reminded by scripture: “*The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.*” Psalm 121:5 You never knew what time Mrs. Johnson was coming, but you *just* knew she would. Suddenly, she waltzed into my room with her big white pad, and my knees became soft noodles. Amazingly and graced, through the supportive smiles of my students, the Holy Spirit reminded me to just take a deep breath. Quietly I sing, “All to Jesus, I surrender all.”

Father God, You are the keeper of my body, mind, spirit and soul. You alone sustain me. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song **I Surrender All** by Jadon Lavik available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Saturday, April 6, 2019

Lyndal Remmert

The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

Several years ago, Jane, our dog Duke, and I took a driving vacation to Portland, Oregon and in the late afternoon of the first day's drive settled into some lodging that permitted dogs. Before it got too late, I took Duke for a walk to stretch our legs. As we were walking by a building, the afternoon sun cast our shadows on the wall of the building and Duke saw them. Duke stopped short, definitely threatened by them, and then started to bark. He was perplexed as each of our individual actions moved the merged man-dog image and shadowed us. After reassuring Duke that we were in no danger and all was well, we continued on, until the shadows were gone. Our shadows had no value except to confirm that sunlight would soon leave us. In contrast, Psalm 121, as well as Psalm 91, speak of God's shade or shadow always being with us as our keeper. How wonderful a promise when living a peaceful life becomes difficult.

Growing up in South Texas on a farm and as such participating in farming duties there was always plenty of sun in the summer with 95 degree or higher temperatures and almost as high humidity levels. As I was pop-pop-popping along on a John Deere tractor without a cab (we had it rough in those days) my only shade was a straw hat. Cotton and maize don't grow under shade trees! In the late afternoon, the shadow of me on the tractor was welcomed because it signaled that it was close to quitting time. I knew that soon there would be cold iced tea, a shower, a good dinner, and a loving family (my keepers-my earthly shade) It is so comforting to me that God is my spiritual shade and promises to be my keeper, my provider, my Savior, a part of me, and that He loves me always. Why do I still worry? Why do I still fear? Why do I always need your help, your grace, your protection, your love?

I AM HUMAN! As hard as I try I cannot on my own create enough shade for myself. I need Your shade, Your shadow, Your Spirit, Your love. I need You GOD!

O Holy God, Help me to trust that Your presence as my keeper is not a shadow that ends at the close of each day. Help me to live contentedly in Your shade knowing that You move as I move, blessing me with Your shade, Your mercy and Your grace. Amen

Sunday, April 7, 2019

Gil Becker

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

Did you ever have a really bad sunburn? The summer I was fifteen we stayed at my Grandad's cabin on Lake Travis. The first day that we could take the boat out I was on skis for about six hours. With skin that makes an albino look swarthy, I got the worst sunburn imaginable. We are talking second degree with blisters. Mom did what she could but dipping me in aloe-vera did not help.

There is an ancient belief that the full moon causes insane people to act out. Having spent eight years in psychiatric treatment centers (on staff, though differences are negligible) I can attest that this is not substantiated by either data or experience. However, a big ol' Texas moon can induce young men to say foolish things to young women and young women to believe them.

Is the psalmist only talking here about specific dangers from the sun and moon? These two great lights are the rulers of the day and night. In keeping with the overall message of the psalm we see in this verse that God is our shield against whatever assails us in daylight or in darkness. We are reminded that the world is filled with powerful forces that can and do pose a danger to us. Yet, God acts as our protector against the ever present, seen and unseen peril which surrounds us.

This does not mean that He will always intervene when we insist on self-destructive behavior like water skiing until we are well done or listening to foolish young men in the moonlight. Sometimes our protection comes in hard learned lessons.

God, We know if we stare at the sun it will blind us, but if we look to the cross and keep our eyes on the Son we may be allowed to see, even that which is hidden. Thank You for being our protection and our restoration. Amen

Monday, April 8, 2019

Archie Jacoby

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

To me God's promise is that on our journey through life He is with us through all adversity. That adversity may be the obvious troubles that we can see, or it may be when darkness threatens us with demons we cannot see, but perceive as real. Life certainly offers challenges that create fear of both the known and unknown variety. As so often happens, these challenges seem to mount up, and over fill us with doubt. Is God not seeing what is happening to His children? Maybe it is illness, career, relationship problems or grief that feel, at times, overwhelming and unbearable. What will happen to me, my family and those that depend on me? Doubts creep in as to whether we can overcome these problems. Will they be the end of us and life as we know it? It is during these times we need to turn to the Lord in prayer and ask for His help and judgment in managing and controlling our fears which is the main culprit of our anxieties. So many times, problems that seem so large are just the devil making mountains out of mole hills. Other times, the problems are very real. The Lord is our shelter from all storms whether real or perceived. Psalm 23 tells us that even as we approach death's door, He is with us, that He has prepared a place for us and we will dwell with Him forever. My old business partner used to say when things really looked bad for our survival "they can kill us, they ain't going to eat us". That was his way of saying/asking, "what's the worst that could happen?" I think it's good to step back in the hard times and ask ourselves that question. What is the worst thing that could happen to us if we have our Lord and Savior looking over us? As a child, I had a period of time where I was afraid of the dark. My father asked me what I was afraid of and I told him I couldn't see the monsters in the dark. He answered not to be afraid, "When its dark the monsters can't see you either. Be quiet, don't be afraid and go to sleep. They won't be able to find you." Sometimes we just need to calm down, put our troubles in the Lord's hands and know He will be there to comfort us from all of life's trouble. His promise is He will be with us always, even till the end of time. What do we have to fear?

Heavenly Father, Thank You so much for all Your blessings. Please forgive us for not trusting You to protect us from all evil. Our human weaknesses make us forget that YOU are almighty, all powerful and nothing has power over You, or us, if we have You on our side. Bless us and keep us ever worthy of Your kingdom by the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Tuesday, April 9, 2019

Craig Sander

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

As a high school astronomy teacher, this verse really confused me. I was hung up on the part about being shaded from the moon. What exactly did that mean? I started thinking a little bit more about how sometimes the moon can be too bright and make it hard to sleep. Maybe that's what it was talking about, especially in biblical times when people had no windows and often slept on rooftops? It was about the moon shining too brightly for them to sleep?

As I prayed more about what this verse might mean, I remembered that I have been taught to look at the context, as well as the text. Maybe it is about more than sleeplessness or reassuring a simple people who had no idea what the Sun and Moon were that they were no cause for worry.

With this in mind, I started at the top of the Psalm. The first thing that I noticed was the title, and right under that it said, "A Song of Ascension". I use a phone app for my Bible often and it had a footnote that I looked up. There were Bible verses from Exodus, Isaiah, and I Kings that talked about the celebration of festivals and singing (almost entirely about singing at religious festivals).

I noticed that everything before it dealt with God protecting us, how God would provide for us, and that God would not let anything harm us. The footnote even said that whenever people would go to Jerusalem to celebrate a festival, God promised that their neighbors would not covet their land while they were gone! That made more sense.

I still do not know exactly why it says that the Moon will not "strike" us, but it does not matter. It is about how God is making sure that we are taken care of and protected, that no harm will come to us whether by the Sun in the daytime, or even by the Moon by the night time. We are in the palm of His hand in His loving arms.

Thanks be to God!

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—God in three persons, Thank You for all the blessings that You give us, the provision, the protection, the forgiveness, everything. Thank You for reminding us of just how much You look after us. Amen

Wednesday, April 10, 2019

Ginger Burow

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

I was drawn to ponder this verse. I had never really thought of any threat from the sun or moon, as they are further extensions of God's amazing creation. They are things of beauty, created to serve His earth with light and warmth. They greatly benefit us and our life here. So then why would I fear that they would strike me down?

Sunstroke/burn was very common in the East and they held a belief in moon-stroke as well. The second belief is a reference to the word lunacy, take that as you like. Though these were common beliefs, I see the verse likely referring to all the dangers in both light and darkness, in other words, worries.

Still why should we fear and worry over such things on a regular basis? I feel most of us try not to do so. Yet often we fail.

The Lord protects His people. Isaiah spoke to this: *They will not hunger or thirst, Neither will the scorching heat nor the sun strike them down, For He who has compassion on them will guide them to springs of water. Isaiah 49:10*

Jesus tells us He has us covered in all things, as long as we seek Him, and that we should not worry: *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Matthew 6:33-34*

Scripture constantly reminds us we are His and are under His protection. We may face trials, but He will save us, whether in this life or eternity.

Lord, Help us to lay our worries on You, and live in the knowledge and peace that You are with us always, and nothing can truly separate us from Your love, forgiveness, salvation and presence. Amen

Thursday, April 11, 2019

Dana Moellering

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

You may be huddled in a basement, bathroom, or a bunker when a storm comes in. The parents are worried and anxious. The children are either crying or sleeping. You take a flashlight or candles to see. You can hear sirens wailing outside, you can hear the wind blowing, and the depths of the basement, house or bunker shake as the thunder and lightning strike and rage outside. There is no guarantee of safety.

Should you expect to be singing for joy in a time of the storm? Or rejoicing in the place where you are taking refuge? If you were aware of the one who has promised to always protect you, then your praises would echo off the walls around you!!!

In the shadows of the storm, either by day or by night, God's protection is there. He is the only one that can guarantee our safety from the storm. His protection spreads over us, stronger than a basement, bathroom, bunker, or where ever you take refuge.

Today we can all relate to this need of protection. Imagine delighting through the storm and singing while the storm passes in the day or night. We know, all the while, that we are standing under the mighty hand of God.

Dear Lord, Thank You for always protecting me by day and by night. Whether the sun by day, or the moon by night, guide me through. Help me to sing praises to You. Continue protecting me from evil that strikes the sun or moon. In Your Holy Name. Amen

Friday, April 12, 2019

Tiffany Nielsen

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

Sun and moon. Day and night. Light and dark. Knowns and unknowns. At first glance, Psalm 121:6 provided me with the simple reassurance that our Lord watches over us continuously. After a little prayer and reflection, though, a more personal meaning emerged. I began thinking about how my fears and concerns vary at different times of the day.

My daytime concerns focus on goals and to-do lists for our business and family. I find myself obsessing over these lists, fearing the repercussions of not completing something. Foolishly I catch myself thinking that if I manage all the “knowns,” I can protect my family and myself.

At night, my thoughts wander to the “unknowns.” Questions swirl through my mind. I worry about the future of my family, our community, and our country. I stress over decisions that need to be made. I wonder about possible upcoming trials and how to prepare for them.

It is human nature to try to control our “knowns” and worry about our “unknowns,” but God wants us to give Him those concerns! Through His providence, I married a wonderful man who owns a heavy equipment construction business and a small farm/ranch operation. These businesses are weather-dependent and routinely have unexpected expenses. The unpredictability could be a nightmare for someone, like me, who wants a daily list of “knowns,” but it is a blessing! When I obsess over my “knowns,” our Lord graciously presents a situation beyond my control. This is His cue to refocus my attention on Him, then He faithfully manages each situation and gives me peace.

At night, I banish my fear of “unknowns” by remembering He has already shepherded me through tough times: our twin daughters in the neonatal intensive care unit, my mother’s cancer battle, and ongoing complications from my husband’s recent surgery. During each season, He has provided people and circumstances to show His love.

Psalm 91:5 says that “You will not feel the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day.” The verse doesn’t say that we will not have terror in the night or arrows during the day. It states that we will not FEEL them. Only one source can give us that peace...Christ! What a great comfort it is to know He will be with us in the daily struggles of our “knowns” and that He has complete control over our “unknowns.”

Thank You, gracious Lord, for Your promises to be with us every hour of each day. Help us trust You with our “knowns” and “unknowns” so that we may enjoy Your peace. In Your name. Amen

Saturday, April 13, 2019
Rhonda Eckert

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

The sun and moon are the two mightiest influences on our planet - the gravitational pull to keep the planet on its course; the rays which give life and do harm; the moon's effects on the seas. To think God's protection is even greater than these forces is mind boggling and deeply comforting.

When my husband died, I felt vulnerable. My earthly protector was gone! At times I felt like the wolves were circling waiting to take advantage of me, my sons, and our property. I worried that someone would know that I was alone in my home. Thoughts swirled about in my head. I also knew God would take care of me. Now, there's a difference in knowing and wholeheartedly knowing. "Here I am, help me!" I just had to let go of that fear and let Him be my Protector. And He did! I prayed for peace in my heart. I prayed not to be anxious or scared. You know what - God was, is, and will always be my ultimate protector! I had always known that, but now I had experienced it in a deeper, profound way! After a time of anxiousness, I began to feel as though I was carried through my days and guarded while I slept. Wow, what comfort and peace there is to know wholeheartedly that you are protected! After all, we are His!

With the forces like the sun and moon out to strike at me, I am giddy with joy that God protects me!

Oh, heavenly Father – Thank You for protecting me! Your awesomeness is all around to take care of me. Here I am - take me, hold me, cover me, protect me. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song
A Mighty Fortress is Our God by Chris Rice
available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Palm Sunday, April 14, 2019

David Bullion

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

Before refrigeration, folks would preserve their foods by drying, salting, pickling, smoking, canning, etc. It was hard work to prepare food back then to make sure it was safe to eat. If you messed up or decided to skimp on something, you could get ill or even die! Most methods of preserving foods were to surround the food with a substance or agent that unwanted bacteria couldn't survive in. For instance, in curing, you would surround the meat with significant amounts of salt to draw out the liquids and create an environment that bad bacteria could not survive.

Christ does the same thing when He protects and preserves our lives. First, He protects us by giving us what we need to combat evil.

Ephesians 6:10-19...be strong...put on all of Gods armor...stand firm...put on the belt of truth...the body armor of righteousness...the shoes of peace...the shield of faith... the helmet of salvation...take the sword of the Spirit...

This whole armor of God is exactly *what* we need, *when* we need it. It is the right tool for the right job. There is nothing that life can throw at you that can penetrate its protection.

Secondly, He preserves our life. He does this by creating an inhospitable environment around us so that sin cannot thrive. He engulfs us with His unfailing and limitless love.

Ephesians 3:18...may you understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is.

This love of Christ is manifested in many ways. It is in the Christian friends that He puts in our lives, in the living Word of God that guides us daily, in the Holy Spirit that comforts us during times of trouble. If allowed, He will create a complete environment around us in which the enemy cannot thrive. Think about it, Christ is with us constantly, protecting us, and surrounding us with His love. His love never fails. He is the agent that protects us from evil and preserves us for eternity.

Father Above, Maker of the Heavens and Earth, Thank You for giving us the whole armor of God for our protection and for loving us beyond all comprehension. Amen

Holy Monday, April 15, 2019

Sue Gustin

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

Having read this verse in many Bible translations and several commentaries, it is interesting how the words “evil” becomes harm, “keep” becomes preserve or protect, and “life” becomes soul. We are important enough to God that He will protect, preserve and keep us from harm. Like many of you I have not always seen the hand of God protecting me from harm except in hindsight. There are times in my life when I felt in danger that I would have loved to see His large hand of protection come down from Heaven shielding me from whatever impending harm I feared. Other times I needed that hand to gently clamp over my mouth to keep me from causing any harm.

This verse also reminded me of John 10:29. Jesus was being threatened by the Jewish leaders for what they considered blasphemy and were threatening to stone Him. But Jesus still proclaimed His care and protection for us all by telling them, “*My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand.*” How comforting is that? God not only protects us from evil, but He has us in the palm of His hand and no evil one can snatch us out!

In studying this Psalm, I discovered that it was one of the songs sung by the Israelites as they journeyed to Jerusalem. And perhaps it was kept to be sung as they ascended the steps of the Temple. That thought gives even more meaning to entering His gates with song. It made me want to hear this Psalm being sung so I went to YouTube to listen to it and have included the link here for you. Hope you are blessed by this song of reassurance.

Heavenly Father, What a blessing to be reminded that You keep me in Your care every moment. Not only my life but my soul is being safeguarded. Thank You for loving me so very much. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song

I Will Lift Up My Eyes to the Hills by Esther

Mui available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Holy Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Victoria Mendez

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

As I began this, I believe many know the tragic life changing event that struck my family a little over 2 years ago on November 3rd. If not, short version is: I saw a chiropractor for relief of a headache and shoulder pain and they accidently dissected the artery in my neck after a neck adjustment. This resulted in me having two strokes followed by a lifesaving surgery and six weeks of hospitalization and months of therapy.

There you go devotion done. God kept my life. He provided the right people at the right time to come into my life and perform amazing and lifesaving work. There truly is no other answer to the right doctor of only three at Saint David's to be present and perform a new surgical technique that had only begun 2 years prior. But honestly that was only the physical part, the real struggle began after I was home from the hospital and began to try to move on. The real struggle would creep upon me and begin to slowly tear at me emotionally. The real struggle was...fear.

It began with thoughts of what if... What if it happens again? What if I am not here for my family like my family is here for me? What if we financially can't keep up? What if I become a burden and not a contributor to my family? In silence I cried, right now I cry. This fear is still alive and hard to talk about. At first it seemed all-consuming. Yeah, time has helped, but I found the most help was in God. Constant prayer for inner peace and verses like, "*Fear not for I am With You...*" Isaiah 41:10, and "*Therefore do not worry about tomorrow....*" Matthew 6:34, and "*I sought the Lord, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.*" Psalm 34:4.

Have I squashed all fear and what-ifs? The truth is NO, but have I found a light in the darkness of fear? Absolutely yes. The Lord is Great and words that He gave to us centuries ago still provide what we need today. With prayer and a constant open heart and mind to His word I have turned an emotional corner. I have found that fear is my evil and that when it creeps up, I turn to His word and trust that He will keep me and my life in His arms.

Dear Lord, You know all our fears whether big or small, help us to trust in You and Your word and through them, Fear Not. Amen

Holy Wednesday, April 17, 2019

Robert Elder

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

Last October, I did an evening hike on the North Bend Rail Trail in West Virginia. The temperature was 90F with oppressive humidity. Soon, a storm arose. Due to the rain, lightning, and waning daylight, I decided to hike back to the parking area. To reach my car, I had to return through a long, dark tunnel. The humid weather, in conjunction with the rain-cooled air, had caused the tunnel to be filled with a very dense fog. Once I had hiked a few paces into the tunnel, I could not see either opening due to the fog. The nearest tunnel portal was only a few yards behind me, but it was completely invisible. The far portal was still 1/3 of a mile away. Had my headlamp gone out, I would have been in complete darkness. My headlamp allowed me to get through the darkness, but it did not get rid of the darkness. This is an important distinction. The darkness still existed, even though my headlamp penetrated it.

At times, we all have to navigate some darkness in our lives. Just because we go through this darkness, does not mean that God has abandoned us. Jesus never promised us a perfect world nor a perfect life. Instead, He warned us that we would face trials (Matthew 10, Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21, John 15). Many early followers of Jesus were persecuted and even killed for their faith. Today, Christian persecution exists in many locations around the world. Yet, as Christians, we are called to be light in our dark world. John 1:5 states, *“The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it”*.

Evil did not win on Good Friday even as darkness came over the world for 3 hours. We still live in a broken world, and we are still members of a fallen humanity, but on Good Friday, Jesus took our punishment for us. He promised us that there will be light at the end of our earthly journey.

Dear Heavenly Father, How can we even begin to thank You for Your mercy? Despite our sinful nature, You sent Your only begotten Son to bear the weight of evil on our behalf. We understand that we must face daily trials, but we thank You for assuring us that evil will not consume us eternally. Amen

Maundy Thursday, April 18, 2019

Cindy Harper

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

Psalm 121 is a Psalm of David, who reigned around 1000 BC. The Psalm is part of the Song of Ascents, thought to be used by travelers on pilgrimages to Jerusalem for festivals and feast days. In addition to travelers, it has been adopted by soldiers and rock-climbers, and is also associated with childbirth, childhood, and bedtime prayers.

I have recently become interested in genealogy, and even sent in a DNA sample for analysis. Thinking about my ancestors in the old country somehow opened my eyes up to the fact that we all are heirs to a long line of grace through our family history. Marching back through the ages, each generation had to survive long enough to give life to the next, or we wouldn't be here today. Our relatives no doubt experienced political and social unrest, wars, lawlessness, disease, home births and exposure to the elements at a time before modern medical practices or facilities. For each generation there was struggle, hard work and sacrifice for the good of the next, and somehow we arrive here today, in 2019, a product of their hopes and prayers and the benevolent hand of God. Psalm 121:8 makes a BIG promise, that the Lord will keep our going out and our coming in from this time on and FOREVERMORE. That forevermore doesn't start with us, or even with David in 1000 BC. It started back with the beginning of mankind and will continue long after we've gone on to our heavenly home. What a great, great blessing.

These thoughts of our lineage of grace passed on through so many lives is well captured in Isaac Watts' great hymn, written in 1708, which begins, "O God Our Help In Ages Past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast and our eternal home."

From 'ages past' to 'years to come' AKA 'forevermore', God has promised to watch over our going out and our coming in, and through Jesus, to provide for our eternal home. Sometime during this Lenten season, take some time to imagine the tremendous lineage of blessing we've inherited, coupled with the blessings we pray for our future generations, and give thanks to the Giver of outrageous promises.

Father, We acknowledge that we have far more blessings than we can even comprehend. Please expand our minds to be more aware of the magnitude of Your gifts to us, and let our hearts respond with an unending hymn of thanks and praise to You. Amen

Good Friday, April 19, 2019

Tammy Vitek

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

Life is a revolving door. This special door has four partitions that spin around a central axis. When we enter one of the partitions, we are in one of the seasons all humans travel. We can see into the next partition, but we don't really know what it will be like. So, we make ourselves sick with worry about what is to come. Thankfully, the door is a continuous cycle of change. Good times and hard times come and go, but they don't stay; only God stays the same.

Have you seen a bird bounce off a closed window? It is usually stunned but flies safely away. Humans also run into unseen difficulties and are stunned, maybe hurt. God holds us close when we run into the panes (pains) of the revolving door. Matthew 6:26 reminds us, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" Verse 34 clarifies, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things." Is it a coincidence that the four doors in a revolving door are called "wings?"

At birth, we enter the revolving door. When our lives spin out of control, God is the central axis to which we cling. During our final seasons, the door doesn't just spit us out; it is the entrance to a larger building! John 14:2 proclaims, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." No matter where we are in the revolving door, He is with us always.

God, Our worries overwhelm us. Forgive us for the seasons when we fail to recognize Your power. When we are at our weakest, take all our anxieties upon Yourself. When we are haunted by failure, fill us with the certain hope that Your grace will cover us. Amen



Reflect on today's scripture while enjoying the song
God of All My Days by Casting Crowns
available at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

Holy Saturday, April 20, 2019

Mike Birdlebough

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

Sandy and I recently returned from a weeklong respite at Rosarita Beach, Mexico. We planned our trip several months ago. Friends and family members were invited. We anticipated a grand time with couples joining in much wine tasting, beach walking, surf gazing, shell searching, and seafood savoring fun, as well as several rubbers of bridge. There was also the allure of international travel where the money and language are different from our own.

As the time for our adventure drew near, some of our family members cancelled because of harsh weather and risky security in Mexico would make such an adventure too risky. The rest of us sallied forth to enjoy time together. As departure grew closer, concerns weighed us down. Finding a rental car that would permit cross border travel was a challenge. It was more difficult than our travel to Antarctica! On the eve of our departure, discouragement set in.

Alas, the day of departure arrived. Air travel to San Diego: smooth as silk. Local hotel: very comfortable. Rental Car pick-up: challenging! The "cross border express" shuttle dropped us off on the wrong side of the border! We could see the agency but getting there took nearly four hours of consternation. Amid all the details, we had neglected to bathe our plans in prayer!

As soon as the prayer went up, the rental car agent showed up and all was resolved. Our dream week proceeded to unfold without another hitch! The weather: enjoyable! The wine tasting: delightful! The resort: perfect! The rental car: commodious! Cross-border travel: expeditious...both ways! Security: a non-issue. 20 rubbers of Bridge later, we saw our friends off for their return home, having shared a wonderful week together in the Lord's fellowship!

We experienced the wisdom wrapped up in Proverbs 3:5, *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.* While we had succumbed to worry, the Lord had handled every detail...He had, indeed, kept our going out, and our coming in!

Dear Lord, You are indeed an Awesome God! We thank You for all the gifts of Your fellowship, and the opportunity to learn the ways of our neighbors to the south, and for keeping us safe from harm while experiencing the beauty of Your creation and its endless variety. Help us to trust in You for every need. Amen

Lifted (or Lyfted)!

“Lift” is the word that has marked our 2019 Lenten journey and is rooted in verse one of Psalm 121, “I *lift* my eyes to the hills, from where will my help come?” *Lift* is actually another word that describes this grand day that we celebrate today — the Resurrection! To be resurrected is to be lifted—*lifted* out of the grave; *raised* from the dead! It is what Jesus accomplished on that first Easter and it is what is promised to all who call Him Savior even as we go down in death—He will *lift* us from our tomb!

This promise of being lifted is not only a future reality that God promises when we die, but one that He promises as a present-day reality whereby we might be *lifted* from various tombs in the journey of life—sadness, loneliness, fear and worry—to name a few!

This past summer, as I attended the church convention in Denver, we had a free evening, so I decided catch-up with a dear friend from seminary. We became very close, even being baptismal sponsors for each other’s children, and for the past thirty years, though we were several states apart, we have stayed close. When I called to see if he was available to get together, he excitedly agreed and said, “I’ll *pick you up at your hotel front door and you’ll recognize me.*” Ron has always been quite a joker, and though I knew that he had recently retired from being a pastor, I had no idea what he was currently doing or what he meant in saying, “*you’ll recognize me.*”

At our arranged time, I searched to find Ron in the sea of cars that were coming and going—still wondering what he had meant. But true to form, parked right in front of me, not 20 feet away was Ron pointing to small lighted sign on his dashboard that read: “LYFT!” For those who maybe unfamiliar, LYFT is a taxi-cab type service like Uber whereby contract persons drive their personal cars in giving rides to paid customers.

I busted a gut when I saw that Ron was picking me up—no, giving me a “lift” via his LYFT business that he now does part-time in retirement! I jumped in and we spent four hours together at a restaurant with his family, eating, drinking, catching up and reminiscing about old times. The whole evening actually “lifted” me beyond measure and the memory of those few hours, eight months later, still continues to raise my spirits.

That is what the resurrection is about—God’s future lifting us from the grave, and God lifting us daily from any and all entanglements of this life that may weigh us down. May we all look to Jesus as the One who by His being lifted on Easter, will lift us today, tomorrow and eternally!

Amen? Amen! +Pastor Bobby Vitek