

# **The Source of our Help - *Psalm 121***

## **Introduction**

- Today is our second week of the “Homesick” series we began last week looking at the Psalms of ascent, these beautiful Psalms, that were likely sung by pilgrims during their journeys.
- Last week Darryl took us through Psalm 120, and I don’t know about you, but I found that sermon pretty challenging.
- The goal of last week was to answer the question: What kind of world do we live in.
- And our answer to that question was that we live in a world that is full of lies and hostility.
- And this is so clear to see, last week we made mention of the 215 children found buried at a residential school site, and then even this past week there was the Muslim family in London who were targeted and killed.
- As challenging as that message was, it was actually so important to our understanding of the rest of this series.
- One of my favourite books of all time, actually I would say it is my favourite aside from Scripture itself is Pilgrim’s Progress, and I actually see a lot of similarities between that story, and these Psalms.
- The entire story of Pilgrim’s Progress is meant to be an allegory for the Christian life, and it begins with the main Character, Christian, finding himself in what is called the “city of destruction”, and the story follows his journey to a great and better kingdom.
- In a way, I feel like our series, and these songs of ascent, or pilgrim songs, parallel this story, and last week, in Psalm 120 we were introduced to that “city of destruction”, the world around us.
- And it really does fit the name of the series, “Homesick”, because when we are faced with the reality of what this world is like it really does make us long for a better home, our true home.
- But this was just the beginning of the story, but it was and is important to begin by understanding the world that we live in, so that we can better appreciate the journey we are about to go through together through the songs of ascent.
- So now that we’ve established for ourselves what kind of a world we live in, we need to begin to process what that actually looks like and what that means for us.
- If last week was meant to answer the question, what kind of world do we live in, this week, we’re going to answer the question of how do we live in this world? And to do that we’re going to look at Psalm 121, which was just read for us.

- Now looking at this Psalm, right away it's a much more uplifting and hopeful Psalm, and as we're going through, I'm going to hi-light the two things that we need in order to process this world of hostility and lies.

## **We need to recognize our need for help**

- And the first thing that we see in this passage, actually jumps out right at the beginning in V. 1

*I lift up my eyes to the hills.*

*From where does my help come? - Psalm 121:1 (ESV)*

- We live in a culture that is very individualistic, and we place a high value on independence.
- It is something that is valued, it is praised, and it is encouraged. The ability to do things on your own.
- We don't want to have to rely on anyone else, we want to be able to handle things all on our own, and make our own way for ourselves.
- In this culture of independence, we are very slow, or hesitant to ask anyone for help, or admit that we need something other than ourselves.
- This is a message that we see everywhere in our world.
- I think that if we're honest, a lot of this comes out of pride. We do not want to lower ourselves to the level of asking others for help, or admitting that we are weak. If we did that, it would be admitting that there are others who are "better" than us, or more put together than us, and we want to avoid that at all costs. I know that that is something that I can tend to struggle with a lot
- But that is not the attitude that we see presented to us in this Psalm.
- This is not a Psalm that starts in a very strong, or independent place. This Psalm begins in a place of weakness, with the Psalmist in a low place, searching for help.
- This Psalm begins in the world that we were introduced to last week. The world of hostility and lies, and the Psalmist is searching for help in the midst of that.
- He says "*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?*"
- The psalmist is searching for help here. He is willing to admit that he is in a weak place, and needs to find someone to help him.
- And that, really, shows us the first thing that we need to see, the first thing that we need in order to function in this world is to recognize our own weakness, and that we need help.
- We can't do this on our own.

- Every day we are bombarded constantly with the broken reality of this world that we live in. It seems like every day when you turn on the news there's a new tragedy, a new injustice, something that just leaves us feeling the weight of the brokenness in this world. Even just looking at facebook makes this so clear. There are days that Elaine and I look at one another and just ask "What on earth is happening in our world". It all just feels so wrong.
- And I don't know about you, but I can't process all of this on my own. There are days that I really struggle to make sense of what is going on in our world, and I can't do it on my own.
- I need help. We need help to make sense of this world, and find hope in the midst of the brokenness around us.
- But that on its own is not enough. It's not enough to simply admit that we need help to make sense of this world and to walk through life. We can't stop there. And thankfully, that's not where the Psalm stops. It's actually just the beginning.
- If we were to stop at this point, simply recognizing that we can't face this world on our own, we would be tempted to look for help in all the wrong places. And we see this so frequently in this world don't we?
- People rely on so many things in order to fill some sort of hole that they feel inside. They pursue things like relationships, alcohol, money, etc. all with the hopes that having more of these things will help them get through life.
- But none of these things truly give help in the midst of this world of hostility and lies. Actually, in the end, we find that these things leave us worse than we were before.
- None of these things answer the question that the Psalmist is asking in V. 1. None of them will ever truly help us to live well in the midst of this broken world.

## **We need to recognize where our help comes from**

- I know that initially that doesn't give much more of a hopeful message than what we saw last week, but thankfully that is only the first verse. As we move into V. 2 we begin to see things turn around.
- because in the second verse of Psalm 121 the Psalmist answers his own question. Look at what V. 2 says.

*My help comes from the LORD,*

*who made heaven and earth. - Psalm 121:2 (ESV)*

- This verse hi-lights the second thing that we need to function in this world. First, we need to recognize that we need help, and secondly, we need to recognize where our help comes from.

- This Psalm gives only one answer to that question, *“My help comes from the LORD”*. Nowhere else.
- Nothing else that we rely on can actually give us the help that we need. Our help comes from God alone.
- And the rest of this Psalm is dedicated to explaining who God is, and why he is worthy of our trust, and how he is able to provide us with this help in the midst of a confused and upside down world.
- At this point, I want to point out three different things about God that are hi-lighted in this passage, which make him worthy of our trust.

### ***God is Powerful***

- The first thing that is hi-lighted at the end of V. 2 is the power of God, and the fact that he is greater than this entire world.
- *“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth”*.
- God is introduced to us as the *“Maker of Heaven and Earth”*
- Now to be clear, God did not create this world as the broken and mixed up place that it is today. He created a good and perfect world. The reason that this world is so full of lies and hostility, is because of our own choices and our own sin.
- But God is the creator of this world, and he has the ultimate power over it. Nothing in this world could ever be greater than him, or too much for him to handle.
- Charles Spurgeon says:
  - *“God, who created all things, is equal to every emergency. Heaven and earth are at the disposal of Him who made them. Therefore, let us be joyful in our infinite helper”*.
- What a beautiful truth that is. Our God is the creator of Heaven and earth, and he has the power to help us in every situation that we face in this world.

### ***God is in Control***

- The second thing that is shown in this passage is the sovereignty of God, that he is in control in every moment.

*He will not let your foot be moved;*

*he who keeps you will not slumber.*

*Behold, he who keeps Israel*

*will neither slumber nor sleep. - Psalm 121:3-4 (ESV)*

- He will neither slumber nor sleep
- We do not serve a God who is prone to taking naps.
- When I read this I am reminded of the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel. As the Prophets were screaming out for Baal to hear them, Elijah mocked them saying “Maybe he can’t hear you, or maybe he’s asleep. You just need to yell louder!”
- Sometimes we can be tempted to think that God is like that. We know on some level that God is with us, but during especially difficult moments or seasons of life it’s easy to feel like God has taken a nap, or stepped away to take care of something else, leaving us defenceless and vulnerable to the world around us. But this is not the God that we serve.
- We serve a God who is always alert, always watching us, and always caring for us in every situation. He will neither slumber or sleep. There isn’t one moment where he’s lost track of us. Where he’s gotten distracted and stepped away from being our help in order to do something else. He is always with us, always helping us.
- And that doesn’t mean that every situation will be easy, or we won’t ever have to face the tough times. We still live in this broken world, and so we still have to face difficult days, but this verse shows us that God is with us, watching over us even on the hardest days. Even on those days, God is our source of help, and he will help us to get through them.
- This idea is brought up again right at the end of the Psalm, in V. 8

*The LORD will keep*

*your going out and your coming in*

*from this time forth and forevermore. - Psalm 121:8 (ESV)*

- God will keep our going and coming from now until forevermore.
- There is not one moment when this world is out of God’s control, or that he’s lost track of us and we will face the trouble of this world without him.
- And this leads into the third thing that we see, which is that God is our Keeper.

***God is our Keeper***

- This is the title that is given to God throughout the entire passage, that he is our “keeper”. He is also referred to as our “shade”
- God is our protector and our provider.
- Look at V. 5-7:

*The LORD is your keeper;*

*the LORD is your shade on your right hand.*

*6 The sun shall not strike you by day,*

*nor the moon by night.*

*7 The LORD will keep you from all evil;*

*he will keep your life. - Psalm 121:5-7 (ESV)*

- We have the image here of God as such an intimate protector in every moment. There is such security that is found in the arms of God as our keeper.
- God does for us what we could never do on our own. He protects us in the midst of the brokenness. He covers us, and he shields us. We are never alone in this broken world, we are constantly being help, and kept by our Heavenly Father who made the heavens and the earth, and who is constantly in control in each and every moment.
- We see the beautiful love of God on full display here. The same love that caused God to look at us, while we were still living in sin and brokenness and decide to send his Son to die and take the penalty for our sins so that we could have a relationship with him. The ultimate love shown through the ultimate sacrifice.
- And if that is how much love our God has for us, should that not give us confidence in this promise that God is our keeper, and our constant help?
- He paid such a high price to redeem us, poured out all his wrath on his Son so that we could be adopted as his children, and he has promised that he will keep us, and care for us, as a good father would for his child.

## **Conclusion**

- So we see that in order to live well in this world of hostility and lies we need to recognize our need for help, and we need to recognize where our help comes from.
- And we need both. We need to recognize our constant need for help, and that our help comes only from God. if we don't realize that our help can only come from God then we will look for help in all the wrong places, and if we realize that our help comes from God, but aren't able to admit that we need his help 99% of the time, then we're left hopelessly trying to face this world on our own.

- But what does this actually mean? how do these two things actually change how we live and function in this world on a practical level?
- Well I want to leave you with just two quick thoughts in the way of application.
- The first is this, when you are faced with difficult seasons in life, when you are confronted with the broken reality of the world that we live in, cry out to God for help. Follow the example of the psalmist in this passage and look to God as your source of help in the midst of this world.
- When we are faced with challenging moments in life, when we're confronted with the brokenness around us, our response should not be to try to handle or process it on our own, our response should be always to fall on our knees in prayer, asking God to help us through.
- Secondly, remind yourself of who God is. In the moments where the world seems to have gone so far off the rails remind yourself that God is your powerful keeper, who is in control in each and every moment.
- Look into his Word. Look into Scripture to be reminded by God's own Words of who he is and what he has promised to do. That he is that God who loved us enough to send his son to die on the cross to take the punishment for our sin, and he is the God who has promised always to protect us in every moment.
- So this week, when you are faced with the broken reality of this world, respond by falling on your knees in prayer, crying out to God for help, then looking into his Word to be reminded of the God we serve, and the promises that he's made.
- Because in every situation, when we are at our weakest, we are helped by God who is our powerful keeper, and who is our constant help in every moment.