

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Lent 2. February 17, 2008 **Psalm 121**



I will lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you – the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

It has been called the American Dream – to start out with nothing – or less than nothing – and making it! This idea that you are tough enough and strong enough and self-disciplined enough and clever enough – against all odds you can make it. Take for example – a guy named Adam Shepard. Adam put the names of a dozen cities in a hat – pulled one out – and that’s where he went to live. Adam started out with \$25 and a gym bag. That was it. He lived 70 days in homeless shelter. He got work – first – as a day laborer – then a steady job with a moving company. Ten months into it – Adam had a job – \$2,500, a used truck and an apartment. Adam even wrote a book about his adventures entitled, *Scratch Beginnings: Me, \$25 and the American Dream*. Adam said he learned the hard way you don’t need fast food and cable TV and a cell phone and high speed internet. It’s tempting – too – to think I don’t need a Savior – either. If I am just strong enough and self-disciplined enough and clever enough – I can save myself. But you can’t. You can’t begin to earn Heaven by being good – or refraining from evil. Today God’s Word is powerful practical law and Gospel:

My Help Comes From the LORD!

1. He watches over me all the time
2. He keeps me safe from all harm

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on – from the Old Testament hymnal – the book of Psalms. Psalm 121 talks about attitude. It is a powerful practical Psalm that I have read countless times beside a sick bed at the hospital or in the home of a shut-in. **I will lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from?** Where do you look for help? When you are sick and in the hospital – where do you look for help? Do you look to your doctors? Do you know where your doctor went to school? Do you know what kind of grades they got? Did they get good grades in livers – or intestines or gall bladders? Did they get good marks in reading x-rays – when they stick them up on those little boxes on the wall and turn on the lights? And the people who do the lab work on your blood and all your different juices – are they good at what they do – or are they distracted because they are having terrible troubles in their home – and so they aren’t really paying attention when they run your tests? Do we put our trust in the fact that we go to a hospital where they have lots of very expensive equipment? When people are having trouble with their mortgages – do we look to our good job and our good pay and our good family budgeting to see us safely to retirement and then some? When we go to school – do we

put our confidence in the fact we have a good memory and are able to connect the dots – and our teachers like us? Or if push comes to shove – do you think as I often do – I have lots of very gifted friends? I do! I have in my lifetime – been blessed with friends and relatives and neighbors who are exceedingly gifted in almost every field you can think of! Or do we look inside – and say – I can get through this – with the self discipline that I have always showed? Do we say to our self – I can get through this Wisconsin Winter – I don't care how cold it gets. I don't care how much snow falls! I have mittens – warmer than gloves. I have hunting boots and layers of clothes – and a shovel in the back of my 4 wheel drive jacked up truck with thick tread tires – global positioning and remote start and one of those little bottles of heat in my gas tank. I can do this too! It's tempting – but it's wrong!

I will lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD! If you are my age or older – you remember the good old days – when they made movies about the settlers in covered wagons making their way west. They didn't call them native Americans back then – but the native Americans would attack. The settlers would circle the wagons – literally circle the wagons. And the native Americans would ride around and around – shooting their flaming arrows at the wagons and the little school teacher and their sod buster farmer husband – and all the little children hunkered down. It was all very exciting – because you knew ultimately rescue would come. And there it was. Watch the hill tops. Soon came John Wayne and the Cavalry. Their flags would be waving – their bugles blaring – their guns blazing – their swords drawn. Down from the hills came the cavalry and everyone was saved! Look to the hills. Look to the hill shaped like a skull. Look between two robbers – to the carpenter teacher so anguished and so quiet in the middle. Look to the one who died without complaint – without threat or curse. Look to the one who died in the middle – in the dark that Friday afternoon – paying for the sins of the whole wide world! Look up to your Savior. Don't look around – for you will find even friends and family will fail you. Don't look down in depression and despair. Don't look within – where you find only weakness and doubt and worry. Look up – to the hills where your help comes from. It comes from the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel!

My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. The LORD is the maker – the designer and builder and maker of all the creatures of the world. There are scientists – who look for new kinds of plants and bugs and animals that have never been found before. Half way around the world – on the Island of Borneo – they have found a new monster cockroach, a huge new kind of cockroach. Also a microcrab – little tiny crabs – so small they could hide under a dime – all pale kind of pink – living in the darkness of caves. There are giant millipedes – and a funny little bug – with big green antennae – and their body looks like two really tiny wedges of pink grapefruit! Did you ever see that? They found two new species of begonias. Do you know what begonias look like? Tuberosus begonias. They found one new kind of monophyllaea. That's a plant with just one leaf! Have you ever seen that? One little leaf? And they found 2 new kinds of snails, too! Two little creatures – with shells on their backs – tiny little feelers – and slimy little mucus that they slide on very slowly – on plants and stones and moist rich soil! The LORD invented all these creatures – that do what he created them to do. If the LORD takes care of all of these little creatures – won't he take care of you and me? We of little faith?

He will not let your foot slip – he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. Sleep is a funny thing. Little babies sleep all the time. Little grandmas and grandpas can fall asleep sitting in the daddy chair watching TV. They say that people 12, 13, 14 need more sleep – that when you are that age – in a perfect world you should sleep in--in the morning – and should start classes around 9:30 or 10! If you are driving a semi – and you have been driving way too many hours – it’s possible for you to become drowsy – and fall asleep at the wheel – and there would be a terrible crash! Jesus of Nazareth – true man and true God – was tired after a long day of preaching and teaching and building up the kingdom of God. So tired – that even though they were in a small boat in a terrible storm on the Sea of Galilee – Jesus disciples had to shake the Master to wake him up on the cushion where he was sound asleep! Jesus the Son of Man slept! But the LORD – the I AM – the Savior God who changes not – never ever sleeps! Your Heavenly Father is wide awake 24/7 365 days a week. He never slumbers nor sleeps. Your Heavenly Father never wakes up with a cough and a snort – to say – I haven’t looked in on you lately. I had best rub the sleep out of my eyes and take a quiet little peek into your life? No! He is watching over you all the time. It’s like the plaque in the bedroom of two of my little people. Graduation presents that say – “before you go to sleep – give all your troubles to Jesus. He will be up all night anyway!” Jesus sends his holy angels to camp around you all the time – so you can sleep the sleep of the forgiven!

The LORD watches over you – the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life... The LORD will keep you from all harm – *all harm*? That’s quite a promise, too – don’t you think? But it’s true! Remember what the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans? **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose...** *Romans 8:28* It’s not easy to see. It’s not easy to understand. But it’s true. Even the most painful and difficult of times are ultimately for our spiritual good! When they show a soldier who lost his legs and his sight in Iraq – comes home to America – only to have all his earthly goods blown to oblivion from a tornado – you are reminded of patient Job. You are reminded of the words we speak at the graveside of a believer – most recently Mrs. Ohrmundt and Mrs. Tobalske – **Together with patient Job we can say we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away. Blessed be the name of the LORD!** Like Abraham we realize in this world we are sojourners. We are strangers and aliens – just passing through. Our real home is in heaven. That’s why the things and stuff of this world are not important. What matters not – is the measure of your flat screen TV from corner to corner. What matters not is how many songs you have stored on your i-pod or how many text messages you sent this month. What matters not – is how thin you are or how thick your hair is – or how free of laugh wrinkles your eyes are! Those things do not matter. What matters is our saving faith in Jesus’ cleansing blood. What matters is our family – our literal brothers and sisters – and our spiritual brothers and sisters in Christ. That’s why it’s so important – if we love someone who hasn’t been to church lately – it’s very important that we tell them about Jesus’ love – and encourage them – to come to Church – come to Holy Communion – come to Bible Class. Come and hear the Gospel! Read our Bibles! Encourage and build up one another. Then – whenever Jesus calls us – we will be ready to come home to heaven.

The LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore. The LORD makes powerful promises! The LORD will watch over your coming and going. He

doesn't just watch over you at your house. He watches over you in your car seat – your booster seat – your seat – with your seat belt on – in your car or truck or SUV. He watches over you at the factory – where you work with machines that cut and smash and weld and spark – so you have to wear all kinds of safety equipment. Jesus watches over you on the road – when you are driving on mashed down snow – with sand and salt – and then a new layer of freezing rain and sleet and hail. The LORD watches over people in airplanes – 30,000 feet above the ground going 500 or 600 miles per hour. The LORD keeps you safe from spiritual harm and danger – from the devil's most horrible hurtful attacks. The LORD keeps you safe from demons and devils that would like nothing more than to do unspeakable harm to your faith and immortal soul! I read the other day about a woman named Mariam. There are those who claim this little great great grandma is 120 years old! The Guinness people say we need not only a birth certificate – but the birth certificates of a spouse and children – death certificates, school certificates and medical examinations. We aren't going to declare that someone is the oldest person alive on the planet without a whole bunch of documentation! As it stands – there's a little grandma named Edna Parker in Shelbyville, Indiana – who is certainly 114 years old. And she has been certified the oldest person alive on earth! Edna has lived a very long time – but the best news is – you and I will live forever – quite literally forever – because Jesus took away all our sins. We will live for a little while here on earth and then we will live forever by Jesus in Heaven because the LORD is our Help and our Forgiveness! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz