**God, My HELP**

Psalm 121 March 8, 2020

Are you an optimist, or are you a pessimist? I heard about an optimist that was talking to a pessimist, and he said, "Isn't this a beautiful sunny day?" The pessimist replied, "It may be, but if this heat spell doesn't stop very soon, all the grass is going to burn up."

Two days later the optimist said to the pessimist, "Isn't this rain wonderful?" The pessimist replied, "Well, if it doesn't stop soon, my garden is going to wash away."

The next day the optimist invited the pessimist to go duck hunting. The optimist had just bought this new registered hunting dog, and he said, "I want you to keep your eye on this dog. He can do things no other dog can do." The pessimist looked at the dog and said, "He looks just like a stupid dog to me."

Well, at that moment a flock of ducks flew over. The optimist shot one of the ducks and it fell into the very middle of the lake. He snapped his fingers and his new dog ran after the duck. Amazingly, the dog ran out on top of the water, picked up the duck, and ran back on top of the water. The optimist took the duck from the dog's mouth, turned to the pessimist and said, "What do you think of my dog now?" The pessimist replied, "I told you he was a stupid dog, he can't even swim."

I believe every Christian should be an optimist. If we Christians are in a position where our only help and our only hope is God, we should not be pessimistic. Yes, we should be optimistic because God is our help all the time.

The psalmist who wrote Psalm 121 was definitely an optimist. “I will lift up my eyes to the hills—From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.”

Psalm 121 known as “a song of ascents” is one of the songs pilgrims sang as they were on the way up to Jerusalem located on the top of the mountain. This is our song we sing as we are on our earthly journey up to our heavenly Home, with capital H.

We find in this pilgrim song three truths about God, our Help. The Good News is this: These truth set us free from all fears and worries and give us strength and joy to keep journeying to HOME with confidence and thanksgiving

1

First of all, God is our Keeper.

Hear the song once again to see how many times you hear the word, “Keep”

“The Lord will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

There are 6 times the Psalmist uses the word. The Lord is our Keeper.

Many of you know Warren Rozelle. I give him a nick name sometimes ago. I call him, “my keeper. Why keeper? He is homebound for a long time due to health issues. So on and off, I visit him and his wife, Pat at home. During the visitation, he asks me how the church is going and what is going on at Fairfield Grace. He and his wife have strong interest in the ministry and mission of the church and love to hear my reports. His attentive listening and encouraging words has been a great motivation to me. I feel safe and home when I am with him. So one day I gave him a nick name. You are my keeper.

But this morning, we heard the Lord is the Keeper, with capital K.

What do you keep? We keep something precious and valuable, don’t we? The Lord keeps us, our life, our going out and going in because we are precious to him. Who are we? We are His masterpiece. We are His beloved sons and daughters and the Lord loves us and keeps us and our life.

“I am good enough.” You are good in the sight of the Lord. “I am not worthy.” You are worthy to Him. “I am not perfect.” You are perfect as you are to the Lord. “I am sinful.” You are forgiven and you are mine. The Lord dearly loves you and keeps you and your life close to Him.

So we shout with joy and thanksgiving, “God is good all the time” every Sunday when we gather to worship. So does Canadian Christians, gladly proclaiming in their “New Creed”, “I am not alone. God is with us. I am not alone in life, in death and in life beyond death. God is with me. Thanks to be God.”

Thanks to God who keeps us, we are enabled to face each day and every day with boldness and confidence.

I am humbled and honored and blessed to offer this following beautiful and powerful blessing to people I visit at the hospital, at home and at Panera Bread and anywhere, spoken and sometimes in silence, “ The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up His countenance to you and give you peace.”

Where are you in your pilgrim journey? What are you facing? What worries and anxieties make your heart heavy? Keep in mind that the Lord is the Keeper who desires to give you blessings and see you being blessed with full of grace and peace. Hallelujah! Amen.

2

The second truth is that The Lord is the Shade.

The Psalmist sings, not only “The Lord is your keeper;” but also, “the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.”

The Sun sizzles during the daytime in dry land of Palestine. Sizzling heat can make you fainted and sick. How about the moon at night? Is it not romantic and beautiful to see the moon at the night sky? But a long time ago people thought the moonlight is dangerous and makes people sick and even crazy. The word, lunatic we use even this day has a same root with the word, Lunar.

So what the Psalmist sings simply means that in both daytime and dark, God protects us. In both the bright light of the sun and the night light of the moon, the Lord is our shade and our shield that protects us from both heat and hurt. God takes care of his own.

One thing that is common to every person and institution on earth is we have problems. You have problems and I have problems. The home faces problems, the church has problems, our government has problems, our nation has deep problems and yes, our world has deep problems, as well. Relational problem, financial problem, mental and emotional problem. Problem after problem. It seems that “when it rains, it pours.”

Also frequently we are shaken by the tremors of trials, troubles, and tribulations. And constantly Satan keeps tempting us to fall into the trap of doubt, discouragement, depression, despair, and disappointment.

But we can move on with joy and confidence, for God is our shade and we are promised His protection. And God helps us to overcome and be victorious day by day, for which we shout again “God is good all the time.”

3

Lastly, the Lord who keeps us and protects us neither slumber nor sleep.

The Psalmist sings, "He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." (vv. 3b-4)

There is not a parent on earth that can watch their children twenty-four hours a day, but God, our heavenly parent does. God is on watch twenty-four hours a day all the time.

Back in the days of World War II when the Germans were bombing London all night, every night, there was a particularly devastating run on a certain city. The citizens began to search among the ruins for the dead, the dying, and the missing. There was a godly old grandmother they could not find and they looked everywhere for her. Someone finally found her soundly asleep in her little bedroom. They came in and said, "Mrs. Smith, how on earth could you sleep with all of that bombing going on?" She said, "Well, it says in the Bible ‘He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.' So I figured there was no need for both of us to stay up all night and I went to bed." That little lady knew that the Lord was her provider.

This story reminds me of an awakening experience I had about 20 years ago when I was in White Plains, serving a church. One day, I happened to read an article about President George Bush Jr’s daily schedule at White House and was shocked and amazed to know that he went to bed at 10 pm and got up at 5 am and do morning exercise for an hour while reading more than several national newspapers. He sleeps a good night sleep for 7 hours daily.

I was in my early 40’s then. I was too pre-occupied and worried about my ministry as a pastor to have time to relax and rest, let alone sleeping more than 6 hours at night. A pastor serving less than 200 people have less than 6 hours sleeping and a president leading more than 20 million people have 7 hours sleep. It did not make sense to me.

Around that time, I read a story about another American president’s talk with a reporter. The reporter asked him how you handle all the problems and tasks coming to you every day. “You must be overwhelmed by the workloads and responsibility upon you and are not able to have a good night sleep.” The president replies, “Not at all. This is what I do. I do best to take care of all the national and international matters during the day time. And when I go to bed, I say to my Lord, “Lord, now it is your turn to work. You know, the Lord neither slumbers nor sleeps.” Wow. What a wonderful faith he had. He knew his Lord who watches him and this world.

The Lord is on watch day and night, 24/7 over us. The Lord keeps us and protects us 24/7 always, even when it clouds, when it rains, when it pours, when it is dark, always to help us. Trust the Lord, your Help, and you will be filled with grace and peace and enabled to keep journeying with confidence.

One of the Gospel songs comes to my heart. “His eyes is on the Sparrows”

Why should I feel discouraged? Why should the shadows come? Why should my heart be lonely and long for heaven and home, when Jesus is my portion? My constant friend is he: his eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me;

Refrain: I sing because I’m happy, (I’m happy) I sing because I’m free, (I’m free) for his eye is on the sparrow, and I know he watches me.

Fairfield Grace Pilgrims!

We are optimistic people of God because God keeps us and protects us and watches us always. Now we sing together this time, “Leaning on Everlasting Arm” # 133