



The Week of August 19, 2018

Sermon Series

Songs for the Summer: Life in the Psalms

This Week's Big Idea

God is With Us Wherever We Go

Introduction: *This sermon series is entitled "Songs for the Summer" because first and foremost, the psalms served as the refrain for everyday life for God's people. Professor Jim Limburg writes that in today's parlance, Psalm 121 might be entitled "On the Road Again." It was meant for travelers who were heading out on a trek; in this case, likely a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Like travelers today, they wanted assurance that God would get them safely to their destination. But the promises of this psalm go further than a simple road trip: Indeed, the psalmist writes, God is with us wherever we go.*

PSALM 121NRSV

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?

²My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

³He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade at your right hand.

⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

⁸The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and for evermore.

Bible Conversation

The psalmist's question in verse 1 may sound rhetorical, but it is grounded in the very real threat of danger. Name one or two dangers ancient travelers might have faced.

Vs. 3-8 were understood as the response the community gave to the concerned traveler. What does it mean to you knowing that when you set out on a journey, there is a supportive community waiting for you back home?

The image the psalmist uses for God is that of a watchman — someone who vigilantly guards against danger. What does that say to you about God?

Reflection by Pastor Shelley Cunningham

Been on a journey lately? I hope you started with Psalm 121. Frankly, given the ever-changing construction lanes and road detours in downtown Rochester, it's a good idea to ask for God's protection every time you head into town or toward Zumbro!) these days.

Journeys in Bible times were no less perilous. They were usually on foot — so stamina and passable terrain were of paramount importance. Running into bandits was always a worry, especially if the trek went through unfriendly territory. And even if the travelers didn't encounter threats in the form of other people, the heat of the sun in the day or cool winds at night brought their own form of danger. No wonder the psalmist was looking for a reassurance that he wasn't heading out on his journey unprotected.

Of course, these days we can do plenty to ensure safe travel. Before heading out on a road trip, we change the oil and top off the tank and buckle our seatbelts. While on the highway, we follow the map, pay attention to road signs, and don't text and drive. When flying, we get our luggage screened at the airport. And it's always a good idea to carry a little emergency cash and a fully-charged cell phone.

Ultimately, though, none of these things offer the same assurance as the word that comes back to the psalmist. *No matter what befalls you, you will not face it alone.* Rough roads? You're not alone. Unexpected detours? You're not alone. Even unspeakable tragedy? You're not alone. God is with you, watching over you and keeping you close. Wherever you are headed these days, carry that promise with you.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, like a watchman standing guard, you promise to protect us wherever we go. May that assurance give us confidence and courage to go forth boldly, trusting that you are always near. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Next Week's Bible Theme and Text:

Gratitude for God's Gifts
Psalm 145

Zumbro Lutheran Church
624 3rd Ave SW, Rochester, MN 55902

Reflection Conversation

Think of a time when you ran into trouble while traveling. What happened?

What are one or two fears you are carrying around right now?

The 1 Question:

What does it mean to you that God is with you always?

**1 week.
1 story.
1 message.**