



A Message from Rev. Tom Ficklin

Psalm 121 is always a favorite of mine. I find peace there in times of turbulence. Here is *The Message* Bible translation:

1 I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? 2 No, my strength comes from God, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains. 3 He won't let you stumble, your Guardian God won't fall asleep. 4 Not on your life! Israel's Guardian will never doze or sleep. 5 God's your Guardian, right at your side to protect you - 6 Shielding you from sunstroke, sheltering you from moonstroke. 7 God guards you from every evil, he guards your very life. 8 He guards you when you leave and when you return, he guards you now, he guards you always.

These are certainly times of turbulence. COVID has appeared to wax, then wane some, and now seems to be waxing again. The social unrest is still not at rest, all of us hoping for that voice that helps move this conversation along comfortably and smoothly. Then, on top of that, we lose two faithful members and another dear friend of the church in the last thirty days. And we are still not back at church yet, which means no smiles and no hugs that we have grown accustomed to on a weekly basis.

One could easily ask, “Where is God?” The Psalmist says God is right at our side. Do we feel like God is right at our side? Sometimes we do and sometimes we just plain do not. Our faith tells us that God **IS** right at our side even during the times we cannot sense Him. As one tried to compare, the sun always shines, even above the clouds.

When we struggle to sense God, it does not mean we have lost our faith nor does it mean our faith is not strong enough. John Wesley, the English cleric, theologian, and evangelist who was a leader of a revival movement within the Church of England known as Methodism, once asked another preacher how he could preach to others when he felt his faith was lacking. Peter Bohler told him, “Preach faith till you have it; and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.”

Oswald Chambers, the author most often known for his devotionals, said, “Faith is deliberate confidence in the character of God whose ways you may not understand at the time.” God is always at work in our lives. Sometimes we feel it and sometimes we may not feel it. Sometimes we know it and sometimes we may not know it. Remember in Isaiah 55 that the prophet says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

God is at work in our lives. He knows when you are anxious. He knows when you are confident in your faith and when you are not confident in your faith. He knows when your heart is breaking. He knows when your grief feels unbearable. God knows because God knows you! And God loves you even as He knows you and He sits with you in all of your circumstances and feelings and fears. Do you believe that? Can you believe that? More importantly, can you trust that God is at work in your life? Now? Today? Always?

What if we all could preach faith even when we did not feel faithful?

What if we could all trust God even when we could not understand?

What if we could praise God even when we are not together?

Let's try.

Please sing with me:

Praise God, from Whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Repeat as often as necessary to gain strength...

