

Pentecost XVIII
LWML Sunday
October 3-4, 2009

“Our Greatest Help in Time of Need”

Text: Psalm 121:1, 2; Isaiah 52:7

As you see on your service folder, we have a special theme for this weekend’s services-“Look to the Hills...God reigns!” This was the theme of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League (LWML) convention this summer in Portland Oregon. This Sunday we are celebrating LWML Sunday. This is the day each year that we take note of the work of our various ladies organizations and the role they play in the life of Trinity congregation.

As I look at the lead verse of the theme I am always reminded of a visit I made here in St. John’s hospital years ago. I had a verse from Isaiah that I was reading to her and she patiently listened to the verse and my application of the verse. After I was finished she said, “That was nice Pastor, but the one I really like is the one that says something about the hills—‘my help comes from...’” I paused for a moment and thought that she must have meant Psalm 121, so I read it to her. She then replied, “Yes, that’s it. When people are in my condition, you should read them that verse!”

Many times I have done that over the years. In particular I have been struck with verse 4 which says, “Behold he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.” I have always stressed that God constantly watches over us and keeps us in his care. There are many struggles and fears that we all have. We have a sure and certain place to look and it is to the one “who made heaven and earth.” The one who created our world takes care of us as well and as our second theme verse tells us, “Your God reigns.” Because of this God is-

OUR GRESTEST HELP IN TIME OF NEED

I. God provides us with all that we need

II. God always delivers

I.

A. Where do people look for help? The psalmist makes it clear where his help comes from. This may be seen as Jerusalem or God's dwelling place. In either case, his help or your help comes from God.

The first article of the Apostles Creed reminds us in its meaning that God "richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life...He defends me against all danger and guard and protects me from all evil." Such is God's providing and the giving of many blessings to us each and every day. In fact one speaker at the convention pointed out that umbrellas should be held upside down to catch all of God's blessings.

B. Hills or mountains played a significant role in Old Testament history. On Mt. Sinai, Moses received the 10 commandments. On Mt. Moriah, Abraham would learn what absolute loyalty to God meant when he was asked to sacrifice the life of his only son. It was on Mt. Carmel that Elijah battled the prophets of the Pagan deity Baal. In fact the reference in this psalm that God neither slumbers nor sleeps may be in reference to Baal. When Baal did not answer the prayers of his prophets, Elijah taunted them that perhaps he was sleeping or off on a journey.

This trend continues in the New Testament as well. Jesus was tempted when he was finally led to a high mountain to view all the kingdoms of the world. The devil said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (Matthew 4:9) Jesus delivered the great Sermon on the Mount in the hills of Galilee. On the Mount of Olives he struggled over his death for the life of the world. Finally on Calvary's mountain he died for us and reconciled us to God once again.

C. People look for help in various places. It can be possessions. It can be society's answers. It may be their own strength. The psalmist tells us to look to God. The one who has given us life first in our birth and again in our baptism is the one who cares for us and gives us a sure Hope for this life and the life to come.

God truly cares for us and has shown this in the greatest way in the sending of his Son as our Savior. He blesses us and protects us from harmful things in our lives. God does this in any number of ways by intervening in our lives or by the people he sends into our lives. The Proverbs say, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death." (Proverbs 14:12) we certainly are in need of help and we can always look to God.

II.

A. Some years ago gymnast Kerri Strugg attempted her team American Olympic team by vaulting on an injured leg. If her feet and leg were examined, they would have not appeared very beautiful and certainly they didn't feel beautiful to her! Look at what she accomplished! As it turned out, the team won without her effort. What she accomplished was very beautiful in the eyes of all who watched her.

God is watching his messengers as well. He says what they do is very beautiful. Listen to Isaiah's words, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns.'" (Isaiah 52:7)

God spoke through the prophets of old and pastors of today when his word is proclaimed. God takes great joy in that and produces much through it. It all points the coming of his promises in his Son our Savior Jesus Christ. You too have this message to bring as one of God's own children.

B. St. Paul writes, “If, because of one man’s trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ...so that, as sin reigned is death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 5:17, 21)

Because Jesus Christ has been victorious, you live the risen victorious life with him as well. After Peter made the great confession of faith in Jesus as the Christ, Jesus said to him and the others, “And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18) We have seen that in recent years in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as well as Red China some years earlier. This world is much in need of the greatest message of all of Jesus Christ and eternal life in him only.

C. There was once a man who was passing out Gospel tracts on a cruise liner. He approached one man but he refused the tract. He said, “I don’t believe in that sort of thing.” The tract-giver told the man how he had come to believe through a man who had given him such a tract in Glasgow, Scotland years ago. The man asked the year and the setting and discovered that he was the man responsible. He lamented, “I stopped giving them out, because I never saw any success in my work!”

As Jesus ascended he told the disciples, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8) The book of Acts records that in 30 short years we find recorded 95 people by name in 54 cities, in 32 countries, and 9 Mediterranean islands. It is said that they turned the world upside down with the good news. This is the mission of this congregation and the LWML as well. We are all about Christ who fills the greatest need of us and the world of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Amen.