

Introduction

- Six-day mountain tour in the alps. The words “I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?” was on my mind
- Mountains
 - What is about mountains that drives the imagination of people?
 - That fuels the romantic wish of adventure?
 - That empowers the instincts of fear and survival?
 - And as in the book of Psalm Chapter 121, awakens the promise of hope and protection?
- In today’s passage, we need to see it with a traveller’s glasses.
- Someone, who has embarked on a Journey and looks towards the challenges ahead
- He lifts up his eyes, looks towards the mountains and asks a rhetorical question: Where does my help come from?

Transition

Have you ever asked yourself this question?

1: Confidence in God’s Help

1. Some interpreters have suggested that mountains in this context have a negative connotation.
 - a. Mountains have dangerous paths
 - b. Mountains can be treacherous: Good Weather at a journey’s start, then ends up in a storm
 - c. Mountains can be a place of loneliness
2. Others, have suggested a rather positive connotation
 - a. Mountains serve as a stronghold, a natural wall protection for a city
 - b. Source of freshwater
 - c. Mountains are also beautiful, a reminder of the true forces of nature
3. In the bible, mountains are a place to experience God.
 - a. Where Moses received the 10 Commandments
 - b. Where God’s presence came as a cloud for six days (Mount Sinai)
 - c. Mount Zion, Jerusalem’s stronghold
 - d. But mountains, are also a place where false gods were worshiped
4. But if we look into the Hebrew meaning behind the words “to lift up my eyes”, it rather brings the meaning of longing, or to desire something
 - a. Regardless of both positive and negative connotations associated with the mountains, the focus in this chapter goes rather beyond the mountains,
 - b. It goes beyond the dangers and the beauty of these majestic formations

- c. The thought of this verse leaps beyond the hills to the universe; beyond the universe to its Maker.
- d. It is about confidence in God's help within the Journey

Transition

The rest of the Psalm develops into an expanding circle of promises and prayer of God's watchful care. Of a God, who is not fixed on top of mountains, not far into the Universe, but a personal God, who is close and is watchful

2: The Watchful Care of God

3 He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber;
4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

1. In verses 3-4 for we have the imagery of a God, who does not sleep. A God who is close watching and may not let your foot to slip
2. In the larger near east ancient tradition gods were frequently depicted sleeping.
 - a. Atrahasis Epic (1800 BCE): God Enlil is awoken by humans
 - b. Enuma Elish: god Apsu complains on the lack of sleep
 - c. And here the Psalmist emphasizes in verses 3 and 4, multiple times that not only God does not sleep, but He doesn't even dozes or nods off
 - d. Rather remains attentive and keeps continual watch over his people so that not even a foot of theirs will slip from the path (v. 3a).
3. In verses 5-6 the Psalmist talks about God being your shade at your right hand
 - a. God and shadow are constant imagery of God's watchfulness
 - b. Because the soldier carried his shield on the left hand, the right hand was usually exposed
 - c. The imagery of God standing at the right hand is that of one, who provides an extra shield in your vulnerability
4. And so, God is not only portrayed as the creator, One who is greater than the adversaries, but also One who walks with you in the midst of adversaries

Conclusion

1. This chapter is not a mere confidence boost, neither an assurance that the journey of life will be without slips, falls, sorrow, worries
2. It is rather a reminder that in life's Journey, either walking towards the mountain, or away from it, God will remain watchful, will remain not on top of a mountain, but close
3. Either in your slips or in your vulnerability, God will be close to you as a shadow

Psalm 121, Israel Pereira

4. As a pastor have said, God is closer than your own breath
5. It is the same God, who came down from the mountain, who became man, who cried with us, who experienced in Jesus the same vulnerabilities and sorrows we experience.
6. On my journey in the alps, I had the opportunity to try to go on top of a mountain alone.
7. I initiated my journey, a journey full of rocky grounds and treacherous corners
8. It would be very fitting to say that I made into the top, due to my courage and persistence
9. Yet the truth is, that I felt raindrops, I looked into the horizon and saw clouds of rains, and being merely 200 meters away from the mountain top, I turned around and went back down
10. The potential adversaries raised my alarm
11. God is not only in the mountain top, but with you
12. Not only in your success, but in your failures
13. In the six days I also fell, hurt my back, my knee
14. The journey in the mountains was not easy, yet God is not fixed on top of the mountain
15. You must not reach the mountain top to experience God. God came down. And is present in every slip, fear, failure of life's journey
16. In His help we find confidence to face adversaries, and in our weakness, we know He walks with us
17. And so the Psalmist ends the chapter not in the end of his journey, yet lists the promise of God's care towards eternity.

7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—

he will watch over your life;

8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.