

Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

You Must be Born Again!

True repentance begins with knowledge of sin. The eyes of the repentant person are opened. He sees the length and breadth of God's holy law with distress and confusion. He sees the extent, the enormous extent, of his own transgressions. To his surprise, he discovers that he has been under a huge delusion by thinking of himself as a good person with a good heart. He learns that in reality he is wicked, guilty, corrupt, and evil in God's sight. His pride breaks down. His high thoughts melt away. He sees that he is a great sinner. This is the first step in true repentance.

Ryle, J. C.. Repentance - What it Means to Repent and Why We Must Do So (pp. 3-5). Aneko Press. Kindle Edition.

www.sermonaudio.com/crc

www.unholycharade.com (blog)

www.lightfordarktimes.com (blog)

Christ Reformation Church – YouTube Channel (Light for Dark Times)

Give Thanks to the Lord

November 24, 2024

Sermon Text: Psalm 121

Scripture Reading: Psalm 136

This is the season of Thanksgiving, the giving of thanks to the Lord for His blessings and goodness to us.

We saw in the first hour this morning what at least tradition tells us is the origin of this day of Thanksgiving – the Pilgrim fathers of our nation certainly did give thanks to the Lord for preserving them through incredible hardships and dangers as they ventured into what was then a terrible wilderness.

We have many, many reasons to give thanks to God in this year of 2024. He has brought us as a nation through many dangers brought on by sinful, corrupt leaders and by the sins of the people of our nation. We owe the Lord much thanksgiving for undeserved blessings and preservation from evil.

The theme of thanksgiving is a very, very frequent one found in Scripture. In fact, one of the most fundamental sins of mankind which brings God's wrath upon him is the sin of UN-thankfulness. Man in his sin refuses to acknowledge or give thanks to God even though every good thing he has is a gift from above. The sinner lives as if God were irrelevant.

We are surrounded by, we are immersed in not only clear proof of God's existence as our Creator, but proof of His goodness and power. There is more than enough plain evidence in one finger of your hand to hold us accountable for acknowledging and giving thanks to God.

“If a man had the mind to consider how one of his fingers is formed and how well proportioned and perfect it is, he would have already learned sufficiently well that there is a God who has been at work here and that it did not happen by chance.

All profane people have always tried, at the devil's leading, to erase the certainty we have concerning the creation of the world....That is why they prefer to say that the world came together by chance and that there were tiny objects tumbling around that the sun used for building the moon and the stars, the earth, the trees, and even men. Could anyone think up a scenario more stupid than that?

So let us pay close attention to this word 'create' and be armed against all diabolical illusions, and let us be steadfast in resisting them and steadfast in the knowledge that everything was made from nothing because there is no existence except in God alone, and that we have from Him all that we have and

are.” [Sermons on Genesis, John Calvin, Banner of Truth]

Listen then to this 121st Psalm in which the Psalmist leads us in acknowledging and giving thanks to the Lord –

Psa 121:1-8 A Song of Ascents. I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? (2) My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. (3) He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. (4) Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. (6) The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. (7) The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. (8) The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Here is an brief overview from H.C. Leupold-

“It is a Psalm of trust. It counsels men to trust in the Lord in all

situations of life. It exhorts us to trust in the Lord in all conceivable situations of life. Many hearts have been strengthened for the pilgrimage of life by this song.” [Exposition of Psalms, Baker]

Consider the opening:

“I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?”

Is the Psalmist approaching Jerusalem, the city on a hill? We cannot know for certain, but we do know that he “lifts his eyes to the hills” and the sight causes him to ask:

“From where does my help come?”

We all need help. Every single day of our lives, we need a helper. In this Psalm a Hebrew word root appears six times and is translated “keep” –

- He who keeps you will not slumber
- He who keeps Israel
- The Lord is your keeper

- The Lord will keep you from all evil
- He will keep your life
- The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in

Leupold translates this word as “to guard” and the noun form as “guardian.” The basic meaning of the word is *to exercise great care over, to give careful attention to the obligations of a covenant. To tend to a garden or a flock.*

The Lord is our Keeper, our guardian. And as the Psalmist contemplates this great truth, he is giving praise and thanksgiving to the Lord, as must we. He is a traveler, a pilgrim, as are we. Most probably he is approaching Jerusalem, ascending to Mount Zion where the sanctuary of the Lord is. Listen to Leupold once more:

“It was commonly known in the later days of Israel’s history that the place that had been appointed by Yahweh to be the central sanctuary of the nation was on the Temple hill at Jerusalem. There,

God had promised to dwell among His people. But that one hill in the complex of what made up the city of Jerusalem was one of a group of several others. The “the hills” became synonymous with the holy city where the Lord dwelt.” [Ibid]

And so our pilgrim, as he ascends to Jerusalem perhaps, is overwhelmed with these truths which apply to all of the Lord’s people:

“From where shall my help come? My help comes from the Lord.”

And who is the Lord? Well, *He is the maker of heaven and earth.* The Creator of the universe is my keeper, my guardian –

Psa 23:1-6 A Psalm of David. The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. (2) He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. (3) He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. (4) Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are

with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (5) You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. (6) Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

Where shall my help come from? From the Lord, maker of heaven and earth. If you know Christ, if you have been born again through faith alone in Christ alone, then this is a certainty – the Lord is your Guardian, and nothing is too hard for Him.

This world is a fearsome place. It is a place of anxiety and trouble. Men and women may talk about being “carefree,” but no one is without care, without worries. And certainly our pilgrim traveler here in this Psalm, in addition to daily cares, had many enemies, as do all of the Lord’s people. Who will keep watch over us? Who will guard and keep us from the conspiracies and stratagems of the devil? We lift up our eyes to the

mountains and realize that our help comes from the Lord, maker of heaven and earth, who has come down to dwell with us and to keep us.

“He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber”

“The Lord made all things and therefore the conclusion is very correct that all the parts of the whole are fully under His control and to help us is an easy matter for Him.” [Ibid]

Psa 124:1-8 A Song of Ascents. Of David. If it had not been the LORD who was on our side— let Israel now say— (2) if it had not been the LORD who was on our side when people rose up against us, (3) then they would have swallowed us up alive, when their anger was kindled against us; (4) then the flood would have swept us away, the torrent would have gone over us; (5) then over us would have gone the raging waters. (6) Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us as prey to

their teeth! (7) We have escaped like a bird from the snare of the fowlers; the snare is broken, and we have escaped! (8) Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

Let's bring these great truths directly home – *the devil has many times over these years tried to destroy this church.* We could give example after example which would fill a book. Yet here we are. Why? Because the Lord is our Keeper. Men rose up against us and would have swallowed us alive. Their anger was kindled against us. They would have torn us with their teeth. But the snare is broken and we have escaped. *Our help is in the name of the Lord, Who made heaven and earth.*” Is this not great cause for thanksgiving?

And we each one can apply the same to our own personal lives. *Had it not been the Lord who was on your side, they would have swallowed you.* But, He did not allow your foot to slip and His guarding of you was and remains constant – He never sleeps.

How many missteps would we have taken if the Lord had not prevented our foot from slipping? The imagery here in the Psalm is that of a pilgrim walking along a treacherous trail, perhaps on the edge of a cliff. That is a picture of life in this world. It is a treacherous path.

The Lord watches over every single step, every single decision, every single course of the lives of His people, and He will never let us slip to destruction. John Bunyan, you recall, in his *Pilgrim's Progress* told us how Christian took a wrong turn and ended up in bondage in the giant's dungeon. But the Lord delivered him from it all and brought him back to the right way.

Pro 3:5-6 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. (6) In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

Can you not, Christian, look back on your past and see places where your foot almost slipped, and yet -

Psa 91:11-12 For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. (12) On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

Pro 3:23-26 Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. (24) If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. (25) Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, (26) for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.

Our pilgrim Psalmist continues -

Psa 121:4-6 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. (5) The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. (6) The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

We slumber and sleep. Not only literally, but we often “doze” when

we should be alert. We are warned about our enemy-

1Pe 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

But the Lord is our Guardian and Keeper, who never ceases to watch. How many times in our lives has the Lord protected us that we are not even aware of?

Psa 4:8 In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

Here then, though sentry duty is normally assigned to an ordinary soldier, it is the Lord Himself who is our Sentry!

What is this imagery the shade, sun, and moon? *The Lord is your shade on your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day nor the moon by night?* How are the sun and moon a threat?

“Shade” is a picture of *protection*. The Lord is your protection on

your right hand. In your immediate presence – right beside you.

The sun and moon imagery refer to day and night. Nothing will strike us by day or at night. The Lord does not slumber. He is right beside us, guarding and keeping.

And perhaps there is also reference here to other kinds of enemies. Pagan nations around Israel worshipped the sun and the moon. But such idols are powerless to harm the Lord's people. Their covenant-keeping God stands guard. It seems that all of this is summarized in verse 7 –

The Lord will protect you from all evil, He will keep your soul.

What is at stake? What is the enemy after? *Our life*. That is what soul means. He will guard your life.

Isa 54:17 no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of

the servants of the LORD and their vindication from me, declares the LORD.”

Psa 91:9-10 Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge— (10) no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

2Ti 4:17-18 But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. (18) The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Our Pilgrim's Psalm ends-

“The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forever.”

NOTE: It is interesting that the NASB uses several English words

to translate the Psalmist's single word, *shamar* –

Psa 121:7-8 The LORD will **protect** you from all evil; He will **keep** your soul. (8) The LORD will **guard** your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever.

I suppose they did so to give the different shades or nuances of *shamar*. But the ESV sticks with “keep.”

Our “going out” and “coming in.” When we begin a new day, we go out of our homes typically and set about our daily business. At the end of the day we return home – our going out and our coming in. All of which is to say that the Lord guards us at home and abroad, that He keeps us no matter where we are. *And His guardianship will never end – it is for this time forth and forevermore.*

Are we thankful? We all must admit that we forget these things, or when we come into trials or other fearsome circumstances, we

can feel as if our Guardian has abandoned us. But this is not true – it is a lie of the enemy. At such times especially we should pick up our Bibles and turn to this Psalm, read it again and again, and believe it. It is true truth. The promises of the Lord are sure. He has *never* failed to keep watch over His own and He never will.

*From where does my help come?
My help comes from the Lord.*

Psa 107:1-8 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good, For His lovingkindness is everlasting. (2) Let the redeemed of the LORD say *so*, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary (3) And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south. (4) They wandered in the wilderness in a desert region; They did not find a way to an inhabited city. (5) *They were* hungry and thirsty; Their soul fainted within them. (6) Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses. (7) He led them

also by a straight way, To go to an
inhabited city. (8) Let them give
thanks to the LORD for His
lovingkindness, And for His
wonders to the sons of men!