Psalm 121:1-8

1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.
2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.
6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.
7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

When there's something strange,
In the neighborhood.
Who you gonna call?
Ghostbusters!

There's something weird,
And it don't look good.
Who you gonna call?
Ghostbusters!

• In the 1980’s – a movie came out called, “Ghostbusters”.
  o The theme song for the movie was entitled, “Who Ya Gonna Call!”
  o I’m not advocating that we call the Ghostbusters.

• But I do have a question I need to ask the church.
  o When Trouble comes and you don’t know who to turn to.
    ▪ “Who Ya Gonna Call? “Jesus!”
  o When you are down and can’t get up.
    ▪ Who Ya Gonna Call? “Jesus!”
  o When life grows dim and darkness invades your home.
    ▪ Who Ya Gonna Call? “Jesus!”
  o When you need a friend and there’s no one around.
    ▪ Who Ya Gonna Call? “Jesus!”
The bottom line is – life is journey and as we journey through this life we all face troubles that seem to overwhelm us.
- It’s during those times that we become weak, defenseless, and exposed to the onslaught of the enemy.
- It is during those troublesome times that we find ourselves in a weakened position and at a great risk.
- It’s during those times that we need the assurance that we have a Divine and Eternal Friend that we can call on.
- And His name is J-E-S-U-S!

The Psalm that we read as a text this morning was born out of a crisis.
- It is believed that Psalm 121 was written by King Hezekiah, during a difficult time.
- Many believe that it was written when the Assyrian Army was threatening Judea and Jerusalem.
- The Assyrian Army was marching toward the city and the King felt helpless against this massive army.
- You can read about this in the book of Isaiah chapters 36 and 37.

I just want share a few verse from these chapters.
- The enemy says in Isaiah 36:7 “But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?”
- The words of King Hezekiah in Isaiah 37:3 “And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and there is not strength to bring forth.”
- What we have in these two verses is the enemy telling the people that they have nowhere to run and no one to turn to for help.
- Hezekiah knows that he and his people are out numbered and out powered.
- That’s why he says, “There’s no strength to deliver.”

However Hezekiah knows that while he and the people don’t possess the ability or power to deliver themselves, he knows that the God he serve does.
- Listen to Hezekiah’s prayer:
• Isaiah 37:14-20 14 And Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up unto the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD. 15 And Hezekiah prayed unto the LORD, saying, 16 O LORD of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth. 17 Incline thine ear, O LORD, and hear; open thine eyes, O LORD, and see: and hear all the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent to reproach the living God. 18 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste all the nations, and their countries, 19 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men’s hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. 20 Now therefore, O LORD our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only.

• Now with that in mind let’s take a closer look at Psalm 121.
  o This Psalm is called a Psalm of Degrees or Psalm of Ascents.
  o That means that it was sung by Jews traveling to Jerusalem for the high holy days.
  o This song was sung as they made their way to the Temple for worship.
  o This Psalm is a Psalm of Assurance of God’s Protection and is a song for any day.

• All of us at some time need the Assurance that God is watching over us, protecting us and caring for us.

• This Psalm mentions five very specific “Times” when God watches over us and protects us.
  • Let’s examine those times.
  • The first time is:

I. When Life is Uncertain:

• Do you ever have times like this in your life?
  o Times where you are uncertain what’s going to happen next.
  o There are times when you are uncertain about the consequences of the decisions that you have to make.
  o There are times when you are uncertain about your job security.
• There are times when you are uncertain about your children.
  o There are times when you are uncertain about your finances.
  o There are times when you are uncertain even about your health.

• During our earthly journey we are faced with many uncertainties.
  o That’s what the writer of this Psalm was faced with.
  o He didn’t know if he had a tomorrow to look forward to.
  o He wasn’t sure about the safety of his city or the people he ruled over.
  o All he knew for certain was that he could call on God and depend on God for help.

• Psalm 121:1-4
  1 I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.  
  2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.
  3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.
  4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.
  o The psalmist knew what people do in a moment of uncertainty.
  o He knew that people did what all of us tend to do when we are uncertain about the future; look every place but the right place.
    ▪ Try everything but the right thing.
    ▪ Ask every person but the right person.
  o He knew that every avenue was a dead-end street if it wasn’t taking people to God.

• The Message translates verses 1 and 2 this way.
• "I look up to the mountains; does my strength come from mountains? No, my strength comes from GOD, who made heaven, and earth, and mountains." (Psalms 121:1-2; MSG)

• One thing that is common to every person and every institution on earth is that we have problems.
  o The home faces problems.
  o The church has problems.
  o Our government has problems.
  o Our nation has deep problems.
    ▪ I am convinced too often that we are looking to all the wrong places for the solutions to the problems.
• Remember the verse in Isaiah 36 where the enemy said, “But if thou say to me, We trust in the LORD our God: is it not he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and said to Judah and to Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar?”
  o You need to remember that in Hezekiah people built alters to pagan gods in the mountains and hills around Jerusalem and worshiped there.
    ▪ These places were called high places.
  o When Hezekiah became king he destroyed these places.
  o It’s as though Hezekiah looked at these hills and mountains and said, “I look unto the hills:”
  o Then he asked the question, “Where does my help come from?”
  o Then he answers his own question, “My help comes from the Lord who created the heavens and earth.

• In other words what Hezekiah is saying is: My help doesn’t come from the mountains.
  o My help comes from the God who created the mountains.
  o The source of my help is Omnipotent.

• **Their were Dangerous Places in the Mountains:**
  • When God’s people would journey to Jerusalem to worship they would sing this Psalm.
    o It was a reminder that God was watching over the travelers as they journeyed assuring them of God’s care and protection.
    o These mountains, though beautiful from a distance, were anything but safe.
    o Not only is the journey through them treacherous, but they had become hideouts for bandits who would attack travelers as they passed through.
    o As the Psalmist began his journey toward the mountains, he said... My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

• **In other words Our God is an All Sufficient God.**
  • The traveler could say, “These Mountains don't scare me, because the one who made these mountains is watching over me.”
    o Can you imagine anyone you had rather have as your helper than the God who created this universe?
• Think about a God that is higher than the hills, mightier than the mountains, above all the armies and greater than all the generals.

• Why do you think the psalmist refers to the God who created everything?
  o The God who created everything controls everything and the God who controls everything can help you no matter what your need might be.

• **There is a Potential Danger of Slipping or Sleeping.**

• The weary traveler would look up at the mountains at the night watchmen and know that there was a man who stood guard while the rest of the people slept.
  o But the problem was, “Who is watching over the watchman in case he goes to sleep or looses his footing while walking the mountain?”
    ▪ The Answer is God.
  o *3* He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. *4* Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

• We all know that there are times when we become weak and weary in our journey.
  o There is always the potential or possibility that we could slip and fall.
    ▪ Or, We could fall asleep.
  o God will not allow you to fall flat on your face.
  o Although sometimes the guard is a man like us who grows weak and weary and faces the same potential danger that we do.
    ▪ Our God is not.
    ▪ He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

• You see in the church we have an enemy worse than any physical enemy that Israel would ever face.
  o The enemy of the church is on the job 24/7.
  o Therefore we need someone we can call on any time night or day.
  o We need someone that we can count on to be there when we need Him the Most.
• When your life is filled with Uncertainty, “Who Ya Gonna Call?” JESUS!
• God has made a 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week, around-the-clock commitment to take care of you.
  o The mountains of life cannot be avoided.
  o Sometimes you cannot avoid the rugged terrain.
  o Sometimes you cannot see the danger within.
  o But we can face the mountains…
  o We can face the uncertainties of life…
  o And we can face it with the assurance that God is taking care of us.
    ▪ Our help is from him.

• The 2
  nd specific “Time” when God watches over us and protects us is:

II. When The Heat is On:

• Psalm 121:5-6 *The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.*
  o This means when I am in deep trouble.
  o Some people might say, "It's not the uncertainties of the future that bother me; it's the certainties of right now that I'm worried about. I've got problems you wouldn't believe!"

• Verse 5 says, *"The Lord is your keeper."*
  o The word "keep" in this psalm literally means "to protect" or "to guard."
• Listen to how God guards us.
  o “The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.”
  o We are told specifically that the Lord is "our shade on our right hand."
    ▪ But why the right hand?
  o In ancient days, a soldier had two primary weapons: a shield and a sword.
    ▪ His most valued weapon was the shield, because that was his only defense and the shield was always held in the
left hand which means the most vulnerable part of a soldier was his right side.

- That is exactly where God always stands in our lives; at our most defenseless point.
  - The Lord always puts His strength at our greatest point of weakness.
  - He takes up a position so He can defend us no matter where an attack may come from.
  - You may not see it, but God is a shield to us every time we walk outside of our door.

- Psalm 18:30 says, "He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him."
  - The reason why He refers to the sun is because the sun gives off heat.
    - Sometimes we have to face heat in our life.
    - It sometimes gets hot in the kitchen of life.
    - God never allows you to get to a point in the kitchen of life where you can't take the heat, because God is our shade.
    - He protects us from the burning heat and the blinding light of every fiery trial that comes our way.

- Have you ever stepped into the shade on a hot day?
  - You know what a relief it is, don't you?
  - The temperature outside hasn't changed, but when you sit down under a shade tree, the heat becomes tolerable.
  - That's the same effect of having God in our lives.
    - He may not take you out of the heat, but he'll provide shelter and shade to help you bear the heat.
    - God's presence in your life doesn't mean that your problems will go away; it means that your problems won't get the best of you.
    - God watches over you even when the heat is on.

- You and I need to understand that Satan and this world seek to turn up the heat of doubt, discouragement, depression, despair and disappointment on us every day, but God is our shade and our shield and we are promised His protection
  - So when the heats on, “Who Ya Gonna Call?” The Lord Who is my Help!!
• **The 3rd specific “Time” when God watches over us and protects us is:**

**III. In Your Darkest Hour:**

• Psalm 121:6 *The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*
  • The reason why He mentions both the sun and the moon is simply that both at daytime and dark, God protects us.
    o In the bright light of the sun and the night light of the moon, the Lord is our shade and our shield that protects us from heat and hurt.
    o God takes care of His children.

• We might say that in reality, we have nothing to fear from the moon.
  o It seems strange that the writer would include the moon as a threat.
  o I mean it’s not like we get “moon burn” from extended exposure to the moon.

• In ancient times, and even in some places today, the moon is believed to have the power to make people crazy.
  o When we speak of the moon, we sometimes use the term “lunar.”
  o Lunar comes from the same root word as lunatic.
  o In some places it was believed that overexposure to the moon would make someone a lunatic.

• However I believe the writer of this Psalm is getting to something a little deeper.
  o I believe he is referring to the darkness of our fears, our loneliness, and the darkness of our pain.
  o The darkness we experience when we hear bad news.

• Even today we have those that are afraid of the dark.
  o We all have dark days that we have to go through.
  o Even then God watches over us to care for us and protect us.
  o The writer of Psalm 121 wrote with the assurance that even in the darkest hours of the night, God would be watching over him, guiding him safely.
• The 4th specific “Time” when God watches over us and protects us is:

IV. When We Are Confronted With Evil:

• Psalm 121:7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.
  o The word evil here means something wicked or injurious.
  o It comes from a root word that signifies the breaking up of all that is good and is used especially of moral depravity.
    (Exploring the Psalms by Phillips page 439)

• The word for “evil” signifies the evil intentions other people might have.
  o Possibly the most frightening danger posed to this traveler was not the possibility of falling, or the chance of being stricken by the heat of the sun.
  o It was the presence of those evil persons who might do them harm.
  o There were bandits and burglars who were anxious to make quick riches at others’ expense.

• We have an enemy that wants to destroy anything and everything that is good and moral.
  o In fact he often tempts us with his wicked and diabolical schemes.
  o We all face temptation of some sort.
  o We are all tempted to not do what we ought to do and to do what we ought not to do.

• 7The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. 8The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.
  o The word preserve is the same Hebrew word translated keep.
    ▪ Webster’s dictionary gives this meaning for the word preserve, “to keep safe from injury, harm, or destruction: to keep alive, intact.”

• As we follow the Lord’s leading He will guard us from any wickedness that may come our way as well keep us from committing wickedness that is destructive to our lives and relationship with Him.
• The 5th specific “Time” when God watches over us and protects us is:

V. When We Go About Our Daily Duties:

• Psalm 121:8 8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.