

082518

I. My Notes... WWC message 082618

II. Series: A Summer of Psalms

a. Title: God Comes Through - Always

b. Text: Psalm 121: 1-8 CSB

c. Quote: "Hope is some extraordinary spiritual grace that God gives us to control our fears, not to oust them." Vincent McNabb (Clergyman)

III. Introduction

a. I'm starting over. I had a detailed introduction written and it just seems that I need, ok I'm being prompted, to say something else. Something that has been echoing in my mind is that we can get stuck. We can get so focused on things that are going on that we can miss the true blessings – the good things that life brings. Today, there are so many things that can hold our attention and we will walk right by the place or person or situation we should be involved with. It is there that God can use us – our abilities, our experience and understanding, our strengths. And while we may be helping, the discovery of the real blessing is that we are the one that receives more than what we offer. That is what becomes a reality. Our task, if you will allow, is to follow the example of our Lord and Savior. Shortly before the crucifixion was to take place, Jesus prayed for Himself – His Disciples – All Believers... (see John 17). In this prayer He stated His duty... "I have brought you honour upon earth, I have completed the task which you gave me to do." (John 17:4 Phillips NT). Our task is that which Jesus did; and as we have stepped away from it to focus on what we want our life gets out of balance, some things don't make sense. Getting back to the simplicity of the Gospel message, there are so many people that need to see that God's love is available, that hope and

help come through a relationship with him, and that we have security – protection – provision are there, always.

- b. Life is hard... you hear me say that frequently. I think that part of the reason is I want to be honest and real as I stand before you. I have heard too many people bring messages that don't paint a picture of truth. I can't do anything about what they say... my goal – my desire is to be authentic, to not shy away from what is right and honest, and to remind us that while life is difficult – we aren't standing alone. I must be careful, it looks like I am beginning to digress into a conversation that has taken place on more than one occasion. This isn't my intention here. I want to come from a different viewpoint to a message of grace and hope.
- c. I think we live under the illusion that much has changed because of the technological advances we have today. Technology has given us some wonderful things today. But it really hasn't helped us change. It has helped us find a way to stay busy, stress more, and feel less connected. In preparing for this message, I read this.... "In *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, completed in 1787, Edward Gibbon (English historian and Member of Parliament) lists the following reasons for that fall:
1. The rapid increase of divorce; the undermining of dignity and sanctity of the home, which is the basis of human society.
 2. Higher and higher taxes and the spending of public money for free bread and circuses for the populace.
 3. The mad craze for pleasure; sports becoming every year more exciting and more brutal.
 4. The building of gigantic armaments when the real enemy was within: the decadence of the people.
 5. The decay of religion—faith fading into mere form—losing touch with life and becoming impotent to guide the people.

Do these five reasons for the fall of Rome tell us anything about our present national situation? Do we dare elaborate on these?" (taken from a sermon by Steve Shepherd, 7/1/2010). My question is, are we much different today?

- d. I don't want to dwell on statistics. The point is that as a society, we haven't grown that much. The difference that believers hold, no matter what the circumstance, is that we have a place to turn. Our cries, concerns, and calls are heard and because of this we can help impact/influence the lives of others. Hope, help, protection have been there... It's time to celebrate, it's good to have a reminder.

IV. Text

- a. Psalm 121:1-8 (CSB)

I lift my eyes toward the mountains. **Where will my help come from?** My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to slip; your Protector will not slumber. Indeed, the Protector of Israel does not slumber or sleep. The LORD protects you; the LORD is a shelter right by your side. The sun will not strike you by day or the moon by night. **The LORD will protect you from all harm; he will protect your life. The LORD will protect your coming and going both now and forever.**

- b. You remember the story of Joseph? Sold into slavery, put into jail, abandoned. I'm sure there were moments that he questioned, perhaps times of doubt. Yet, as it worked out Joseph had a time to get his own revenge. His response during this time...

- i. Genesis 50:20 (NASB)

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive."

- c. Esther was put into a position that could cost her everything... including her life. She was going to have to put herself in great risk to protect her

“people” (the Jews). It may have been a great struggle. She was going to have to trust God's protection. She was reminded...

i. Esther 4:14 (ESV)

“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

- d. No matter what the situation God rises to the occasion – He will always act in a way consistent to His nature.
- e. His actions bring Him glory

V. Possibility

- a. Hard times are a fact of life.
- b. Finding joy – happiness is a choice we must learn to make
- c. It's rough when it seems life is crushing down
- d. I'll admit there are things in Scripture I struggle with. One is what the Apostle Paul said in his letter to the church in Rome.
- e. Romans 8:28 (NASB)

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.
- f. I don't claim to understand the extent that God will go to reveal His love to man. He will use anything and every situation to show the depth of His grace and compassion.
- g. I know that God has a plan for each and every person. Jer. 29:11; 1 Tim. 2:3-4; Heb. 13:20-21... all reinforce the truth that God has a plan for us.

- h. Because of this we can look up. As the psalmist stated. "My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (vs.2)
- i. That is, we can communicate, we can worship, and we can see that in every situation there is good – there is benefit – there is hope

VI. Presence

- a. Ok, another step back. I want to encourage those reading and listening. I began to try to be doctrinal... it didn't feel right
- b. I grew up with a lot of questions – especially about the Lord God... I wanted to believe and have that deeply emotional connection I observed in many at church
- c. I struggled to find it. The problem, I discovered, was that I sought the experience not the Giver
- d. As a teenager I found my emotional connection in music... Oh, I couldn't play an instrument or sing but music reached me on a deep level
- e. One of my favorites was Andrae... His music was amazing and it had a strong message
- f. "He never sleeps, He never slumbers, He watches over me both night and day" (Andrae Crouch, 1970)
- g. God's is with us. He promised His presence always
- h. Another group I listened too was The Gaither's (image that) ... and yet another song with a message...
- i. "Because He lives, I can face tomorrow,
Because He lives, all fear is gone;
Because I know He holds the future,
And life is worth the living,
Just because He lives!" (Bill Gaither, 1971)

- j. It's based on John 14:19 but that didn't matter to me as much as the music touched my heart.
- k. I sensed the presence of the Lord.
- l. I'm telling you this because God is there – He promised throughout Scripture
- m. Seek me and you will find me – cf. 1 Chron. 28:9, Prov. 2:1-6; I am with you always – cf. Matt. 28:20
- n. And those promises are great but if you can't find a way to connect to them it seems hollow
- o. Do you KNOW God is there? Have you received an unexpected phone call from someone at just the right time? Perhaps, God is listening. There are things that happen at a time when we are most in need... Is that coincidence or God's hand?
- p. It is very probable that, at times, you and I are being used to do these kinds of things... a phone call, a smile, a shoulder – even when it doesn't seem necessary or convenient can touch the depths of someone's soul. Is it you that did it or as my brother says – the Jesus in you?
- q. Maybe Romans 8:28 begins to make more sense. “All things” happen so that we can come to understand “I am with you always” ...
- r. I'm going to try to do justice to this story. It's personal. When he was 57, my Dad, had his second heart attack. He was rehabbing from his first and on a treadmill. He collapsed and had what was explained to us as “sudden death”. On the treadmill next to him was a paramedic, getting his workout in. He was on my Dad, doing CPR, almost before he hit the ground. (Was this a God thing?). After my Dad was transported to the ER and had begun to recover there was some time he was alone in the room. My Step-Mom was taking care of things and I hadn't arrived (I was driving). This gave my Dad time for reflection and realization. We talked about this after I arrived. Dad had looked up and prayed, “it looks like it's You and me, Lord”. That moment

changed him. His struggles didn't stop. He had battles for some time. There were moments that life or circumstances didn't make sense or seemed against him. He and my Step-Mom left California – his home all his life – to settle in a place they could afford. It's was at this point, almost 10 years later, the "You and me Lord" began to take shape. Dad was involved with a church and felt the need to do more. He began to go to nursing homes. To sing, to share God's love and the Gospel, and take communion to people that were in desperate need of grace and God's touch. He did this faithfully until his passing. Dad has been gone 8 years now and the ministry continues. From what I understand it has grown.

- s. That is "Emmanuel, God with Us" (MercyMe, 2007)
- t. God is there, always

VII. Protection

- a. The last words of this Psalm..." The LORD will protect you from all harm; he will protect your life. The LORD will protect your coming and going both now and forever." (vs. 7-8)
- b. Joseph acknowledged the Lord's protection and providence when he spoke with his brothers
- c. Peter, the man who – much like us – spoke before he thought, wrote...
"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV)
- d. Our purpose is to live in a way that honors and glorifies the Lord. This is pleasing, and it has an added benefit of revealing our faith and our choices to others
- e. I was speaking with a friend the other day. She has had her struggles. She isn't shy but wasn't all that sure about sharing her "faith". Through many

conversations and ups and downs, she has learned to just live – to be who God has purposed her to be

- f. In doing this... now those non-believers that are in her life come to her for prayer, for counsel, because they know who she is and what she believes.
- g. This lady impacts lives with her testimony almost daily. She does it by the way she chooses to live
- h. Her behavior reflects her belief.
- i. And she knows God's protection – something she doubted in the past
- j. God is there – He wants us to be safe and secure – He wants us to understand that our lives are important – He is involved in our daily schedule (coming and going)

VIII. Last Words

- a. “One tribe of native Americans had a unique practice for training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, he was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then he had never been away from the security of his family and tribe. But on this night he was blindfolded and taken miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of thick woods. By himself. All night long.

Every time a twig snapped, he probably visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. Every time an animal howled, he imagined a wolf leaping out of the darkness. Every time the wind blew, he wondered what more sinister sound it masked. No doubt it was a terrifying night for many.

After what seemed like an eternity, the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was the boy's father. He had been there all night long.

Can you think of any better way for a child to learn how God allows us to face the tests of life? God is always present with us. God's presence is unseen, but it is more real than life itself." (Leonard Sweet, *SoulSalsa*, Zondervan 2000)

- b. Are you ready to live, to take the next steps – those you might have been unwilling to – knowing that God is there, and He has your back?
- c. Let's Pray
- d. May the Lord fill you with confidence as you walk along the path of life. May the Holy Spirit guide you and prompt you to right choices in those moments where there are questions. And may you know, more than ever, that you are loved and valued... that the Lord God cares about the details of your day.