

Sermon for March 1st, 2026
SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

READINGS

Genesis 32:22-32

22 The same night he arose and took his two wives, his two female servants, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. **23** He took them and sent them across the stream, and everything else that he had. **24** And Jacob was left alone. And a man wrestled with him until the breaking of the day. **25** When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he touched his hip socket, and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. **26** Then he said, "Let me go, for the day has broken." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." **27** And he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." **28** Then he said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with men, and have prevailed." **29** Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. **30** So Jacob called the name of the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life has been delivered." **31** The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. **32** Therefore to this day the people of Israel do not eat the sinew of the thigh that is on the hip socket, because he touched the socket of Jacob's hip on the sinew of the thigh.

Psalm 121

1 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.

Romans 5:1-5

1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. **2** Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, **4** and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, **5** and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Matthew 15:21-28

21 And Jesus went away from there and withdrew to the district of Tyre and Sidon. **22** And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.” **23** But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, “Send her away, for she is crying out after us.” **24** He answered, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” **25** But she came and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, help me.” **26** And he answered, “It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs.” **27** She said, “Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” **28** Then Jesus answered her, “O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.” And her daughter was healed instantly.

Our meditation this Second Sunday in Lent is on our Psalm.¹

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Introduction

Today's reading is one of the fifteen Songs of Ascent in the book of Psalms. These were written so that people traveling to Jerusalem on pilgrimage could sing them together and meditate on the message while making their arduous journey. They are called songs of *ascent* because the road to Jerusalem was uphill the entire way. Now, our spiritual forebears did not have radios for music, nor did they have podcasts to listen to. The only thing that could occupy their ears and their minds was making conversation, singing songs, or listening to the sounds of the wilderness around them. These were the only things that could keep boredom or fear away.

If you are making such a journey, you do not want to be left without conversation or thought in your mind. Our bodies are well made by our Creator, such that even when a man is out of shape he can hike for an entire day if he really needs to. But our *minds* make things difficult because they are easily discouraged, from the moment we take our first step on the journey. People fail in their thoughts long before they would ever fail physically. So this sort of Psalm focused their minds, motivated them, and encouraged them throughout their journey.

A Message to Stay Strong

With our reading for today, we can see the clear message upon which they were to meditate: God is with us, God is on our side, and God will protect us. At first, this sounds like something we all hear all the time – there is no shortage of reminders for us that God loves us and provides us with everything we need. But for the song of ascents, it is *more* than that. He connects this with creation and the nature of the Lord Himself.

The God who spoke light into existence, who separated waters from dry land, cares about you. He who named every star in the sky says that *you* are important to Him. The Psalmist looks up to the hills of Jerusalem, to the majesty of the armies of Judah guarding its walls, and he knows that it is unlikely that he would ever get an audience with the king in his palace, but that does not matter. He looks up to the hills and thinks of the true God, the King over the entire universe, and thinks to himself “The Lord always makes time for me and helps me.” My friend, do you know that He does the same for you?

And the love of God which looks over him (and us!) is more than mere affection. God does not

¹ Note to all Lay Leaders, Deacons and Chaplains. On account of a number of our Catacomb Synod congregations doing Wednesday night services (and me providing audio messages for them), the Lenten sermons will be focused on the Psalms and shorter than usual. If that does not suit your congregation, I recommend utilizing the previous year's Lenten homilies.

get tired and nor does He have to sleep. Could He sleep if He wants to? Sure. But He abstains from sleep to watch over the pilgrims. As they ascend the hills to the city to present themselves before our Lord and engage in devotion, even when it gets too dark and they have to camp near the road, God is watching over them. And He does the same for you.

We might be tempted to think this is ridiculous. The majesty of our Lord is incomparable. He is big and we are small, He is strong and we are weak, He is smart and we are fools. Why would the sovereign King of the entire universe take the time to watch over a few pilgrims going to Jerusalem? What inspires Him to be concerned with creatures so far below Him?

I'll tell you why He does this. Because He is the *Keeper of Israel*, and the *Keeper of you*, my friends. If you belong to Israel, the body of saints here on earth who hold to the true faith, then you are *His*. The vast majority of humanity hates the Creator and hates everything about Him, they want nothing to do with Him. To love the Lord and believe in His promises makes you exactly the kind of person that He wants running the earth some day. God sees those who are *His*, and He ensures that they are protected from all evil; we cannot count the sheer masses of disasters in our lives that God has prevented. If anything bad happens to us, we know for certain that God had a good reason for permitting it – even if we should be martyred for our faith, we stand confident to confess with St. Paul that “for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”²

Conclusion

So the pilgrims, walking up to Jerusalem for the festivals and gatherings, were comforted and encouraged as they sang this song. They traveled hill and dale to go up to the capitol city, risking attacks from bandits, low supplies, illnesses, bad weather, injuries to get there. They went through boredom, anxiety, fear, and interpersonal conflict every time. But what kept them going was knowing that God was *for them*. They made it through knowing that He was the One protecting them, helping them, and ensuring their success in every step of their journey.

Now these days we have a hard time noticing that the same benefits are offered to us daily, to *all* Baptized believers in Christ. God watches over *all* the saints, not just those going on some journey. But with everyone driving or riding in a vehicle, and nobody going without the stimulation of cell phones, radios and televisions, it gets difficult to see where we are blessed. I suspect the devil is hard at work making sure these distractions only get worse, because he wants us to forget that we too are pilgrims. We may not be walking up a road to go make sacrifices at a temple, but we *are* on our way to that holy city – the heavenly Jerusalem, wherein we shall rejoice with our Lord forever who kept our path straight. So then, let us return to this Psalm (and all other songs of ascent) as we continue in our devotions, that even when we are afraid we may not forget that our Lord watches over us.

Now the Peace of our Lord, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.