

April 7, 2019

KIBC Sunday Worship Service

Message by Pastor Teiichiro Kuroda

Title of the Message: "I Lift up My Eyes to the Mountains"

—The Lord Who Created Heaven and Earth—

Text: Psalm 121:1~3

**121:1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from?**

**121:2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.**

**121:3 He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber;**

#### Introduction

Today's message is from **the Yearly Scripture** of KIBC in 2019. It is a favorite Scripture for many people.

Let's read Psalm 121:1~3 together.

**121:1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from?**

**121:2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.**

**121:3 He will not let your foot slip — he who watches over you will not slumber;**

Psalms 120~134 are called the **Songs of Ascents**. They are songs of pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem. The Israelites seemed to make their pilgrimages by singing these psalms. They, who dispersed over the world, had a duty to visit the temple in Jerusalem three times a year.

**Deuteronomy 16:16 Three times a year all your men must appear before the LORD your God at the place he will choose: at the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the Festival of Weeks and the Festival of Tabernacles. No one should appear before the LORD empty-handed:**

These three times refers to Israel's three major festivals, **Passover**, **Pentecost**, and **Sukkot**. The Israelites came to gather at the Mt. of Zion from all quarters of the world. They came to worship God in the temple of Jerusalem that was located on the mountains. Thus, these psalms are titled the **Song of Ascents** and **the Song of Pilgrimage to Zion**.

The author of Psalm 121 thought over his life on the way to Jerusalem. Looking up the mountains, he prayed for his life and safety and pondered where his true help came from and

praised the Lord.

By the way, our lives are also like a pilgrimage to Heaven. When we enter the city of Heaven, we come to have a blessed time to be with God forever. However, we are still on the way. How should we walk as pilgrims toward the city in Heaven? Specifically, with what attitudes should we walk in 2019?

Today, let's study our ways of living from Psalm 121 that is our Yearly Scripture in 2019.

### Main Points

## 1 . The Pilgrims Who Walk the Highway to Zion

**Psalm 121:1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from?**

**121:2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.**

### 1 ) A Song of Ascents

The Japanese language doesn't clearly distinguish between a singular form and the plural form. It records **mountains** (plural) in the original text, **"I lift up my eyes to the mountains."** And **mountains** shows well the characteristics of the land in Palestine. When we read **"to the mountains,"** we imagine a magnificent view of mountains from the foot of the Alps.

However, there are no beautiful, magnificent, impressive mountains in Palestine. They are limestone hills. It is a range of the rough, bleak and dried rocky hills. Their peaks are not so high.

However, the pilgrims who believed in God knew that God was present among those bleak mountains. **This is God of the Bible we should remember.**

The author continues to sing, **"Where does my help come from?" (Verse 1)**

My friends, please imagine the situation where you have no help and are in need. It is very helpful that our family, friends, brothers, and sisters of church and people who we trust are beside us. However, we sometimes face a critical situation in life where no helpers are beside us.

There were no helpers during the pilgrimage to Zion. People would only see a range of rocky mountains. In such a situation, the author of psalm sang, **"Where does my help come from?"** **This is the land of the Bible, Israel, that we should remember.**

**"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Verse 2)**

Like this, the author of Psalm 121 asked himself like this even though he knew the answer. He believed that God of Israel was present in the mountains even when there seemed to be no

helpers in his human view.

The believers in the Bible had **hopeless experiences** many times. But they experienced **help** many times at the same time. Therefore, the author confessed his trust at the beginning of the song.

My friends, believers sometimes have troubles. Their faith may also collapse. They might not be able to pray for a long time. They could have no helpers from the human viewpoint. At that very moment, it is the word of Psalm 121 that they should remember during the journey of life; they look up to the One who created Heaven and earth. **This is a song of ascent when we go to the Jerusalem in heaven.**

## **2) The Saints Who Went Toward the Temple**

We studied about the pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem. Our journey is not always happy and perfect. We sometimes walk in bleak land. When we need a helper but we don't have any good helper we feel desperate.

Such a journey can happen. However, a journey like this is an opportunity to meet God and experience His help. The author praised God, **"I lift up my eyes to the mountains."** To look up the mountains where there seemed nothing but bleak and rocky terrain, meant he did not see any helper in the human sense. The mountains were not magnificent or grand. Even so, he looked up and sang.

**"My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Verse 2)**

My friends, we see an important attitude of believers' faith who trust in God and walk with Him. God is present in the mountains (lonely places) where is nothing. God is present (His Spirit) there, and we experience Him who produces something from nothing. It is the God of Israel. It is the journey to experience God's grace during our Christian lives toward Jerusalem in heaven.

Then how can we experience the fact that God produces something from nothing? Let's study this in more detail.

## **2 . God Who Watches over Israel**

**121:3 121:3 He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;**

**121:4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

The Scripture teaches us at least two important things.

### **1 ) God's Perfect Protection**

The pilgrims worried about the following three points.

① Natural disasters ② Health ③ Unexpected accidents

### ① Protection against Natural Disasters

The sunlight is very strong during these three major festivals in Israel, especially for Pentecost and people get sunstroke in the daytime. Therefore, many avoided the pilgrimage in the daytime and walked in the nighttime. But the wild animals (fierce animals) like a jackal came out during these times, and they were in danger. Therefore, they sang that God protected them from natural disasters as below

**121:6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.**

### ② Protection for Health

They got tired during the journey. In particular, their feet became sore and exhausted from the long journey. Their health was very important. And the pilgrims sang, **“He will not let your foot slip.” (Verse 3)** and **“The Lord watches over you — the Lord is your shade at your right hand.” (Verse 5)** The right hand is a dominant hand so that they sang **“your shade at your right hand.”** They praised the Lord God who supported and protected their health.

### ③ Protection against Unexpected Accidents

Like the story of a good Samaritan in the New Testament, the pilgrims didn't know when they would be attacked by the robbers in Palestine. They sang that the Lord protect them against unexpected accidents.

**121:7 The LORD will keep you from all harm-he will watch over your life;**

Psalm 121 is a short psalm of 8 verses, but the word **“he will watch over”** appears 6 times (Verses 3,4,5,7,8). They sang that God Himself protects them.

The pilgrim completely trusted in God who was **“the Maker of heaven and earth” (verse 2)** and **“he who watches over Israel.”(Verse 4)**

They praise the Lord as below—

### 2) The Lord Who Protects Forevermore

**121:8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.**

The pilgrims were on the way to Jerusalem. However, they sang **“coming and going.”** They were confident of protection coming and going and forever. It means that the Lord who saved us from sin and the judgment of death completely protects us until we return in triumph to the Jerusalem in heaven. Like this, the author absolutely trusted in God. Faith must be like this.

### 3) Application

Then, what do we learn from Psalm 121?

We have anxieties during our pilgrimage. In those days they had three kinds of anxiety (health, natural disasters, unexpected accidents), but God absolutely watched over them. The Lord's help can be found in despair.

#### ① Trust in God

The walking stick of the pilgrimage is trust in God.

We don't know what will happen in 2019. However, God who watches over night and day is with us. He protects us from anxieties that we might face during our pilgrimage to the Jerusalem in heaven

#### {Illustration}

**I have heard a story about the performers of flying trapeze of a circus. The performers flew right and left, left and right. Their lives are put on the hanging ropes from the ceiling.**

**If they miss the right timing to catch the rope, they will fall to the ground. However, if they trust in the rope of their partner and grab it tightly, they are able to fly to the opposite side.**

**The performer said that the important thing for all performers was to trust in the rope.**

My friends! To trust in God is like what the performer of flying trapeze said. To trust is to hold the rope tightly. We should hold God's Word tightly. The God of the Bible is the One who created heavens and earth is love, and He is perfect so that He never fails. Trusting in Him is like the precious walking stick we use to continue making the pilgrimage.

#### ② God's Love

Then, why does God watch over us? ⇒ Because God loves His people.

The God of Israel whom we trust in is the God of love. He is not a god that human beings created. He created human beings. He called Israel **my beloved people**. We are loved by God.

God is love. We should make the journey of faith by trusting Him. However, the problem is unfaithfulness to God.

The pilgrims must go through the bleak land. They might face three troubles. They become unable to see God. Of course, God is invisible in nature. They come to lose their trust in God.

God always loves the pilgrims even though they are weak and unfaithful.

Our God is the One like as below—

**121:4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

**121:5 The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand;**

**121:6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.**

**121:7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life;**

Jesus Christ also said as below—

**John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.**

God loves and protects us and guides us in the wilderness.

Let's give thanks to Him for His blessing that we are able to make a journey of life with our wonderful Lord.

### Conclusion

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Today, we studied God's word I from Psalm 121, our Yearly Scripture of 2019.

Let's look up to God and have the blessed days of experiencing God this year.

God of Israel is also our God. The author of Psalm 121 praised God who watched over the journey to the temple in Jerusalem.

What important things did we learn today?

1. Trust in God (faith)

Trusting in God is the only walking stick that the pilgrims need their journeys.

2. To respond to God's love

God's nature is love. How do we respond to God who is love? We should not mutter or become unfaithful. ⇒ We should love God just as He loves us.

Let's read Psalm 121:1,2 again and close today's sermon.

**121:1 I lift up my eyes to the mountains — where does my help come from?**

**121:2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.**

\* God bless you!