

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
25th August 2020**

READINGS

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.
He won't let you stumble,
your Guardian God won't fall asleep.

GOD guards you from every evil,
he guards your very life.
He guards you when you leave and when you return,
he guards you now, he guards you always.

Psalm 121: 1-3, 7-8 (The Message Translation)

So, what do you think? With God on our side like this, how can we lose? If God didn't hesitate to put everything on the line for us, embracing our condition and exposing himself to the worst by sending his own Son, is there anything else he wouldn't gladly and freely do for us? And who would dare tangle with God by messing with one of God's chosen? Who would dare even to point a finger? The One who died for us—who was raised to life for us!—is in the presence of God at this very moment sticking up for us. Do you think anyone is going to be able to drive a wedge between us and Christ's love for us? There is no way! Not trouble, not hard times, not hatred, not hunger, not homelessness, not bullying threats, not backstabbing, not even the worst sins listed in Scripture:

They kill us in cold blood because they hate you.
We're sitting ducks; they pick us off one by one.

None of this fazes us because Jesus loves us. I'm absolutely convinced that nothing—nothing living or dead, angelic or demonic, today or tomorrow, high or low, thinkable or unthinkable—absolutely *nothing* can get between us and God's love because of the way that Jesus our Master has embraced us.

Romans 8:31-39 (The Message Translation)

“Trying to be happy without a sense of God's presence is like trying to have a bright day without the sun”

A.W. Tozer



REFLECTION

The pandemic has reminded everyone that we are neither immortal nor immune from difficult times. It is frightening to think how easily all the parts of life we thought so secure, the things we relied on, succumbed so quickly to the virus, and how everything had to be shut down.

Yet for people of faith, none of that should be a shock. Our faith is not based on our strength and our ability, it is not based on what we can achieve or on the plans that we make. God doesn't love us because of what we can do. God's welcome is not conditioned by our ability. In fact our faith reminds us that all of us of our own inherent weakness.

As our readings show today, our reliance is on God. It is God who is our strength. It is God who loves us unconditionally whatever our ability, whatever our experience, whatever our history. Everything else in life might collapse. Every part of our security might fail. But God will never stop loving us. God will never leave us. We will never be without God's strength in the midst of life. There is no scenario where God walks away from us and leaves us alone.

Of course, we can forget that sometimes. We can try to do things on our own and forget our faith. We can try to live without relying on God. I certainly have made that mistake many times in my life. And it's such a silly thing to do, to ignore the greatest resource of hope and joy and encouragement.

That's one of the reasons why I think being part of church family is so important to all of us, because it is there that we are reminded that we are not alone; that we can turn to and trust in God; that there is no judgement or failure in admitting that we cannot do things on our own; that we all need God every single day – after all, we are created to be complete only in relationship with God – that's the point of the creation story in Genesis.

Have you been trying to do things on your own and forgetting to rely on God? Why not try God's strength – God longs to share life with you – for God loves you more than life itself.

PRAYER

All powerful God
Creator,
Maker of mountains and designer of oceans
All nature bears the evidence of your true character,
Giving witness to your holiness and love.

You remind us that we are not alone,
That we do not face the challenges of our days on our own,
You are the God who is with us,
The one who offers unlimited strength, unconditional love,
Our ever-welcoming heavenly Father.

Forgive us when we have tried to 'do it on our own'
When we have, like spoilt children, followed our own way.

Bring us back to you Lord,
Ready to rely on your strength,
Blessed by your presence,
Safe in your care,
And held in the family of God's people.

In Jesus name,
Amen.

