

Lord, take my hand and lead me...

Bible reference Psalm 121 & Genesis 12:1-4

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will 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 He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

Take thou my hand and lead me o'er life's rough way. I sang these words just over 50 years ago when I confirmed my faith. It's often sung in our Lutheran Church and often as a Confirmation of faith hymn but perhaps today modernised as '*Lord, take my hand and lead me...*' It is a hymn of faith and hope. Putting our hands into God's for life and trusting that God has us. That God will lead us and protect us.



As a youth after Confirmation I remember at our youth group doing what was called a faith walk. This was an exercise of trust where you put on a blindfold and trusted someone to lead you perhaps through an obstacle course. And to make it more difficult you'd not only be blindfolded but you'd have to walk backwards.

Can you trust the person leading you?

Putting our trust and faith in Jesus. In the promises of God. That's us. That's what gives us firm footing in life. Even in the face of troubles.

But life can bring anything but firm footing sometimes. I've been diagnosed as having stage 4 cancer. I've been having treatment for this, and I've learned sometimes painfully that Chemotherapy brings neuropathy and unsteady feet and a struggle to move. When I dwelt in the word of Psalm 121 with Pastor Sue she said that the image she had at that time was of having eyes which are initially downcast, downcast because of feet stuck in deep dark, sticky mud and the person lifts their eyes to the one who bends down to save, to care, to help. Or perhaps it's like being blindfolded and walking backwards...

Difficult, uncertain, lonely. "I lift my eyes to the hills - where does my help come from?" the psalmist writes in Psalm 121. Where do we put our trust and our faith in times of uncertainty?

“The lord be with you” they said as he embarked on a difficult journey. He was travelling to a place of the unknown.

Where would it lead to?

What would it be like?

Would it be painful?

Death!

These were my questions. Death on my doorstep as I heard that I had an incurable tumour.



How painful would it be? “The Lord be with you”, I’d said it and heard the response “And also with you” said it in worship many times. “But how will the Lord be with me on this journey?” How would the Lord be with me as I faced my human fears of pain and of missing out on life with people he loved, and as he faced death? What would the dark uncertainty bring? How would God be there as He promised.

My friends I didn’t know the answer. I wanted to. I wanted to have some control over my life. I wish, as I prayed psalm 121 I wish I knew the exact answer. But I didn’t.

What I do know though was the certainty of the promise. And that’s what I love and cling to as a Lutheran Christian: that God does what he says despite the deep dark of human uncertainty. Like for Abram called to go on a crazy walk of faith, God puts His hand into ours and leads us through life’s rough and sometimes dark and uncertain way.

When Abram received his call from God in Gen 12 it seems he is given a heavy-duty blindfold as he sets out in faith. You see in ancient days there were 3 things which were seen as the source of blessing and happiness and success. These things were

- 1) to have a big family,
- 2) to have land and
- 3) to have an inheritance to give.

Now these were all things which one could see and put faith and trust in...maybe not so different today.

Well Abram seems already to be in some trouble. We’re told in Gen 11 that Sarai his wife was barren; she had no children. And then in relation to land and the family inheritance, God comes along to this 75-year-old and says:

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you.” (Gen 12:1). What would you do in Abram’s shoes?

God goes on to promise: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen12:2-3).

An amazing promise in the face of uncertainty for Abram. What would you do if you were in Abram's sandals? God tells us without any fanfare:

"So Abram left as the Lord had told him". The Lord reached out to him and led him. This Lord would not sleep or let Abram's foot stumble. Abram put his faith and trust in God even though it seemed he was turning his back on all the world saw as blessing. And God did what He said. Abram is our spiritual father today.

"For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist"

(Rom 4: 16-17)

Promise and faith. Gift and reception. Call and fulfilment.

Is God faithful to his promises? Here is the person. Does God really give life to the dead?

That was the question I asked. Jesus is the key! Jesus and his faithfulness and love for me and you and all people, is the key.

Will God really walk with me through the valley of the shadow of death and not let his foot stumble or fall?

That too was a question I asked

What are your questions in life for God who promises in the psalm not to sleep but to walk with you through life?



It would be easy for us to make the mistake of thinking that the answers rely on my, on your strong faith. But I know how fragile I am. I think hand on heart we all know our fragility in our humanity, in our sometimes lack of faith, and in our sin.

Whatever the journey is for you and whatever the questions are that you ask today, the key is to look to the One who has gone before you on the road to Calvary and in whom we hear the promise



“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” (John 3:16-17).

Is he enough this Son who gave his life for you? Can you put your trust in him and his hand as he leads you on life’s way?

Trust and hope value: dwell and go deep into the Word

The blind folded walk of life, of faith can be a tough one. Putting our hand into God’s can even be quite scary and uncertain for us. The blindfold brings darkness. The darkness of uncertainty. Nighttime darkness without sleep. The darkness of loneliness. The darkness of death. The truth is that we want the control, but death is beyond our control. And God comes to us in his Son in promise. Splashed with baptism, promise to be with us even to the end of the age on the journey we make through life.

The psalmist looks ahead, blindfold removed, by looking back to what God has done and promised. The future, no matter what it holds is certain because God has said so and does as he promises. My friends God gives His promises for us to know. In faith we can receive them for life. So, know them. Learn them. Hear them. Read them. Lent is a time of growth for the soul. Grow in the promises of God in Jesus who walks with you dear friends and share the promises with the people you walk with.

So where did I finish up with my question “how would the Lord be with me?” Well, not all the answers are clear. But since I first asked this question three months ago God has been at work in many wonderful ways through his Word and through many amazing, wonderful, caring loving hearts and hands and feet of people in my life. I’m doing the journey and God is with me.

And when I go and see my oncologist and get the results of a scan, one thing I know is certain. The Lord has promised life in his Son Jesus Christ and he is faithful.”

Take thou my hand and lead me along life’s way.

The Lord be with you...Amen.

Video of the service including the above address can be found on the St Paul’s Lutheran Church Youtube page <https://www.youtube.com/@stpaulslutheranchurchboxhi1133>