

Yes You Can Trust Me 2020
Psalm 121 John 14:1-11

Psalm 121:1-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come?

²My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

³He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.

⁴He who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

⁵The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.

⁷The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.

⁸The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

John 14:1-11 (New Revised Standard Version)

“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.” ⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

When the Golden Gate bridge was being built in San Francisco,
early on, eleven construction workers lost their lives
when they slipped and fell from dangerous high places.
As a result, the work was proceeding slowly, well behind schedule.

So with accidents increasingly delaying bridge construction,
the chief engineer, Joseph Strauss spent over \$130,000 on a net,
similar to a circus net that was suspended under the bridge.

The safety net extended ten feet wider than the bridge's width,
and now, able to trust their security to the net below them,
they could work without fear that a fall meant certain death,
and the pace of construction work more than doubled.

Just knowing that the net was there made that much of a difference.

The psalm we just read is about our safety-net,
the promises of God **that make even more of a difference**,
which is certainly a most critical truth and comfort
for us amid our circumstance and concerns of today.

Psalm 121 calls us to realistically reflect on our situation in life
and asks where is our hope and help upon which we can rely?

And answers, surely it is in the Lord God who created everything,
who is fully aware of even the tiniest details of our lives,
and who loves us and keeps us today, tomorrow and forever.

As I think about our world and the context in which we are living,
once again we need to hear and receive this psalm's truth
as a word of hope and reassurance **spoken as grace**
into uncertain times of fear and tribulation.

Our hope and our reassurance does not come
from government and politicians, or doctors and scientists,
or even from how well we comply with the latest guidelines.

Our true hope and help come as gift and blessing from God alone,
as it has always been and always will be ...
... which is also the message of the passage from John.

John's Gospel was probably written 70-75 years after the ascension
and by this time, most of those
who had actually known and walked with Jesus, had died.

The earliest Christians, especially the original disciples
had expected Jesus to return again within their lifetimes,
and so, where is Jesus amid this suffering and persecution?

Some were feeling discouraged, confused, anxious and fearful.

The writer of John recognized
that the same encouraging, hopeful and reassuring words of Jesus,
that were spoken that night on which he was betrayed,
would speak clearly to their fear and trepidation ...

... the same message of hope, do not fear for you are going to be OK,
don't be anxious or give up for wherever you go I will be with you.

You may not be able to see the safety-net below us, but it's there.

Our security comes from our gracious and always faithful,
all-powerful loving God who is with us every step of the way,
who is always steadfast in his promises and purpose,
even when we're not sure of what the Lord is up to.

In the John passage, it's the Thursday night before the crucifixion.
They are gathered in the Upper Room, and Jesus has told them,

he will be betrayed, and all of them will flee and abandon him.
These are final words of teaching & hope addressed to his followers.

For three years his disciples have shared the journey with him.

They got to hear his wonderful wisdom, parables and teaching.

They have seen his miracles happen right in front of them,
healing the blind, walking on water, raising the dead,

but mostly, they've felt his love and sense of God's mission.

Can you imagine, what an amazing experience,

what an adventure being a disciple of Jesus must have been,

to have spent those three years instructed and blessed
in the very presence and inspiration of Jesus Christ?

But that night Jesus had told them that he was leaving them,

that he would be betrayed into the hands of sinners to die ...

**... that wasn't your usual dinner party conversation, and the room
was tense with their distress, confusion and troubled hearts...**

... yet in spite of their fear, doubt and imperfect faith,

Jesus offers promise and hope and grace, and assurance
their fellowship will continue as God intends.

that

The message and assurance that Jesus gave the disciples that night,

was that though he's leaving them, yet he was not abandoning them.

He would still be with them, wherever they went
to see them through all of life's trials and storms.

Jesus responds to their anxiety and fear

with comfort and assurance before the coming storm, vs. 1

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me.

In the Greek, the form of the verbs specifically stresses this focus:

"You don't you be troubled, but keep on continuing to believe."

Notice, there is nothing being said about mitigating the storm,

or about Jesus making the circumstance change or go away.

The crucifixion would happen. He was preparing them for later,
after the resurrection when this would begin to make more sense.

Believe in God also in me. In this case, the Greek word for "believe",

is more than just accepting intellectual facts or ideas,

but means to trust, to rely on, knowing you can count on me.

It means that we are connected, bound and tied by grace to Jesus

through trust and relationship ... with **belief enough to respond.**

I remember as a small boy, and going on our family vacations.

Even if there was car trouble, we got lost, stuck in construction,
or any of the other unfortunate stuff that can happen on the road,
it never occurred to me to be worried, upset or concerned,
because Dad was there, and I knew he could handle anything.

Jesus is offering that same sort of comfort to his disciples and us.

Jesus continues with another image of hope and comfort, vs. 2-4

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

I read that passage as a hopeful-promise and comforting-reminder
at almost every funeral I officiate ...

... for what a comforting truth that is.

In our times of deepest grief, sadness and loss,
it is the assurance of seeing our loved ones again,
and being with the Lord our God who loves us and created us.

At one level, clearly Jesus is speaking about the Kingdom of Heaven,
but he is also talking about way more than just a physical location,
a place for us with Christ, and through Christ, our walk of faith.

More than just our hope and promise of heaven someday,
through Jesus we are invited into the mystery of God,
infinitely powerful Creator of the universe,
yet as revealed by Jesus, **intimate with each of us.**

The Grk word "dwelling place" is closely related to the word "abide",
as Jesus will describe in the next chapter of John, vs. 15:4

Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine,
neither can you unless you abide in me.

"I go to prepare a dwelling place for you, where you will abide with me".

**Jesus talking about a relationship with the Lord, promising,
there is a place for you in the heart of God for all time...**

... like expectant parents preparing for their already-beloved baby.

But the ever-pragmatic Philip wants more of an explanation. vs. 8

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied."

The irony of that statement and misunderstanding is amazing.

The whole point of the incarnation,
the birth, life, ministry, teaching and example of Jesus
had always been
to reveal the nature, heart and character of God.

How did you miss this? vs. 9

Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me?"

Jesus is not just a miracle-worker or wise teacher sent by God.

But, God the Father, is present in Jesus, the Son.

vs. 11 Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me

**The whole mission of Jesus had always been to make known the Father,
to reveal who God is, in a manner that was never possible before...**

... for Jesus alone is the physical presence of God in the world,

Jesus alone is uniquely the true way to life with God. vs. 6-7

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him."

Speaking specifically to Thomas and the disciples that night,

this was a powerful word of promise, reassurance and comfort,

that Jesus himself was all they will ever need.

These verses are about hope.

The focus is not about **us deciding** who will be excluded

or limiting how God will deal with all the rest of humanity.

The message is that even though you don't fully understand,

at least believe, trust and know you can rely on me,

from what you have seen, heard and experienced... vs. 10

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves.

Jesus is going to the cross

for one reason and for one reason only: to reveal- to show us God,

-to show us God's grace and mercy,

- to show us just how much God loves us and wants to bless us,

- and to show us how far God will go to communicate that love to us,
so that we believe,

and by believing, have life in joyful abundance
with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Finally, a most important and critical part of this passage,

is that Jesus is not addressing this to individual Christians,

and it's not about just me & my Jesus apart from everyone else.

The Greek is explicit, that the word "you" used in this passage,

is always deliberately plural ---- "all of you together".

Jesus is addressing the Church, the full body of Christ,
the gathered people of God, all of the saints,
and the promises are meant for all of us together...

... and if interpreted individually we may miss the point.

By grace and faith we have all been grafted into the body of Christ,
which is the church, our faith-community and family...

... where we develop and live out our faith as we participate
actively and usefully in the life and mission of the Church
as an expression of our shared faith and commitments.

**That is the shared and meaningful life together that our Lord
intends and desires for his beloved, precious and blessed people.**

The Church of Jesus Christ is uniquely where we grow in God's grace,
where we're equipped us to serve the Church's mission and purpose,
so that together, we bless and make a difference in this world.

And though we are different and diverse in many and unique ways
**yet our shared faith in Jesus Christ and God's gracious love,
inseparably binds us together through Christ,
who makes us one both now and forever,
and that is the Christian hope & truth that we share.**

Our true hope, assurance and the power of promise is that we know,
as we're reminded in Psa 121 we can trust God who always faithful.

Whatever is going on in our lives today, whatever our burdens, vs. 1-2
I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who
made heaven and earth.

When we are facing an uncertain future, illness or disappointment,
My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your
shade at your right hand.

Though troubles threaten to overwhelm, and there seems no way out,
The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The Lord will keep your going out
and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

All through Scripture we are reminded again and again,
that God's power and presence, these provide our certain hope...

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me...
so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every
tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.