



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 13, 2022

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 121

1 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.

5 The Lord is your keeper;
the Lord is your shade at 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 on and forevermore.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell, Director of the World Mission Initiative

During the 1980s and 90s, Peru's Andes Mountains reverberated with acts of violence on an order of cruelty rarely experienced in modern history. Shining Path Liberation Army fighters killed and dismembered farmers, teachers, and children, leaving whole communities traumatized and families frozen in grief. Tragically, the Peruvian Army responded in kind, inflicting gross violations of human rights, especially among indigenous communities. "For 12 long years, we went to bed each night not knowing if the violence was coming for us," said Presbyterian elder and my research colleague Olmedo Huamaní of the indigenous community of Santa Barbara, Huancavelica.

In the face of such profound moral injury, I found what the social psychologists expected: the erosion of interpersonal trust, intimate relationships, and the capacity to plan for tomorrow. What surprised me, though, was the deep resilience I found among so many of the region's Christians. The biblical narrative of an all-powerful God who abides among God's people, knows them by name, and will not stop loving them—*despite* their experience—was celebrated and shared in every prayer meeting, worship service, and family devotional time I attended in Huancavelica. By evoking God's watchcare, people were enabled to hold on to each other.

It won't surprise you, then, that the most popular hymn by far among Christians in the region is Psalm 121. The Psalm's laser-like focus on God's protection helps me in my perceived self-sufficiency to "right-size" my sense of importance—and remember in whose gracious hands I live.

PRAYER

Gracious God, you are our rock and our shield. Remind us of life's fragility and of our need to hold on to each other even as we look to you for protection and nurture. In the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

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