

Lent Devotional April 14, 2025

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.*

Devotion

The Rev. Tom Harrison '24

In January 2023, my wife, Cherie, and I found ourselves in Bethlehem for 10 days, thanks to Pittsburgh Theological Seminary's World Mission Initiative.

We stood atop the Mount of Olives, gazing east from the Ha-Masu'ot Lookout across the Judean wilderness, where two days earlier we had eaten lunch in the home of Bedouin shepherds. Beyond the desert, we could make out the northern tip of the Dead Sea, where a day earlier we'd bobbed about like corks on wind-driven waves. Before that, we helped prepare the dinner we shared with residents of a Palestinian refugee camp.

I thought of all the history and drama that had unfolded on these hills—how Jesus fasted and met the devil in the wilderness before us, how he'd descended the slope behind us, riding a donkey. I thought of his crucifixion, burial, and resurrection—and of the endless antagonism that has played out ever since on that lower hill behind us, the Temple Mount.

What does it mean? How will it end? And to what purpose? God could easily get along without the bother of humanity. God doesn't need us.

But God does love us.

I remember a quote by Elie Wiesel, a Nazi concentration camp survivor and Nobel laureate. In the forward to his novel *The Gates of the Forest*, Wiesel wrote: "God made man because he loves stories."

God doesn't need our prayers or praises but does desire them. God doesn't need our help but desires partnership. God is not impressed with our attempts at righteousness but loves our confession. God's

pure love compels and inspires us to strive for righteousness that we can't achieve. And when we confess our faults and failures, God gladly forgives and exhorts us to keep trying.

That's the makings of a great story. That's God's story. We are God's story.

Prayer

Divine Maker of heaven and earth, you watch tirelessly over your holy city. You shield us by day and stand guard by night. You direct our footsteps along the hills and highways of your creation, even as your son, our Messiah, walked this earth and showed us the way. Continue to lead and protect us as we humbly walk with your son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.