

THE PASTOR'S SERMON

Please note that the following are the pastor's notes for his sermon and may therefore have some grammatical or spelling errors, etc.

“Dealing with Disappointment”

Sunday, September 19

Psalm 121

Let me start this sermon with some questions about your life as a student.

What were you like as a student? Were you a good student trying your best to get good grades? Or were you one of those students who settled for what they achieved without making significant sacrifices in their studies?

What was your approach in this matter? Some began a new academic year with the best expectations of achieving good grades. If grades weren't very good the previous year, we probably committed ourselves and our parents to do our best and achieve good results. However, if we had been good students, our commitment was to maintain good results. Either way, expectations were always there.

Expectations! expectations! Human beings live by expectations.

"The best things in life are unexpected because there were no expectations," said English writer Eli Khamarov, and he was right. Happiness is usually proportional to our level of acceptance and inversely proportional to our expectations.

Expectations are present in our day to day life, haunting us with their load of illusions and pretensions. But when they are not met - something that can happen often - we slip into the hole of frustration, disappointment, and disappointment.

Where are your expectations today?

Are they in your children? Your family relationships? The church? Your work? People and institutions? Where?

But...why do we have expectations?

One possible explanation comes from the uncertainty about what will happen. An expectation involves making a prediction about the future, which gives us a little more security. We could say that it is a response to the fear of the unknown.

What do we need to keep in mind regarding expectations?

One of the first things is that we need to consider is not to confuse expectation with hope. The first is a

forecast based on something probable; the second does not have that support.

We often speak of hope as a kind of longing: "I hope you have a nice day." "I hope you have a relaxing vacation." "I hope to get the job." "I hope he says yes." "I hope to get the promotion." "I hope I don't get sick." There are many things to look forward to in life, some more likely than others. However, the biblical concept of hope goes far beyond these earthly hopes. It is not merely wishful thinking or expectation, but something we are confident will happen. Hebrews 11: 1 says, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Sometimes we express an expectation about something when in fact, we know that there is very little chance that it will happen with what we deceive ourselves. Or other times, we have so many expectations of something that we abandon other things that we believe are not fundamental in these expectations.

I remember a student I had when I was a high school teacher. He was not a student with good grades. He was always bordering on the cutoff grades. Before scheduling some kind of help for him, I asked him what his expectations were? Because his grades were not

good, and he needed to have a good score to enter college.

His answer left me speechless. He told me that his father was a truck driver, and he owned a trucking company. And that as a truck driver, he earned more money than me as a teacher. So, why study so hard if the company was going to be his in the future. He literally said to me, "I can succeed in life, simply with it."

Although I did not share his argument, I must admit that he had an expectation for his future, based on something probable. But he had not considered that even in that expectation, his life could change. And disappointment could break into his expectations, and what he had predicted would not be fulfilled.

Now, if those expectations are first shared with God, and we let Him lead us, guide us, and put the right people on our path, it will be totally different. Those expectations will be grounded in Christ. Therefore, if things do not turn out the way they were expected, the disappointment will not be profound. Because our expectations were, first and foremost, left in the hands of God.

Psalm 121 doesn't speak about our expectations, but it speaks to us of God as guardian, as a guide of our life.

Even in those moments of decision, of expectations, but also of disappointment.

The reasons why the psalmist writes these words are unknown. We do not know if he wrote them as a prayer before going to battle and facing the enemy because some commentators have called this psalm "a prayer of a warrior." Although other commentators say that this psalm originated as a "farewell liturgy." Whatever the writer's reason for writing this psalm, it calls us to trust God because He has everything in His hands.

In the first verses, the psalmist recognizes that the first and primary way to be in contact with God in those challenging moments is through prayer. He says: "I lift up my eyes to the hills — from where will my help come?"

Let us remember that in the Jewish tradition, the prayer was made looking towards the sky as a form of adoration and praise. On the other hand, the psalmist is likely alluding to Mount Zion, a symbol not of danger but of divine help and protection. If we see some writings of the Bible, many events happened in mountains and hills, so it is not difficult to understand the concept of finding God in the highest peaks.

The psalmist raises his eyes high to be as close as possible to the presence of God. It is to find the help of God despite being far from the central place of worship. Jews, when praying, sought the direction of the temple of Jerusalem in their moment of prayer to fix their gaze on God.

We know that we do not need to look for a physical place to find God. God is present everywhere. Even in areas that seem to be removed from His presence. But even so, this experience of fixing our eyes in the direction where we feel God's presence helps us focus on the deeper search for God.

One of the exercises that we constantly do in our prayer is to close our eyes. Have you ever wondered why we do it? It has no meaning other than to keep a better communication with God. To keep it away from the distractions of different ideas and thoughts that take away the inner peace that we can achieve by praying with our eyes closed. It is telling God. "Lord, I close my eyes to dedicate my entire being to you in prayer, concentrating on the communication I have with you."

The writer knows that his help comes from God, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth."

In addition to this meaning of prayer, the psalmist recognizes God as his personal God. He talks about "my help."

Is God your personal help? Or is God the last alternative after your own decisions and desires failed?

God is personal if we let Him be. God becomes our hearer, our adviser, who listens attentively to what we have to say to him. He is not a God who interrupts us when we speak to Him, as we often do with other people; Rather, God pays full attention to our needs.

But God is our help through the journey of life. It is not just during one single moment. And you and I need to have this clear. Don't call for God's help only during your disappointments, but have a constant relationship with Him.

God does not leave us or abandon us under challenging times; instead, He protects us from dangerous moments in our lives. And His protection is constant. As the writer well says, "the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore" (v8).

Today you and I are in this place looking for precisely that guide. We look to God as the Helper of our life. And life, as you know, it has ups and downs.

The disappointments are constant. We are disappointed by institutions and people. One may feel disappointed by another person when we have placed too many expectations on that particular person. For example, a father may feel disappointed by his son for not having achieved something. A boss may feel disappointed by his employee for failing in a particular project.

Disappointment is constantly on our way.

What disappointment do you have at the moment? How can God help you overcome it? Have you prayed about those disappointments?

Most of the time, disappointments come into our lives because we have set our gaze and expectations on people and institutions. And we have taken away our eyes from Jesus.

So let us put our eyes on Jesus, using His prism of love. That way, we can look at this person or institution from a different perspective and angle. That of Christ.

We all have the right to be disappointed but never abandoned. That is why the psalmist will refresh our memory again this morning, saying:

"The Lord will keep you from all harm, he will watch over your life." Amen.