**Sermon: A Song of Reassurance**

Growing up in Norfolk I was bereft of one of my favourite parts of the Lord’s creation, and that’s hills. You’re a bit low on undulation; somewhat flat, indeed, in every sense, so I always looked forward to swapping East Anglia for the East Midlands once a year on the Christmas relly run, where we visited our relatives. We payed our respects to those no longer with us at Wilford *Hill* cemetery in Nottingham and then enjoyed such special times with my great aunt and uncle on Asfordby *Hill* near Melton.

But much as it helps to look back on such treasured memories, those alone cannot help us in the nitty-gritty of our everyday lives. As we look forward into the future, and indeed around us in the present, we need help. It’s Messy Church today but let’s be honest it’s messy lives that we live every day. As an old advertising slogan went for a bank, ‘life’s complicated enough.’

So where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Our help comes from the Lord, the Mighty Saviour. Our help comes from the mind of the Spirit. Father, Son and Spirit Holy, our help’s from God, and from God only. For ultimately, that’s where our help comes from, and that’s the outline of where we’re going this morning. Let me take you on walks in three hills as we unpack this source of help together.

This summer we went walking in and around three hills. The first ones were in Hadrian’s Wall country in the far north of England. We started and finished in the very attractive town of Corbridge nestled above the banks of the Tyne, and then proceeded to walk for ten and half miles through some pretty desolate countryside, including that hair-raising walk along the A68 which I told you about the other heaven. What a place to be in; the hills, even on a somewhat bleak day, offering fine views of territory the Romans conquered 2,000 years ago. They may have made the roads, but the Maker of heaven and earth made you and me and the world around us. He is our help, and that is a wonderful thought.

I’m not the only one to talk about my experiences and weave them in to what I want to say. Doing this is as old as, well, the hills. The psalmist was using an illustration from, quite literally, his life’s journey. This may have been used as an antiphonal psalm ie the leader of the company opened with verses [1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%20121:1), which are in the first person, and different people or groups answered him with verses [3-4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ps%20121:3) and so on, which are in the second person.

And the setting? The hills as they journeyed together towards Jerusalem. The Lord Jesus himself would use those same hills to make a point of his own, when he said,

*“you are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden”*

When Paula and I went to Israel we looked back on this city, Jerusalem, built there amongst the hills, from our coach, and there before us were the lights of the city at dusk, plain to see, like the lights we are to be in the darkness. When it comes to using your own personal experiences, you can’t get any better than Jesus and he remains my ultimate inspiration.

A whole millennium before Jesus walked those same hills, we have these pilgrims here in Psalm 121. As Warren Wiersbe says in his excellent commentary on the psalms:

*When the travellers caught sight of Jerusalem, situated on the mountains, they knew that God dwelt there in His sanctuary and provided the help they needed. Everything in the heavens and on the earth bears witness to the great Creator who is also our heavenly Father, so why should we fear?*

I never cease to be amazed at the staggering complexity of the Lord’s creation. The heavens and the earth. The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof, if you will indulge me in the older translation. By the word of the Lord the heavens were made. It was you who made all the boundaries of the earth.

As an old hymn says:

*For the beauty of the earth, for the beauty of the sky*

And in v2:

*Hill and vale, and tree and flower,
Sun and moon and stars of light,*

That’s just days three and four of creation. Whilst walking amongst the hills and vales and trees and flowers, we saw some of day five: the animals. The sheep bleating to each other as we walked amongst them down the hill. When we got to the bottom we turned round for we heard someone calling. We thought the woman was calling us to tell us we were going the wrong way - and it’s a shame she wasn’t, because we were - but instead she was calling the dog who in turn rounded up the sheep with remarkable efficiency, prompting Bethany to say, ‘well, I’ve never seen *that* before!’

And to think that our help comes from the one who made all this! When it comes to making things, my efforts, as you know, are somewhat limited. A mug tree made in woodwork, which does hold a number of mugs, is the sum total of my achievement. So I admire anyone who can make anything, especially if it actually works. But our God is the maker of heaven and earth, and is beyond admiration. No, only worship is appropriate for him, and of that we can never have enough. For, as we sang the other week

*He only is the Maker of all things near and far,*

*He paints the wayside flower, he lights the evening star,*

*The wind and waves obey him,*

*By him the birds are fed,*

*Much more to us, his children,*

*He gives our daily bread.*

*All good gifts around us*

*Are sent from heaven above,*

*Then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord,*

*For all his love.*

Where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. Secondly, our help comes from the Mighty Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, and for this let’s go south to the highest hill in Oxfordshire. I didn’t know there were many, but not too far from those services we stayed at is White Horse Hill, where we went on a more civilised walk from the along the top, down into a picturesque village in the delightfully named Vale of the White Horse, and back up the hill where we sat and gazed over the Thames Valley whilst listening to tales of Alfred the Great.

It was as good as it sounds. And it’s good to know that our help comes from the Mighty Saviour, the Lord Jesus. There’s a passage in Revelation which says:

***11****I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war.* ***12****His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself.* ***13****He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God.*

Our help is not only from our Maker but from a mounted rider; a mighty Saviour who is King of kings and Lord of lords. We may be dismayed at the world around us but he who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. He is faithful and true; the Way, the truth and the life. He is just and he is the Word of God, and as such he is, alongside the Father and the Spirit, the Maker of heaven.

Let me take you right back to the beginning of our unique to John series, our journey through all the passages that are only in his gospel.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ***2****He was with God in the beginning.* ***3****Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

As well as being a mighty Saviour, he also is the Maker of all things near and far. There is no conflict here and no need for confusion, although it is quite hard to get your head round. Our help comes not from three gods but from one: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

If we need help because our car breaks down, there’s more than one person involved in coming to our aid. We make a call to one person, another person comes out to help us and then after they’ve gone we have the means to get going again with tools sorted out by someone else; different people but the same breakdown company. In the same way we call out to the Father, who has sent his Son to come to our aid where we are, followed by the Holy Spirit with the tools to help us in our journey. This sort of works! Don’t worry if you don’t get it. I don’t understand everything my car mechanic tells me, but I don’t say, ‘I don’t get this so I’ll leave it with you.’ No, I say thank you very much and continue with my journey.

But before we had cars we had horses, and this image of the figure on the white horse is a helpful one in that it gives us a perspective on the Lord Jesus, not only our Maker but our Mighty Saviour, an ever-present help in times of trouble. There’s a lovely picture of the Lord watching over us in Psalm 121; this idea comes out again and again – four times in fact (vv 3, 4, 7, 8). Just as a figure on a horse looking out to see what’s coming in order to protect those he loves, we have a Saviour who delivers us from evil, and helps us in the battle that is the Christian life. For make no mistake, it is a battle following Jesus, and we need his help every step of the way. To put on the armour of God, as Paul tells the Ephesians, that we are equipped for the strategies of the evil one. But to quote another psalm:

*The Lord is with me, he is my Helper*

And he is with us in the Helper he sent: the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said:

*I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper*

This is our third and final area. We started in the rugged hills of the north, created by the Maker of heaven and earth. We went south to White Horse Hill where we were reminded of the help of our Mighty Saviour. Finally let’s come back to the Midlands, and our walk in Dovedale back on my birthday, with the dove in the dale a reminder of our third source of help, the Holy Spirit, for if we belong to Jesus we have the mind of the Spirit to help us in our lives.

Who’s running your mind? Some days the house has been repossessed, the car has been condemned, the church has closed down and I’ve got any number of diseases, and I haven’t even got out of bed! But, as Paul says to the Romans, the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. Jesus described him as the Helper. Where does our help come from? It comes from the mind of the Spirit at work in us.

He helps us to pray. Paul says in Romans:

*the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.*

And in a useful article I found online, called ‘Five ways the Holy Spirit helps us’, the following is said:

***He reminds us about all that Jesus has taught.***

*“But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit — the Father will send Him in My name — will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you” (*[*John 14:26*](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+14.26&t=NKJV)*).*

***He is a personal witness to testify about Christ.***

*“When the Counsellor comes, the One I will send to you from the Father — the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father — He will testify about Me” (*[*John 15:26*](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+15.26&t=NKJV)*).*

***He convicts us of sin.***

*“When He comes, He will convict the world about sin, righteousness, and judgment” (*[*John 16:8*](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.8&t=NKJV)*).*

***He guides us to truth.***

*“When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth. For He will not speak on His own, but He will speak whatever He hears. He will also declare to you what is to come” (*[*John 16:13*](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.13&t=NKJV)*).*

***He brings glory to Jesus.***

*“He will glorify Me, because He will take from what is Mine and declare it to you” (*[*John 16:14*](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+16.14&t=NKJV)*).*

Each of these could be a sermon in and of themselves. All are a help to us on our journey, and we haven’t even got to the gifts of the Spirit that are such a help to us and those around us.

This is a song of reassurance, and how we need it, for we cannot get through the day, nor should we try, without the help of our God; Maker of heaven and earth, Mighty Saviour and with the mind of the Spirit to help us in all the ways we’ve just mentioned and more besides. Help is at hand. What we need to do is ask for it. And as we come to the Communion table, there’s no better time to do so. To acknowledge the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. To admit that we are sinners in need of help of a Mighty Saviour. And to know the help of the Holy Spirit in making us more like Jesus as we know his mind more and more.

And then when we move on from the table to the turmoil that life can be, continually asking the Lord for help, confident in the knowledge that we have a God who will help us every step of the way, until our earthly pilgrimage is complete and we see our Helper face to face.