

“The Lord himself watches over you! The Lord stands beside you as your protective shade. The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon at night. The Lord keeps you from all harm and watches over your life. The Lord keeps watch over you as you come and go, both now and forever.” Psalms 121:5-8 NLT

lectio // Psalm 121

Just a quick glance at the opening of this Psalm says, “a song for pilgrims ascending to Jerusalem.” I am reminded and challenged by this thought once again. When I read the word “you” I naturally apply that in the only context I know - ME. However, I have a huge suspicion that the word “you” in the Bible is much more community than it is individualism. This solo, individual thinking is extremely hard to filter out of my theology. It is hardwired into my North American DNA. I no sense of “us” in our highly marketed “i-culture.” It may be better to read this and many other passages of scripture as “US,” just to remind me of the true context in which it is written. I’ve written about individual appropriation of promises in the Bible, and in that sense I am included, but in a much more profound way it is about us - all of us as the people of Israel or the community of Christ. There is no one that would have read this passage and received comfort from a single application of I or me. It’s the people, the pilgrims, the group that is acting as one with many individuals. I have thought about this and wondered if I have so contextualized the application of scripture to the individual, that people actually believed it was all and only about them - their individual faith, their individual comfort, their individual progress and growth. I have tailored the scriptures to meet their solo needs and in doing so talked them right out of needing the community! Besides, it would seem, it was the “community” of faith, the church that has “hurt” them, disappointed them, disillusioned them. What other choice have I given them but to interpret “you” as “me?” What if the only real way to grow, develop, find comfort, encouragement and LOVE is ONLY within the context of community? What if the blessings of God, the favor of God is most applicable WITHIN the community of Christ and not solo at all? Uh oh! I knew it was not healthy, I knew it was disobedient to do Christianity alone - but what if it’s far more dangerous than that. What if it’s impossible? What if you just can’t get there alone? There are stories of alone-ness in the gospels. The prodigal, the sick, the loner, the demon possessed, they all lacked community! And it seems that Jesus put them back in contact with others as a part of their restoration. Read the Psalm again with the word “US.” Am I crazy? Am I making a big thing out of nothing?

Dad,

The church, the body of Christ, the community of Christ has meant the world to me. I would not be who I am or where I am without the people of God, in tandem, loving, correcting and believing in me. How could I have missed such an important point. Almost all of my application of your word as I spoke has been toward an individual! Individual growth, blessing and success instead of community. I have processed the “one another’s” for years and just missed it. Help me get back on track by re-engaging the community of Christ.

contemplatio

rest in the presence of God, allowing the words revealed to take root