

March 5, 2023 – 2nd Sunday in Lent

The Source of Our Help

[Psalm 121](#)

I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 121:1-2 NRSV)

In summer 1978 I drove from Virginia Beach to Morgantown for an interview for a faculty position at West Virginia University. As I drove through Virginia and West Virginia after years of living in the almost-ironing board flat flood plain of Tidewater, Virginia, I was again in awe of the majesty of the mountains.

As I drove I sang *The West Virginia Hills* and felt a sense of gratitude for my West Virginia-born grandmother who taught me the song and instilled in me a love for West Virginia and her people.

During the job interview I told the dean about singing the song but having forgotten one line of the words. His response was, “Before you come here, you’ll have to learn that line.” (He offered me the job.)

After I accepted the job offer, I made frequent trips between north central West Virginia and north central Ohio to visit my parents. Driving back to West Virginia, I always felt the mountains outside of Wheeling embracing me and welcoming me back home.

As West Virginians, we often feel a sense of ownership in the opening words of the *King James Version* of Psalm 121. Somehow our mountains help us to feel secure and loved and rooted.

Yet the translators of many modern translations understand the structure of the underlying Hebrew sentence differently. They write something like, “I look at the mountains. Where does my help come from? My help comes from God.”

In this time of preparation for the celebration of the Resurrection, we are reminded of the true source of the help we experience. Our help is not the result of impersonal forces in a cold, uncaring universe but of a loving God, the Creator of the universe and, yes, even of our West Virginia hills.

And this God has as two major attributes: love and compassion, some of which were made part of our nature when, as Genesis tells us, we were “made in the image of God.”

Prayer: *O, God, we are awestruck by your work as Creator of the Universe, and we are grateful for the beauty of your creation, especially here in West Virginia, and for your help and love. During this season of Lent, remind us of your grandeur and your personal love, and draw us closer to you. Amen.*

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