

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 1, 2026**

**SERMON: "WHEN PSALM 121 FEELS LIKE A LIE"**

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**SCRIPTURE: PSALM 121**

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I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?

**2** My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.

**3** He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;

**4** indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.

**5** The LORD watches over you—  
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

**6** the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.

**7** The LORD will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;

**8** the LORD will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.

## **Sermon: When Psalm 121 Feels Like A Lie**

Have you ever felt that maybe... this isn't true?

That the psalmist in fact... has it wrong?

"I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
from where will my help come?"

Because sometimes when you lift your eyes... you see nothing. You pray, and you pray, and you pray, and not only do you not hear any response from Above, everything seems to actually get worse instead of better. Has anyone had this experience with God before?

I know that I personally have experienced moments in my life where I didn't feel watched over or protected at all by the Lord, no matter how much I reached out to Him for guidance.

One of those moments was in high school, in Atlanta.

I had gone there after I had an abortion at age 15 to live with my Aunt Deborah. She felt called to help straighten me out, to nurture me onto a Christian path. I lived there for about 6 months, in a bougie neighborhood of Atlanta where everyone had fancy German cars with leather seats and big brick houses with wide porches covered in gray mesh netting. The car situation was of special interest to me, because I was freshly 16 years old and newly licensed. Every time my cousins and their friends wanted to go to a party, I happily volunteered to be the designated driver for their Lexus and BMW sports cars.

One night, I went out with my friend that we'll call "Devin". I volunteered to drive his brand-new Mercedes to a party so he could drink. He got very drunk, to the point where he seemed to constantly think the ground was much closer than it actually was. He was angry when I wouldn't drive him across town to another party in that condition. I dropped him half a block from his house, planning to walk home so his parents wouldn't see me driving their \$100,000 car.

However, instead of getting in the driver's seat and pulling clumsily into his own driveway, Devin peeled off the curb, leaving me in a cloud of exhaust, and drove onto the 1-75 and wrapped that beautiful piece of metal around the road median at 70 miles per hour.

Devin survived, but was in a coma. (He's fine now, he has a wife and kids and is an architect at a big firm in Atlanta).

My cousins and their friends insisted that I didn't tell any adults that I had been there and willingly let him drive the car without telling anybody. I didn't blame them for their hesitancy; it wasn't just about protecting him. It was about protecting us. Our freedom. Our reputations. Our access to German cars and empty houses and the illusion that we were sophisticated instead of unsupervised. If I told, the whole ecosystem would collapse. Parents would lock things down. Keys would disappear. Trust funds would tighten. I wouldn't just be a snitch—I would be the nuclear option.

There's a particular moral math you do at sixteen. You tell yourself that silence is loyalty. That protecting your friends is noble. That adults are dramatic and overreactive and will only make things worse. And underneath all of that reasoning is something much simpler: I wanted to belong. I had already lost so much. I could not bear to lose my place in that fragile teenage tribe.

But here's the part that wouldn't leave me alone: Devin's parents didn't just own the car. They loved the boy.

They deserved to know where their son had been. Who he was with. How much he had been drinking. They deserved the dignity of the full story if he woke up disoriented and ashamed and trying to piece the night together. They deserved the chance to interrupt whatever trajectory had just nearly killed him.

And if I'm even more honest, I needed the truth to be outside of me. Carrying that secret felt like swallowing a stone. Every time someone said, "We don't need to involve the adults," what I heard was, "Let's pretend this didn't happen." But it had happened. A body had been thrown against metal at seventy miles per hour. Pretending felt like participating in the lie that almost killed him.

My conscience was stronger than my self-preservation—but only barely.

If there was an adult that I trusted in my life—the one adult who had never let me down through a childhood and teenagerhood full of grief—it was my aunt. I didn't trust the system. I didn't trust most grown-ups. But I trusted her.

So despite the pleas of my cousins and their friends, despite knowing it would cost me socially, I told her I was there and what had happened that night. I sobbed, and she held me and hummed in my ear like I was a baby. It was the safest I had ever felt with an adult. But she did what adults must do and told Devin's parents. And overnight as predicted, I was exiled.

If you have ever been sixteen, you know there is no loneliness like teenage exile. It is primal. It is biological. Your body interprets it as danger. Community at that age feels like oxygen. And mine was gone. I would walk through that wealthy Atlanta

feel like oxygen, and mine was gone. I would walk through that hallway, Atlanta high school and feel eyes slide away from me. Conversations stopped when I approached. Invitations evaporated. I had chosen conscience over belonging, and belonging retaliated.

That was the moment Psalm 121 felt like a cruel joke.

“He will not let your foot be moved.”

Really? Because it felt like the ground had dropped out from under me. And trust me, despite not really being a Christian yet or any sense of godliness, I had prayed, and prayed, and prayed about the situation. There are no atheists in foxholes, as the idiom goes.

“The Lord is your keeper... the Lord is your shade at your right hand.”

I felt exposed. Burned. Alone.

Loneliness is a strange kind of suffering. There is no ambulance for it. No casseroles. No visible bruises. Just the slow erosion of your sense that you matter.

I left Atlanta not long after, feeling like I hadn't gotten any better or stronger by the experience. I felt like I had failed. And more than that, I felt like God had failed me.

Because remember how we started: *Have you ever felt that maybe this isn't true? That the psalmist has it wrong?* “I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come?” At sixteen, I lifted my eyes. And I saw nothing. No rescue. No restored reputation. No sudden reversal. Just silent hallways and evaporated invitations and the slow ache of loneliness. I thought the silence of my peers was the silence of heaven. I thought being shunned meant I was unkept.

But Psalm 121 never actually promises popularity. It never promises that you won't lose the crowd. It never promises that doing the right thing won't cost you. It says, “He will not let your foot be moved.” And here is what I understand now: my social standing was moved. My comfort was moved. My illusion of belonging was moved. But my soul was not.

“The Lord is your keeper... He who keeps you will not slumber.” The keeping was not protection from loneliness. The keeping was protection from becoming someone who would trade integrity for belonging. The keeping was this: that night in Atlanta is the first memory I have of choosing empathy over self-preservation. Of choosing truth over access. Of choosing conscience over applause. The keeping was God refusing to let my heart harden. It was God shaping me—through humiliation and exile—into someone who would one day sit with grieving families and not look away, someone who would tell the truth even when it costs, someone

who would understand that loneliness does not mean abandonment.

At sixteen, I thought God had failed because He didn't fix my circumstances. Now I see He was guarding something far more important. He was guarding the fragile, flickering goodness inside a lonely teenage girl. He was keeping my conscience awake. He was keeping my empathy alive. He was keeping my heart soft.

If you are in a season where you lift your eyes and see nothing—where you pray and it seems to get worse instead of better—Psalm 121 is not mocking you. It is steadying you. It is reminding you that your reputation may shake, your community may shift, your comfort may disappear—but your soul is not unattended.

God saw who I could become if I followed His way instead of my own. He saw more in me than I could see in myself in that hallway of silent stares. While I thought everything was falling apart, He was guarding the most important parts of me.

Keeping your conscience.

Keeping your compassion.

Keeping your becoming.

That is the help that comes from the Lord. And that help does not slumber.

Amen.

