

Seeking Help

Where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth (Psalm 121:1-2).

Scripture: Psalm 121

Song: “10,000 Reasons”

On April 13, 1970, Apollo 13 astronaut Jack Swigert said what no one wanted to hear. He calmly reported, “Okay, Houston, we’ve had a problem.” Those familiar with the Apollo 13 mission (or movies about it) will know that the Apollo 13 crew and NASA had to overcome a number of serious obstacles to get the astronauts safely back to earth five days later.

The Apollo 13 crew called to mission control for help. While David headed toward Jerusalem with his companions, he recognized that his source of help was God himself.

Jesus told His disciples that in this world they would have trouble (John 16:33). As God’s children, we are not exempt from the pain and difficulty this world dishes out. But when we do face any crisis, any pain, any tragedy, we can draw comfort knowing that just as God was with David, He’ll be with us. First Peter 5:7 tells us, “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” And whenever we seek Him as our source of help, whenever cry out to Him—“Father, we have a problem!”—He hears us and will bring us safely through.

Father, thank You for always being for me and with me. Thank You that You are my source of help in the circumstances I face today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

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Grasping Grace

“The last will be first, and the first will be last” (Matthew 20:16).

Scripture: Matthew 20:1-16

Song: “Who Am I”

In Victor Hugo’s 1862 classic novel *Les Misérables*, there’s a powerful scene involving the main character, Jean Valjean, and a bishop named Myriel. Valjean has stolen silverware from the bishop’s home and has been caught by authorities. Knowing his guilt, Valjean expects the worst. But what Bishop Myriel does is shocking: When authorities bring Valjean to him, he goes along with the thief’s version of things and secures his release. Remarkably, the bishop then adds two silver candlesticks to what Valjean had stolen. In the exchange, the bishop gave something far more precious than silver. He gave grace by which Valjean was transformed.

In a culture that emphasizes “you get what you earn,” grace can be a foreign concept. Jesus’ parable of the landowner in today’s passage wonderfully depicts God’s gracious nature. Undeserved and unwarranted, His grace takes us by surprise.

Sometimes we get caught up in thinking that what we do somehow makes the Lord love us more (or less). We may even start thinking our standing in Christ is achieved by our own hard work. The workers hired last in Jesus’ parable didn’t think that. They couldn’t. They knew they hadn’t earned what they got. It was grace. As ones saved and sustained by God’s amazing grace, we can live in the transforming sweetness of it as we daily serve Him.

Father, thank You for Your gift of grace in Jesus. Help me let go of trying to earn Your favor so I can receive what You freely offer. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Choosing Greatness

“Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (Matthew 20:26-27).

Scripture: Matthew 20:17-28

Song: “If We Are the Body”

At a youth conference several years ago at a college in Tennessee, I saw something that I’ve not forgotten. As we entered the cafeteria for lunch, we each were to pick up a tray and utensils. On this particular day, however, someone was at the entrance, greeting us and handing trays and utensils to us. He wasn’t just a random guy though. He was the president of the school!

The college president worked in the lunch line. That’s not a normal thing. But being a follower of Jesus is anything but normal. In the world’s way of operating, leaders are served by those around them. But in God’s kingdom, leaders serve.

We don’t serve to earn God’s favor. But because we’ve received so much from the Lord, it’s our privilege to serve. There are people all around us who need to see Jesus’ love. Perhaps they’re discouraged and need to be lifted up. Maybe they’re feeling defeated and need to be reminded of who they are in Christ. Maybe they have some tangible need or problem with which we can help in some way. If we are willing, we have the amazing opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus. Today we can choose greatness by choosing to serve.

Father, thank You for Jesus and what He has done for me. Help me follow His loving example by serving others in astonishing ways. In Jesus name, amen.

Prioritizing Life

“Three times a year all your men are to appear before the Sovereign LORD, the God of Israel” (Exodus 34:23).

Scripture: Exodus 34:23-27

Song: “You Reign”

In a July 2019 article, *Business Insider* reported that Chick-fil-A restaurants likely lost more than \$1 billion in potential sales because they are not open Sundays. The company’s founder, Truett Cathy, wrote in his book that the decision to keep the business closed on Sunday was from a desire to demonstrate loyalty to God by honoring the Lord’s Day. Despite the cost, Cathy stood by his convictions during his tenure as CEO.

Whether or not you are a fan of Chick-fil-A sandwiches, you can’t deny that they have stood by their convictions. God’s people are called to do that even when it’s hard. Putting the Lord first can seem costly, but when God’s people honor Him that way, He promises to be with them. Interestingly, that same *Business Insider* article praised Cathy’s “business strategy” as “brilliant,” observing that the benefits have likely outweighed the costs.

While honoring God may be our desire, many things compete for our attention and loyalty. Jobs and careers demand our time. Family responsibilities are heavy sometimes. Dealing with the challenges of everyday life can be exhausting. However, when we reorder our priorities to put the Lord first, His protection and provision never fail, and His peace prevails in our hearts.

Father, today I present myself before You. I want to honor You in my days and weeks and months and years. Please bring glory to Your name through my words and ways. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Realizing Compassion

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it (Luke 19:41).

Scripture: Luke 19:41-44

Song: “Everyone Needs Compassion”

In the late nineteenth century, Dwight L. Moody became one of the most prominent evangelists the United States has known. Before coming to faith in Christ, Moody had a Sunday school teacher who visited him at the shop where he worked. This compassionate man was deeply concerned for Moody’s soul. Moody wrote: “This is a very strange thing. Here is a man who never saw me till lately, and he is weeping over my sins.” As an evangelist, however, Moody realized what it was about: “I understand it now and know what it is to have a passion for men’s souls and weep over their sins.”

Only twice in Scripture do we find that Jesus wept. The first occasion was at Lazarus’s tomb (John 11), and the second was for the city of Jerusalem. As a whole, Jerusalem would reject Jesus, yet He shed tears of compassion, longing, and love over the people.

He loves us too. Despite where we might have been or what we might have done, Jesus longs for us to turn to Him and be set free from that which enslaves us. There is so much in our world that drags us down. And our enemy, the devil, lies to us, telling us that God’s redeeming love and grace are not available to us. But let’s look to Jesus! His tears are evidence of compassion rooted in love. He cares deeply for you.

Father, thank You for loving me. Help me embrace the wonderful truth of Your compassion. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Finding Assurance

Those who trust in the LORD are like Mount Zion, which cannot be shaken but endures forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. (Psalm 125:1-2).

Scripture: Psalm 125

Song: “Walk by Faith”

Hurricanes are common in Florida, and a friend once told me about how boats are secured during these violent storms. One of the first things an owner does is remove the sails and strip down the boat. After that, long dock lines are used to anchor the vessel to a number of fixed points on the shore. Often a spiderweb type of pattern is employed, with enough slack to allow the boat some movement. The important thing is to have the boat sufficiently anchored to solid ground.

What works for boats in a hurricane is also what works for people in the storms of life. Our souls need anchoring to spiritually solid ground.

At various times along our way, damaging events may blast through our lives in hurricane-like fashion. Perhaps a loved one's illness brings heavy responsibility and concern. Or a troubling medical prognosis leads to questions and uncertainty. Or downsizing at work means job security is gone. When these kinds of powerful winds blow, we can be securely anchored to the one who is unshakable. Our Lord is rock-solid. We can depend on Him. We can tether our “dock line” of trust to His great faithfulness.

Father, thank You for loving me and for being my immovable anchor in the tough times of life. Help me trust Your faithfulness today. In Jesus' name, amen.

Praising His Glory

The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” (Matthew 21:9).

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11

Song: “King of Glory”

Many people are drawn to the excitement and energy of a parade. We have parades to honor our heroes, mark our national celebrations, and keep holiday traditions. Whatever the event, the crowd, floats, balloons, marching bands, and celebrities make it clear that something big is happening.

Just days before His crucifixion, a parade-like event highlighted Jesus’ glory. The words “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” and “Hosanna to the Son of David!” echoed along the road to Jerusalem as Jesus entered the city. Something big was indeed happening.

Though the crowd’s praise quickly faded away, Palm Sunday is a reminder of our king’s great and eternal glory. We don’t fully grasp it yet in all its facets, but when we consider not only who He is but also *why* He came, we begin to glimpse it. His love brought Him to earth. His love paid for our sin at the cross—and then triumphed over sin and death at the resurrection. His glory, revealed to us through His love, brings our victory. Anxiety, doubt, and fear flee at the exclamation, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Father, thank You for Jesus and all that He has done to save me. May my life be a praise offering to You today. In Jesus’ name, amen.