

[I begin with playing just a few seconds of audio recordings from certain songs, asking the congregation: “Can you remember?”]

1. M.A.S.H.
2. Twilight Zone
3. Do You Hear the People Sing?
4. Chariots of Fire
5. Star Wars Theme
6. E.T. Theme
7. Raiders of the Lost Ark Theme
8. Magnum P.I.
9. Star Trek Theme
10. Captain Kangaroo
11. Believe (from Polar Express)
12. Hawaii 5-0
13. Mission Impossible
14. Ich Habe Genug

What happened inside you, when you listened, when you remembered?

When I hear Psalm 121, my mind often goes to a Swiss Alps mountain view, and my mind’s ear hears a song as the camera pans in on the mountain view. [choir sings “The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Music]

When we are touched by music, powerful things can happen. Eleven days ago when we sang “*His Eye is on the Sparrow*” in our Ash Wednesday worship, I had a number of people tell me that they were completely connected to Eva Jones and to Jeanette Alexander.

A few years ago, my good friend and colleague told me that when he hears Psalm 121, it didn’t so much give him a **DIR**ection (looking upward,

topographically.) Rather, the Rev'd Harold Slate said that it gave him a **CONN**ection, more than **DIR**ection.

That was somewhat prophetic for when within a year later, this was the Psalm that I read when his family and I went to the little country hillside cemetery north of here to spread his ashes. We had moved upward in **DIR**ection to the hills. But so much more so, we were in **CONN**ection to Harold, to the Home where he had gone, and to the Spirit that had worked to touch so many people through his life.

As important as feelings are for many things in life – for no good life is lived by logic alone, without feelings ... **feelings, HOWEVER, REVEAL VERY LITTLE OF THE REALITY about the nature of our relationship with God.** Some people think that the **Holy Spirit only** works when there is a tear in the eye or a knot in the throat. But they are wrong.

God is like the mountains. Regardless of how we feel, God [and the mountains] are always with us. God always wants the best for us. It's just not always easy for us to see OR FEEL that in the moment.

I remember a conversation I had with a fellow from the church I once served, who told me about a period of unemployment in his life. He said that learned so much from that time; it was SUCH a learning laboratory. After a pause, he said: ***Of course that's how I feel about it now. I didn't much think it was good while I was going through it.***

That is good recognition of a fact: memory is necessary for us to live into the words of Psalm 121, or of similar words from Saint Paul: **“we walk by faith, not by sight.”** (2 Corinthians 5:7)

The way to walk by faith and not by sight is to **REMEMBER INTO THE FUTURE.**

I can almost never see very well into the future. My crystal ball is just not very clear. I'm gradually learning to not try to use it at all. **BUT** I do **REMEMBER** that whenever I have been in a difficult place, my looking back upon it (*i.e. using my "rear view vision"*) has shown me that **God really was in that moment** with me; that **God really did uphold me**; that **God really did work for good, when I loved the Lord and allowed myself to be called according to God's purpose.**

So while I can't see into my future now – **my memory tells me** that I can trust God. My **momentary feelings** may be **fearful, but my memory tells me that God can be counted on.** I just have to lean on that memory; I just have to hold onto God – even WHEN IT FEELS LIKE GOD IS ABSENT.

As I stood in the midst of the ruins of ancient Ephesus, I looked about all me and tried to imagine what it was like with Paul when he came there to establish a church. So much had changed. But then I suddenly got this notion: I lifted my eyes unto the hills surrounding me. I realized that they had not changed. They had been there back then, as now, and as they will be into the future.

And I wondered if Paul might have also stood in that same exact spot, in the midst of all his uncertainty, and lifted his eyes unto the hills and had the VERY same thought – GOD WAS WITH HIM, GOD WAS IN CHARGE & HE WAS IN GOD'S HANDS.

Songs can be powerful memory connections. I'm glad to know that Jesus turned to singing during one of the hardest times in his life, on the night before He surrendered up His life on calvary. (Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26: ³⁰ **And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

Songs, the psalms, memories of God's faithfulness are all essential tools that help us when our present emotions might let us down. They can remind us of God's faithfulness, so that we can **remember into the future with confidence** – in God, even if we don't have confidence in ourselves.