

*Lenten Reader 2019  
1st Parish Church, UCC  
Yarmouth, Maine  
Week 6  
April 10-16*



April 10

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills,  
from whence cometh my help.  
My help cometh from the Lord,  
which made heaven and earth.*

This version of the first lines of Psalm 121 is from the King James Bible and was the version that I learned as a child years ago. The first two lines are a declaratory statement in contrast to the version in the New Revised Standard Version which reads:

*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.*

The King James version did, and still does, make sense to me. My help comes not just from the Lord, but the hills as well. Indeed, when I think of Mount Sinai, Mount Olympus, or the Black Hills of South Dakota, I am reminded that faith traditions have often conceived of hills and mountains as imbued with the divine. And is it any wonder, when one thinks about:

- the rumblings and clashes of thunder that echo and careen among mountain chasms and engender fear and awe of divine wrath and power;
- the splendor of vivid sunsets that backlight the dusky blues and purples of the hills and fill the soul with wonder;
- the gray mists that shroud the hills and embody the mysteriousness of the Creator;
- the streams gushing and tumbling down from the mountains and bringing life to the earth's creatures;
- and, above all, the steadfastness and permanence of the mountains that reassure one of the Creator's everlasting protection.

*The Lord shall preserve thy going  
out and thy coming in from this time  
forth, and even for evermore.*

*Sarah Bowie*

## April 11— Psalm 121

1-2 I look up to the mountains;  
does my strength come from mountains?  
No, my strength comes from God,  
who made heaven, and earth, and mountains.  
3-4 He won't let you stumble,  
your Guardian God won't fall asleep.  
Not on your life! Israel's  
Guardian will never doze or sleep.  
5-6 God's your Guardian,  
right at your side to protect you—  
Shielding you from sunstroke,  
sheltering you from moonstroke.  
7-8 God guards you from every evil,  
he guards your very life.  
He guards you when you leave and when you return,  
he guards you now, he guards you always.

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## April 12

*Psalm 116:*

*I love the Lord, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.*

*Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.*

Last year in February, as Chuck and I waited for news about the impending birth of our first grandchild, I received a call from our daughter Karen. She had had an emergency C-section and the baby had been rushed off to the NICU. She was unable to tell me anymore than that- she simply asked me to get to Dartmouth-Hitchcock hospital as fast as I could.

I have never really been one who engages in formal prayer, but on that three hour drive to Lebanon, NH, I prayed and conversed with God almost constantly. Dave and Karen had named their baby girl, Iona, after the island located between Scotland and Ireland. This island is known as one of the “thin places”- a place in time where the space between heaven and earth grows thin and the Sacred and the secular seem to meet. Our granddaughter existed in that “thin place” for almost two weeks.

Family, friends, and medical staff all prayed and supported Iona and her parents through this difficult time. And by the grace of God, our prayers were answered and Iona Rose remained here with her family. She continues to thrive. And I will never doubt the power of prayer for the rest of my life.

Mary Thorp

## April 13— Psalm 116

1-6 I love God because he listened to me,  
listened as I begged for mercy.  
He listened so intently  
as I laid out my case before him.  
Death stared me in the face,  
hell was hard on my heels.  
Up against it, I didn't know which way to turn;  
then I called out to God for help:  
“Please, God!” I cried out.  
“Save my life!”  
God is gracious—it is he who makes things right,  
our most compassionate God.  
God takes the side of the helpless;  
when I was at the end of my rope, he saved me.

7-8 I said to myself, “Relax and rest.  
God has showered you with blessings.  
Soul, you've been rescued from death;  
Eye, you've been rescued from tears;  
And you, Foot, were kept from stumbling.”

9-11 I'm striding in the presence of God,  
alive in the land of the living!  
I stayed faithful, though bedeviled,  
and despite a ton of bad luck,

Despite giving up on the human race,  
saying, “They're all liars and cheats.”

12-19 What can I give back to God  
for the blessings he's poured out on me?  
I'll lift high the cup of salvation—a toast to God!  
I'll pray in the name of God;  
I'll complete what I promised God I'd do,  
and I'll do it together with his people.  
When they arrive at the gates of death,  
God welcomes those who love him.  
Oh, God, here I am, your servant,  
your faithful servant: set me free for your service!  
I'm ready to offer the thanksgiving sacrifice  
and pray in the name of God.  
I'll complete what I promised God I'd do,  
and I'll do it in company with his people,  
In the place of worship, in God's house,  
in Jerusalem, God's city.  
Hallelujah!

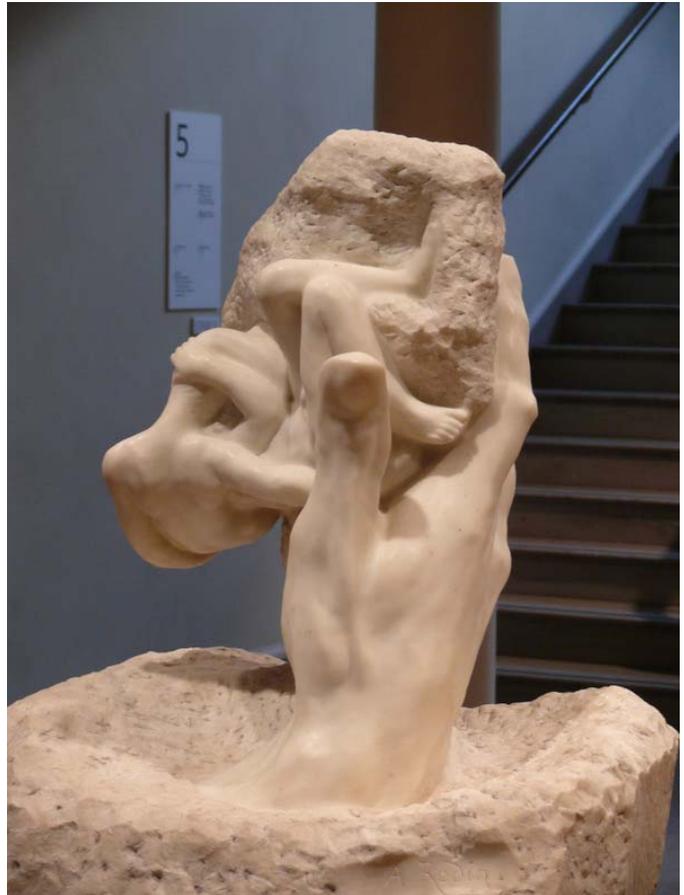
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April 14

Rodin presents the inchoate figures of Adam and Eve cradled in God's hand. The composition is an homage to his revered "master" Michelangelo, the Renaissance artist whose unfinished figures materializing out of rough stone symbolize the process of artistic creation. In this work, Rodin boldly equates the generative hand of God with the ingenious hand of the sculptor. -from <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/191046>

The act of creating must be as close as humans come to God. In that moment that the spirit connects with the rock, the paint, the song, the idea and something new is revealed. The amazing beauty of newness, the finding of the spirit in a previously inanimate object. To go from rock to living sculpture, from pigment to living image, from notes to music. As long as there is creation and re-creation in the world, there will always be hope.

Judy Colby-George



Rodin, Auguste, 1840-1917. Hand of God, from Art in the Christian Tradition, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN. <http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-imagelink.pl?RC=55496> [retrieved April 6, 2019]. Original source: [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RISD\\_Rodin\\_Hand\\_of\\_God.JPG](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RISD_Rodin_Hand_of_God.JPG).

## April 15— Psalm 138

1-3 Thank you! Everything in me says "Thank you!"  
Angels listen as I sing my thanks.

I kneel in worship facing your holy temple  
and say it again: "Thank you!"

Thank you for your love,  
thank you for your faithfulness;

Most holy is your name,  
most holy is your Word.

The moment I called out, you stepped in;  
you made my life large with strength.

4-6 When they hear what you have to say, God,  
all earth's kings will say "Thank you."

They'll sing of what you've done:  
"How great the glory of God!"

And here's why: God, high above, sees far below;  
no matter the distance, he knows everything  
about us.

7-8 When I walk into the thick of trouble,  
keep me alive in the angry turmoil.

With one hand  
strike my foes,  
With your other hand  
save me.

Finish what you started in me, God.

Your love is eternal—don't quit on me now.

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April 16

*.From Richard Rohr, Franciscan priest and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation:*

*“I believe God loves things by becoming them. God loves things by uniting with them, not by excluding them. Through the act of creation, God manifested the eternally out-flowing Divine Presence into the physical and material world. Ordinary matter is the hiding place for Spirit and thus the very Body of God. Honestly, what else could it be, if we believe—as orthodox Jews, Christians, and Muslims do—that “one God created all things”? Since the very beginning of time, God’s Spirit has been revealing its glory and goodness through the physical creation. So many of the Psalms assert this, speaking of “rivers clapping their hands” and “mountains singing for joy.” When Paul wrote, “There is only Christ. He is everything and he is in everything” (Colossians 3:11), was he a naïve pantheist or did he really understand the full implication of the Gospel of Incarnation?”*

*Submitted by Ellie Mercer*

