

November 14, 2021  
Rev. Kerry Smith

Show Us the Path of Life  
Greenland Hills United Methodist Church

Psalm 16

New Revised Standard Version

Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you." As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. It sounds so simple doesn't it? Today as we celebrate our 80<sup>th</sup> year as Greenland Hills, I think about the 87 charter members who gathered on that first worship service day, November 9, 1941, at the neighborhood school up there on Mockingbird. They had no idea a month later their worlds would be turned upside down with the events that happened at Pearl Harbor. In 1942 with \$2,750, the members of Greenland Hills purchased this land. All during World War II those faithful people raised money to start building this sanctuary.

They broke ground on this sanctuary in January 1946 and October 27, 1946, 75 years ago this year, had the first worship service. To have survived World War II, and the entire time to have been working towards something, that is to trust and obey. In 1953, first floor classrooms were added, the attic was finished out, and air conditioning was installed.

Throughout that time there were Sunday School classes, weddings, funerals, worship, singing, praying, youth group known as MYF, baptisms, friendships, laughter, community. Eighty years of keeping the light on so people can find their way. Greenland Hills stands as a place of inclusive love and hospitality inviting all to grow in their love of God and love of neighbor.

Ted Lasso is a popular show right now. I highly recommend it if you have an opportunity to watch it. One of my favorite lines is when Ted Lasso says, "I disagree with the phrase it's the hope that kills you. I think it's lack of hope that comes and gets ya. I believe in hope. I believe in believe." For eighty years the people of Greenland Hills have believed in believe.

This morning we chanted Psalm 16, but I want to read it to you from the Message translation which is more of a paraphrase because it helps me to hear the Bible with new ears. "Keep me safe, O God, I've run for dear life to you. I say to God, "Be my Lord!" Without you, nothing makes sense. And these God-chosen lives all around— what splendid friends they make! Don't just go shopping for a god. Gods are not for sale. I swear I'll never treat god-names like brand-names. My choice is you, God, first and only. And now I find I'm your choice! You set me up with a house and yard. And then you made me your heir! The wise counsel God gives when I'm awake is confirmed by my sleeping heart. Day and night I'll stick with God; I've got a good thing going and I'm not letting go. I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell— that's not my destination! Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way."

Psalm 16 is a psalm of trust and confidence in God. When I read these words, I see someone who is in the midst of suffering and yet, they find life and joy. They have entrusted their lives and futures completely to God. The God we worship, the God we believe in, is at

work for good in every situation, whether it is good, bad, or ugly. God is behind the scenes encouraging us, lifting us, working through human beings to bring about good in every situation.

It reminds me of the story of the little boy who kept bragging to his father about what a great batter he was. So the father said, "All right, son, show me what you can do!" They went to the backyard, and the father watched as the boy tossed the ball up in the air and swung the bat with all his might. "Strike one," said the boy after he missed completely. "Strike two," he said as he missed the ball again. "Strike three," he said as he missed the third time. Then he turned to his father with a look of determination and announced, "Boy, am I a great pitcher!" The writer of Psalm 16 is someone who deals with life that way. Whether it is day or night, they are going to stick with God.

The part about the Greenland Hills history that gets me is when Glory Be Hall was built. At the height of the economic downturn in 2008, people committed to sacrifice financially because they believed in the future of this community of faith. They knew that they needed to invest in the children, in a new preschool and in a fellowship hall. This place has continued to strive to help people become rooted in God's love, growing in the Christian faith and reaching out with compassion and justice. No matter what happens, the people of Greenland Hills stick with God, they trust and obey.

Sticking with God means walking with God on the path of life. It means turning to God in prayer, not as a last resort, but as a first, only and constant source of stability and hope. When we entrust our lives to God we experience a depth of stability and joy and security. God is at our right hand; we will not be shaken. It's easy for us to spend life focusing on all of the things that we don't have that someone else has. All of the opportunities that we are never going to get, but someone else does. This psalm points us in a different direction to focus on the blessings that we do have in God.

As I look around this sanctuary, I see people who love God who are committed to the care of their soul, the care of their neighbors, and the care of the communities and the cities in which they live. I know there is no church that is perfect. But I know I can't find God apart from real people, even imperfect people. I can't crack the faith code all by myself. I genuinely need people in my life who are willing to make the faith journey with me. People who are honest enough to call me on my stuff. To stretch or challenge me. To carry me when my life is falling apart or to show me grace and forgiveness when I've blown it. It's sometimes awkward. It's often tedious. At times it feels nearly impossible. In church we will let each other down from time to time. We will swing and miss. We'll drop the ball. We will make serious blunders. We will mess up. We will get angry with each other and still get together for potlucks or still bring casseroles to the grieving. Or still show up for each other in the hospital waiting room. Church is just weird that way. Even the best churches will from time to time make you want to walk away. But, more often than not, at least for me, it is the very thing I can't live without. Thanks be to God, Amen.