**Sermon – True & Greater Guardian** – 35 minutes (42.5 allowed)

For Sunday, 07/30/17:

Text: Psalm 121

Sermon Title: True & Greater Guardian (part of the series “True & Greater in the Psalms)

Medimemo: Psalm 121:1-2

Goal: Persuasion

Main Point: Trust Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as your True & Greater Guardian – no matter what.

OUTLINE:

Worship Song & Transition (1.0 Minute)

1. “*Beautiful*” (Dan Villalobos)
2. Transition - Children dismissed to Redemption Kids – by Worship Leader

Introduction (4.0 Minutes)

1. “Jesus! Help Me!” Story
2. Context – A Dialogue
3. Scripture – Psalm 121:1-8
4. Prayer

Main Body (27.0 Minutes)

1. Encouragement #1 – Consider your journey and identify your fears (6 min)
2. Encouragement #2 – Hear the character of God and be assured (10 min)
3. Encouragement #3 – Trust the Good Shepherd to keep you (11 min)

Conclusion (4.0 Minutes)

1. Final Exhortation

Prayer & Transition (1.0 Minutes)

1. Lead to Song of Response “Good Good Father”

Next (9.0 Minutes)

1. Song of Response “Good Good Father”
2. Offering – by Tanner

Encouragements & Benediction (1.5 Minutes)

1. BBQ at Saltonstall – 8/2 – 6:00p-7:30pm – Food & Volunteers – See Reddy
2. Community Fun Day – 8/19 – Volunteers – See Emma in Lobby
3. Scripture/Blessing – Deuteronomy 6:24-26

Value-Added Options:

?

**Sermon – True & Greater Guardian [Psalm 121]** – 35 minutes (42.5 allowed)

###### INTRODUCTION (4.0min):

Introduction - “JESUS! HELP ME!” Story:

1. JESUS! [pause]… HELP ME!... [pause]… JESUS! [pause]… HELP ME!... [pause]
   1. Much to my surprise, those were the words that escaped my mouth on a snowy Friday afternoon in downtown Lynn Massachusetts.
   2. At the age of 12, I found myself flat on my back on Union Street underneath a semi-tractor trailer truck so close that I could see the engine above me and feel the heat that it generated.
   3. My brothers, cousins, and neighborhood friends would walk together every Friday to the Lynn’s Boys Club for an evening of swimming and basketball.
   4. For whatever reason, the group had left without me. I was running to catch up. It was snowing and icy and I was in a hurry.
   5. In such a hurry that I bolted across the street just as this massive truck careened around the corner and was bearing down on me.
   6. I was soooo startled that I stopped short and my feet flew out from under me.
   7. The truck slammed on its brakes but the combination of ice and momentum caused the truck to continue to slide quickly at me. I knew that it was going to hit me.
   8. That’s when I screamed!
   9. I don’t remember thinking… just reacting…
   10. And when I opened my eyes… there I was under that truck! Scared as could be but happy to be alive.
2. Whenever I think of this morning’s Scripture, Psalm 121, I remember that story – the fear of my imminent death and my instanteous and unrehearsed call to Jesus for his help.
3. And… by the time I am done sharing, I hope that you will understand why…

Context – A Song of Ascents:

1. [SLIDE – Approaching Boston] - As a native New Englander - now living in Medford, the projected picture above me is quite familiar. Do you recognize it? [pause]…
2. Yes, that’s correct. That is photo is taken from a car traveling south on Route 93 - just outside of Sullivan Square – headed into town.
3. As some of the iconic images – Zakim Bridge, Boston Garden, Prudential Building – appear, you can begin to anticipate arriving in Boston. And, it might even seem appropriate to turn up the radio if “The Dropkick Murphy’s” or “The Band Boston” comes on.
4. Psalm 121 is the 2nd of fifteen Psalms known collectively known as “Songs of Ascent”.
5. [SLIDE – Approaching Jerusalem] - It appears that each of these 15 Psalms were composed on different occasions for different purposes but were then collected and used as a type of liturgy for pilgrims who were making their way to visit the 2nd, or rebuilt, Temple in Jerusalem.
6. If you may remember, Israelites were commanded to celebrate three different festivals – Pentecost, Passover, and Feast of Booths – every year at the Temple as part of their worship of Yahweh (God).
7. As these travelers approached the city of Zion by making their way up winding pathways to the elevated temple, they too would begin to anticipate their arrival and… the promise that they would be able to worship God in a unique and present manner – all the while collectively singing these Psalms – the Songs of Ascent - along the way.
8. When we read this Psalm, you’ll notice that there are two voices heard. The beginning starts with personal pronoun “I”. Then, it shifts to “you” and appears that someone else is speaking encouragement and truth back to that person and others.
9. Scholars disagree whether that this dialogue is between a pilgrim and a priest, or a king and his minister, or a pilgrim and his own internal thoughts (sort of a self-talk).
10. Regardless, I think that you’ll find the truths that these voices offer will be helpful to us this morning as we consider Jesus as the True & Greater Guardian.

Scripture – Psalm 121:1-8:

1. If you are able, I invite you to stand up together as I read Psalm 121. (Projected on Screen)

***1*** *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?****2****My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

1. Now, here’s that second voice…

***3****He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.****4****Behold, he who keeps Israel, will neither slumber nor sleep.*

***5****The Lord is your keeper;the Lord is your shade on your right hand.****6****The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.*

***.7****The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.****8****The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore*

[Pause]

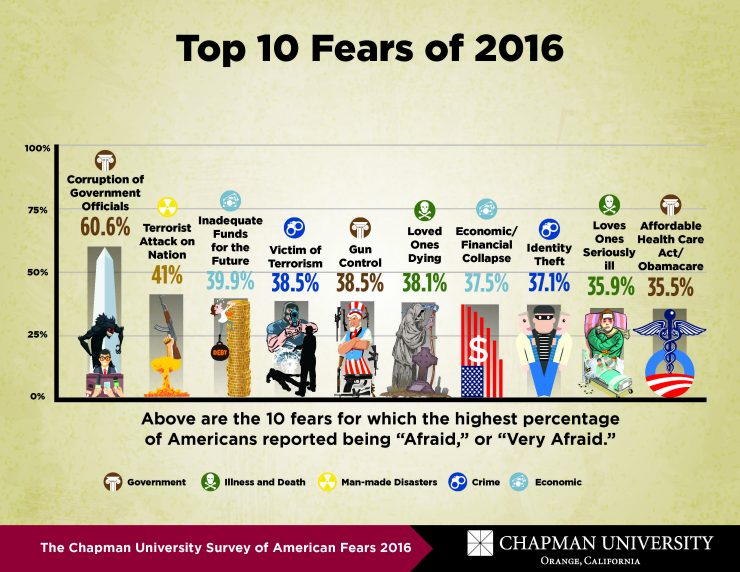
Prayer of Transition:

1. Would you bow your heads and simply repeat after me as I pray for us?
   1. *“Heavenly Father… Speak to our hearts… and change our lives”. Amen.”*
2. Thank You. You may be seated.

[PAUSE]

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #1: Consider your journey and identify your fears (6m):**

1. “*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?”* [Psalm 121:1]
2. This particular Psalm, while often sung as pilgrims were ascending up to Jerusalem, was likely written from the point of view of a pilgrim who had already been to the Temple to worship God and was now anticipating his return home through the mountainous Judean countryside.
3. Embarking on a journey could be full of expectation - but also of danger.
4. The safety and security of the Temple and the walled city of Zion meant exposure to risk:
   1. Lack of food… Lack of water…
   2. Scorching sun… frigid nights…
   3. Narrow trails… steep cliffs…
   4. Wild animals… Violent robbers…
5. As so, our speaker presumes that he will need assistance – either in the immediate next few steps or somewhere along the way.
6. And, even though the pilgrim does not name a specific fear, it is clear that there could be room for anxiety - as a potentially dangerous journey is begun.
7. So I ask… In your journey… through this life… what’s your worst fear? [Pause]
   1. When you wake up in the morning and your feet hit the floor as you get ready to begin your day… Is there an anxiety that comes to your mind?
   2. As you travel throughout your day, is there something that nags at your spirit? Causes you to worry?
   3. When you lay down at night, what prevents you from falling asleep peacefully or keeps you up through late hours?
   4. What’s your worst fear?
8. We all desire “safety”. Self-preservation seems to be “hard-wired” into our very nature.
9. And so, if we are honest, we all suffer from fear – to one degree or another – at different times of our life.
   1. Fear, a type of respect, can sometimes help us. We teach young children to fear the stove so they don’t burn their little hands.
   2. But, many times, fear paralyzes us or disrupts our daily walk.
10. My first, simple encouragement this morning is to “Consider your journey and identify your fears”.
11. On that snowy day, at the age of 12, I knew my fear. I was afraid to die – perhaps the ultimate fear that we all share.
12. Maybe death doesn’t occupy your mind but… other circumstances may.
13. There was an interesting study published in October 2016 by Chapman University called “A Survey of American Fears – Wave 3.0” that looked into the fears of average Americans.
14. In a random sample from across the United States, >1500 adults were asked about their level of fear about 79 different fears across a huge variety of topics ranging from crime, to government, to disasters, to personal anxieties, to technology, and many other areas.
15. From this survey, they produced a list of the “Top 10 Fears of 2016” for which the highest percentage of Americans reported being “Afraid” or “Very Afraid”.



1. Not surprisingly, themes of government and the economy, crime & violence, and illness & death all dominated.
2. [You might find it interesting to know that at 10.2% Americans appear to more afraid of Zombies, than Strangers (9.8%) or Ghosts (8.9%) or Clowns (7.8%).]
3. When we identify our life-traveling fears… when we acknowledge the challenges confronting us on the journey… when we are truthful about the risks awaiting us… then, we are in a position to look beyond ourselves and ask the question: “*From where does my help come from?*” – just like the Psalmist did.
4. My prayer this morning is that each one of us soberly examines our heart and accurately name our fears and recognize our need for “help”. **[Pause]**

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #2: Hear the character of God and be assured (10m):**

1. In the face of fear, anxiety, or worry, what solutions have you tried? What have you depended on? In order to control the risk of a chaotic and broken world, **where do you place your confidence?**
   1. Perhaps, economic instability compels you to work harder, earn more, and build investments – all worthy goals, for sure – but even with all that effort you worry.
   2. Perhaps, potential illness causes you to watch your diet, exercise more, and gobble multivitamins – all worthy goals, for sure – but even with all that effort you feel anxious.
   3. Perhaps, possible loneliness and isolation makes you create lots of relationships, fill your social calendar, and run from event-to-event – all worthy goals, for sure – but even with all that effort you feel fearful of personal rejection.
2. When there is threat or stress or strain in your life, where do you look for help?
3. The pilgrim in our Psalm today is clear… As soon as he asks that question, he preaches truth to himself.
   1. *“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”* [Psalm 121:2]
4. His confidence is grounded in the recognition that all that he can see was brought into being by His Creator God. Any of the good and noble strategies that he may rally in order to overcome the challenges facing him pale in comparison to the majesty, the power, and the care of the One who has made everything.
5. And it is at this point that a second voice is heard in this Psalm. One that reminds us of the very nature of our Creator God and brings me to my second encouragement:
   1. **Hear the character of God and be assured**.
6. This second voice reminds the pilgrim (and us) that God – YHWH – is a Guardian of His own. When confronted with any of life’s difficulties, we can be assured that He is vigilant…
   1. ***3****He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.****4****Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”* [Psalm 121:3-4]
7. He is like a shepherd who guides safely and watches over Israel – except unlike human shepherds or other pagan gods – He never falls asleep.
8. Israel is never out of His sight. God has no “downtime”.
9. He is the same God who led Israel’s father Abraham out of Babylon and brought him to the Promised Land; the same God who lead Israel out of the captivity of Egypt while standing watch over the nation as a Pillar of Cloud by day and a Pillar of Fire by night; the same God who, once again, rescued His people from exile and again brought them from Babylon back to the Promised Land.
10. And just like God watches over his nation Israel, he watches over you – **personally**… very personally!
11. We are told: ***5****The Lord is your keeper[[1]](#footnote-1)…* [Psalm 121:5] [Pause]
12. ***5****The Lord is your keeper…*
13. I loved what Pastor Tanner said a few weeks ago,
    1. *“We rarely refer to God as our “keeper” – even though we all have an “expiration date”.*
    2. Take a jar of mayonnaise out of the refridgerator for long and what do we have?... Take me… take you… out of the watchful and personal care of our keeper and what do we have?...
14. ***5****The Lord is your keeper…*
    1. Sometimes, one of the tricks that Hebrew poets use to tell you what they consider to be the most important point of their writing is to bury their main point right in the middle of their poem. This phrase “The Lord is your keeper” comes right in the middle of Psalm 121 – 58 syllables precede it; 58 syllables come after it. It screams “Pay Attention!”… “Listen to Me!”… “Know this for Yourself!”
    2. This watchful God of Israel?
    3. He’s got His eye on you too! [Pause]
    4. As we learned last month, the same God who heard Jonah’s prayer from the belly of a great fish and did not ask him to *“just leave a message after the beep*”[[2]](#footnote-2) is ready to answer you too!
15. This watchful God of Israel?
16. He’s got your back!
17. The Psalmist goes on to tell us just how comprehensive this **protective** or “safe-keeping” nature is:
    1. *“the Lord is your shade on your right hand”*. [Psalm 121:5]
       1. Scorching heat is an ever-present danger in the Middle East. The risk of thirst, sunburn, and sunstroke is real.
       2. An Israelite in battle carries his shield for protection in his left hand but that leaves his ride side vulnerable to attack. He must depend absolutely on the soldier to his right to protect him from harm. If he is constantly worried about his right, then he cannot fight what is ahead.
       3. God, our keeper, is covering your flank… and from the dangers that exist.
18. ***6****The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.* [Psalm 121:5-6]
    1. Poetically, this could mean a number of things:
       1. Pagans outside of Israel believed that the sun and the moon and other created entities actually embodied gods or were symbols for their worship OR
       2. Physical danger from the sun was obvious; and some mental danger from the moon through lunacy or madness or being moonstruck.
       3. But I suspect that this is the Psalmist’s poetic way (merism) of telling us that YHWH Guardianship was constant and total… that He was on duty 24/7/365 against the perils, known and unknown, both day and night. It’s like saying I’ve got you covered from Massachusetts to California (and meaning the whole of the USA) or I love you from head to toe and meaning “All of You”.
19. So let me ask you this… “How does that type of personal, constant, total watch-care compare to so many of the other things that you and I often place our confidence in? [Pause] Doesn’t quite stack up, does it?
20. And if you are not assured yet, the Psalmist drives home his point by repeating for the fourth, fifth, and sixth use of the image of YHWH as our Keeper or Guardian.

1. ***7****The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.****8****The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”* [Psalm 121:7-8]
2. Notice that the Psalmist shifts his reminder from the present to the future… “will keep” is repeated three times…
3. “Your life” is a many-sided word; it means your whole being; everything that makes you – well, “You”!
4. God’s Guardianship also covers the whole of existence (going and coming), not just the present circumstances.
5. It covers where you go, what you do… your journey through life as a pilgrim here on earth.

[Excursus: “Suffering”]

1. However, we do need to have a word of clarification here.
2. Does this text mean that if you are a Christian that you are exempt from suffering? Of feeling the effects of living in a broken world? The problem of pain is a profound obstacle for saving faith for some and a confusing Christian walk for others.
3. May I just offer the thoughts of two authors that I respect:
   1. “*Life exposes people to a great variety of mishaps, but none are beyond God’s sheltering care*” (A.Cohen, *The Psalms*)
   2. “…*to be kept from all evil does not imply a cushioned life, but a well-armed one*” (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150*”
4. God’s vigilance is over the totality of our life
   1. There is a danger of claiming promises as demands on God – like a contractual obligation upon Him. If you think about it, it kinda places us in charge of God, doesn’t it?
   2. We must remember that not every promise made is experienced in the immediate n-o-w.
5. For example, I can think of faithful sister-in-Christ (Betty) who was confronted and ultimately surrendered on this side of eternity to her battle with cancer.
   1. I executed her will and cleaned up her paperwork.
   2. In doing so, I discovered a diary covering several of final suffering years where she carefully catalogued in great detail the simple mercies that God was extending to her daily.
   3. The last time I saw her, we talked and prayed as she assured me that the next time that I saw her, she would be like new – a promise that she expected completed on the other side of eternity.
6. Time will not allow me to go into great detail but I am reminded of the Scripture in the 10th Chapter in Hebrews. The writer details all of the suffering and struggles that followers of Christ had endured on this side of eternity. But he encourages them like this:
   1. *“Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”* [Hebrews 10:35-36]
7. You see, we would be wise to hear the promises but place our trust in the Promise Maker. The timing of the complete fulfillment of his care may be now - or it may be ultimately – but it will come to pass.
8. My prayer for this morning is that when we hear of God’s character that we are assured.

**MAIN BODY – Encouragement #3: Trust the Good Shepherd to *keep* you (11m):**

1. And, that brings me to my third and final encouragement this morning.
2. To experience the Ultimate Safe-Keeping of the Promise Maker, you must **“Trust the Good Shepherd to keep you**”.
3. Throughout the Old Testament, ancient Israel understood that God, their Guardian, was like a shepherd looking after them, His flock.
4. Then, in the New Testament, Jesus makes a startling claim in John’s Gospel, Chapter 10:
   1. ***7****So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.****8****All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them.****9****I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.****10****The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.*
   2. ***11****I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.****12****He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.****13****He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.*
   3. ***14****I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me,****15****just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* [John 10:7-15]
5. In first century Palestine, a typical shepherd would have his hands full looking after 20-80 sheep.
6. His day was consumed with caring for them – leading them from pasture to pasture; watering them at springs and watering holes; feeding them so they were healthy and nourished. He was their Guardian, their Keeper.
7. Nighttime was unsafe out on the hillside. So, he found them shelter so they could rest in safety. Sometimes, the shepherd would be able to take his flock back into the village where they would be placed in a sheep pen and the gate would be closed or locked. Many times, however, a small cave out in the fields would have to suffice.
8. In that case, the shepherd would herd his sheep into the cave through its opening. And then… he would lay himself across that cave opening so that no sheep could wander out and any lurking predator – a wild animal or a violent man - would have to go through him.
9. Jesus said that He was the Good Shepherd.
10. He knows His sheep. They can know His voice. He lays down His life for them.
11. But…
12. To experience His protection, what must the sheep do?
    1. Go through Him, the Gate, to have the “safe-keeping” of the pen or cave, right?
    2. Whoever enters through the gate, Jesus says in John 10:9, will be saved.
    3. So, coming in through the gate is a picture of salvation - a place of safety, going in and out of the sheepfold, and having an abundant life. This is what John 10:10 means when it says, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”
    4. A full life or an abundant life is one of fellowship with God. It is a life that is so full that it cannot be destroyed by death. It is a life of abundant grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.
    5. My prayer this morning is that each person within the sound of my voice is living the kind of life that is full of the grace of God found through Jesus, the Good Shepherd.

**CONCLUDING THOUGHTS & PRAYER (5 minutes):**

1. So… “What would it look like to be fully convinced that God is your Guardian?”
   1. Well, I expect that you’d consider your life’s journey and identify your fears.
   2. Then, I think that you’d want to hear about the character of God – especially His constancy, His watchfulness, and His protection.
   3. And finally, I’d suggest that you would “Trust Jesus, the Good Shepherd, as your True & Greater Guardian – no matter what.” [Main Point]
2. Here’s a simple real-life example:
   1. When I first met my wife Teresa she had benefited greatly from the generosity of her mother Evelyn. This was welcome because Teresa was still learning to steward her money. And, she had always seen her Mother as her “financial safety net”.
   2. This continued after we were married and lasted until the day that Evelyn passed away.
   3. What do you do when the brokenness of this world steals the power of something that you thought would “protect” you?
   4. Teresa confesses that besides grieving the loss of ongoing relationship with her Mother, she also experienced a second emotion – the fear coming from the loss of her safety net.
   5. You see, she had placed her confidence in her Mother’s generosity and always “being there”.
   6. Now, as a follower of Jesus, she has placed her confidence in Jesus’ generosity and always “being there” while still recognizing how much her Mother reflected Jesus to her.

**TRANSITION – Congregational Reading of Psalm 121 (2 minutes):**

1. [SLIDE – Temple Steps] – At the Temple in Jerusalem, there were 15 steps that led from the outside into the different Temple areas. And so, all Jews (men, women, or priests) would come up these 15 steps as they entered into the Temple.
2. One tradition says that when pilgrim travelers reached the Temple that sing one of the 15 “Songs of Ascent” as they stepped on each of the 15 steps leading into the Temple. On the first step, they would stop and sing Psalm 120 – The Pilgrim’s Start; then on the next step, they would stop and sing our Psalm 121 – Capturing the Journey; then on the next step, they would stop and sing Psalm 122 – The Joy of Arrival. And, so on… until all 15 steps had been climbed. By the time they had sung the 15 Psalms, known as the Songs of Ascent, and climbed up these steps, they were ready to worship!
3. In the same way, let’s imagine that together we are either traveling up winding mountainous paths to Jerusalem OR we’ve arrived and are now standing as a group on the 2nd Step of the Temple getting ready to worship YHWH – just as the Scriptures had directed us.
4. And, by faith, let’s encourage each by the reading of this Psalm together.
5. Please stand with me as we read together.

Scripture – Psalm 121:1-8:

***1*** *I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?****2****My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.*

***3****He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.****4****Behold, he who keeps Israel, will neither slumber nor sleep.*

***5****The Lord is your keeper;the Lord is your shade on your right hand.****6****The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.*

***.7****The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.****8****The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore*

1. Song of Response “*Good Good Father*”

Encouragements & Benediction (1.15 Minutes)

1. Encouragement #1: BBQ at Saltonstall – 8/2 – 6:00p-7:30pm – Food & Volunteers – See Reddy
2. Encouragement #2: Community Fun Day – 8/19 – Volunteers – See Emma in Lobby
3. Benediction - Scripture
   1. Would you stand, extend your hands, and receive a blessing from Deuteronomy 6 reminding us of God’s Ultimate Guardianship over each of us?
      1. *[May] the Lord bless you and keep you;*
      2. *[May] He make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;*
      3. *[May] He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.*
   2. Let us go out today, confident that… Guardian.
   3. You are dismissed.

**IDEAS: (Value-Added):**

1. C

**NOTES:**

1. Illustrations:
   1. Can I have a video of someone reading Psalm 121?
   2. Compare God as Guardian to “Guardians of the Galaxy”? –
   3. Can I think of a journey as an illustration?
      1. Taking a flight?
      2. The fear at take-off or landing? What are my “fears”?
      3. How about the Apollo astronauts? Space Shuttle?
2. Brainstorm:
   1. 1 Peter 3:15? “Give the complete story?”… considered when I heard the first Commencement speaker with Alex… the heart of evangelism… eternal security?
3. Questions of Suffering:
   1. As a Christian, this Psalm provides 2 (or 3) questions… IE, “As a Christian, am I exempt from suffering?”
   2. Not every promise is experienced N-O-W!
   3. Consider Betty Fayerweather or Donna Wadden
   4. The danger of claiming promises rather than trusting the PromiseMaker… His character is faithful; the timing of the fulfillment may be now or ultimately….
   5. Can I list Scripture that affirms God’s protection?
4. Confidence or Confident:
   1. Question: What are you confident in? When there is stress or strain, where do you look for help? (Should I post this question to Facebook?) Research? Do a Poll?
   2. Echo/Remember – Jonah 2 Sermon “I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and He answered me.”
   3. Staff Brainstorm: List – “What are the top 10 things that people today, place their confidence in…”
   4. Look Up – “Place confidence in”… Gallup Polls?
   5. List synonyms for “confidence”
   6. See Jonah 2
   7. See Jeremiah 17:11-18
   8. Depend
      1. My spouse/daughter etc…
      2. The group
5. Confidence:
   1. Career/Job
   2. Gov’t
   3. Investments
   4. Family (mostly)
   5. Scaffolding – that we setup
   6. Themselves
   7. Law & Order/The System
   8. Stopping at a Red Light
   9. Medical Community
6. Engaging the Hearer:
   1. “So let me ask you this…” is a great way to ask a question of the congregation. Makes them think.
   2. This Psalm needs to be turned toward each individual. There needs to be a response.
7. Can the Scripture be read as a monologue that reflects an external questing and an internal dialogue?
8. Fear or Anxiety:
   1. Crucial – What’s your worst fear? What keeps you up at night? And… what “solutions” have you tried or considered?
9. The Error of Name It; Claim It…
   1. The difference between trusting the promise versus trusting the PromiseMaker
10. Possible Intro:
    1. “I’ve fallen and I can’t get up”
    2. “Help!”
    3. 9-1-1
    4. When you are in trouble, who do you call?
    5. G-H-O-S-T-B-U-S-T-E-R-S!
    6. A Baby – “Momma… Dadda!”
    7. Lynn – under the grill of the truck – Jesus! Snow falling
11. ADT Security – gives us peace when we sleep
12. Who are the Guardians of Medford MA? USA? The World?
13. See Hebrews 10:32-39
14. Great Question to Ask: “What would it look like to be fully convinced that God is our Guardian?
15. Imagery – shepherd laying across the opening to the Sheep Pen – wolves must go through him to get to the sheep…
16. Guardian in the NT?
17. Press: Who/what do you trust as “Guardian”?
    1. Evelyn Dies – Teresa feared loss of her safety net
    2. What do you do when the brokenness of this world steals the power of something that you thought would “protect” you?
    3. Is there a symbol that I can leverage?
18. Describe a Song of Ascent – Get picture of heading to Zion
19. Can I tie my Sermon to the two prior sermons? Commitment and Passion?
20. Picture – young boy wrapped in a thousand layers of winter clothes to be protected from the cold… (A Christmas Story)
21. Consider Spiritual Warfare
22. Vs 1 – Look at “Help” – the original Hebrew
23. See Jeremiah 17:7 – illustration of the tree… compare to my life
24. d
25. Media:
    1. Sermon Video Clip – maybe from the site of “My Story?”
    2. Video to Create? Video Scripture Reading
       1. Scene 1: Getting ready to go
       2. Scene 2: Getting out of the car (John/Teresa – Jeep)
       3. Scene 3: Look up for the climb
       4. Where? Wright’s Mountain, climbing
       5. Script
          1. 1: Person 1
          2. 2: Person 2
          3. 3: Person 1
          4. 4: Person 2
          5. 5-6: To each other
          6. 7-8: To us (turn towards the camera)
26. Music:
    1. Song of Respones? Strongly consider “Because He Lives” done 6/25 by Dan – check lyrics
27. Can we have Intercessory Prayer after the sermon? (Assemble a Team)
    1. State: This is my fear or challenge… then the team intercedes
    2. Can I provide a core Scripture or Encouragement?
28. General Notes about Approach:
    1. When preaching Christ from the OT, I'm a big fan of the "redemptive-historical" approach: a) preach the passage in light of its original context, b) then move to its "textual fulfillment" or "applicational solution" in Jesus.
       1. Here's a great article from Sidney Greidanus on Preaching Christ from Ecclesiastes (it applies to the Psalms just as well). Note his "Seven Ways" of preaching Christ from the OT on page 58 (3rd page of article).
       2. <http://equip.sbts.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Pages-from-SBJT-V15-N3_Greidanus.pdf>
       3. We have been overdue for another "True & Greater" series. I'm jacked about this!! Here's a link to our old ones for some examples (Pentateuch series) <http://www.redemptionhillchurch.com/resources/sermons/#series-sort_true-greater-seeing-savoring-jesus-in-the-law>
29. See Jeremiah 17:7 – illustration of the tree… compare to my life
30. Through the use of some very deliberate choices of word and verse, there can be little doubt.

**SCRIPTURES:**

1. Psalm 121
2. **121**I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
       From where does my help come?  
   **2**My help comes from the Lord,  
       who made heaven and earth.
3. **3**He will not let your foot be moved;  
       he who keeps you will not slumber.  
   **4**Behold, he who keeps Israel  
       will neither slumber nor sleep.
4. **5**The Lord is your keeper[[3]](#footnote-3);  
       the Lord is your shade on your right hand.  
   **6**The sun shall not strike you by day,  
       nor the moon by night.
5. **7**The Lord will keep you from all evil;  
       he will keep your life.  
   **8**The Lord will keep  
       your going out and your coming in  
       from this time forth and forevermore.

We rarely refer to God as our “keeper” – even though we all have an “expiration date”. (T.Turley)

**RESOURCES:**

1. Podcast:
2. <https://jewsforjesus.org/publications/havurah/havurah-v07-n02/keeper-of-israel-reflections-on-psalm-121/>
3. <https://exegeticalreflections.wordpress.com/2015/12/18/psalm-121/amp/>

Does the Lord really keep us from all harm?

http:/#.WS4sGleMN\_U.email

1. <https://www.gotquestions.org/amp/name-it-claim-it.html>
2. <https://cdn.theatlantic.com/assets/media/img/2015/08/26/opener_option2/1920.jpg?1440631999>
3. <https://www.gotquestions.org/amp/Bible-confidence.html>
4. <http://www.lifeway.com/leadership/2016/09/27/3-signs-were-placing-confidence-in-the-flesh/>
5. He echoes what the prophet Jonah prayed from the belly of a great fish, “*I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and… He answered me*.” [Jonah 2:2]

**IMAGES:**

**PSALM 121 - I Lift My Eyes to the hills**

*1I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?****2****My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.****3****He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.****4****Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.****5****The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade on your right hand.****6****The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.****7****The Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.****8****The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.*

1. **If you had to make a yearly "pilgrimage" somewhere, where would you want it to be? Why?**
2. **What are some “good things” we can sometimes value over God?**
3. **How do you know if we are valuing something over God?**
4. **What should we do if we discover we are valuing something good over God?**
5. **What are some simple observations we can make everyday to know God is the creator of Heaven (sky) and Earth (land) (verse 2)**
6. **When we have the opportunity to worship the creator why are we tempted to worship the creation?**
7. **How can we be sure we following God with our feet? (verse 3)**
8. **In verse 4, the Psalmist reminds us that he is protected because he is part of Israel and God has a convent with Israel. How would you explain the two covenants (old and new) to a non believer**
9. **In verse 7 we are told that God protects us from all Evil. How was this verse explained in the sermon?**
10. **How can we know for sure if are protected from evil forever? (the Gospel of Jesus)**

<http://www.anchorway.com/grow/small-group-questions/>

Sermon:

<http://www.anchorway.com/sermon/psalms-of-ascents-psalm-121/>

Song: Brian Doerksen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g4eqKDkDiw>



**Preparing Your Heart for Worship**

Psalm 120-134 are known as the “Songs of Ascent.” These 15 psalms hold a special place in the heart of worshippers. Back in the Old Testament, there were 3 special feasts that God called the people to observe. Regardless of where you lived, you were to travel to Jerusalem in order to worship God at the Temple. The Feasts were Passover (remembering how God delivered His people from the bondage of slavery under the Egyptians by sending the death angel. All the Israelite homes covered by the blood of the lamb where “passed over” by the death angel), Pentecost (this was when the crops were planted and the recognition that God would bring the rain) and finally Tabernacle (this called the people to live in boxes, remembering their time in the wilderness and how God provided for them. This also celebrated the harvest that had just come from God our Provider).

Every feast, people would travel with their family and friends from small towns throughout Israel to Jerusalem. Jerusalem sits high on the mountains, and it is beautiful. There would be an “awe” for the weary travelers that would lift their hearts and spirits as they approached the Holy City. As they came to the Temple, they would begin to worship.

**[](http://jeffsimmons.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/jerusalem_temple_steps.jpg)**There were 15 steps that led from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of the Women at the Temple. God resided in the “Holy of Holies” at the center of the Temple. Only one time a year could someone enter into God’s Presence (The Day of Atonement as the High Priest offered sacrifices on behalf of the people). Otherwise, the worshippers would gather in the Court of the Gentiles, the Court of the Women, the Court of the Men or the Court of the Priests. Therefore, all Jews would come up these 15 steps as they entered into the Temple.

The Songs of Ascent were sung as the people walked up these steps. Psalm 120 was sung, and then the family, friends or individual would take a step up. Psalm 121, and then a step up. 15 steps. You can imagine, by the time they had sung these 15 Psalms and climbed up these steps, they were ready to worship!

**[](http://jeffsimmons.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IMG_0966.jpg)**

We did this at our most recent staff meeting. Together, our staff team started at the back of the room, read a Psalm and took a step. Someone read Psalm 120, then we all took a step. Next, another person read Psalm 121, then another step. Psalm, step. Psalm, step. Psalm, step. By the time we finished Psalm 134, “Praise the Lord, all you servants of the Lord who minister by night in the house of the Lord. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord. May the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth, bless you from Zion,” we were ready to worship! We then responded in corporate worship, and it was powerful!

So often on a Sunday Morning, we come with so many distractions. We are late for church, wrestling with kids, or focused on seeing all our friends. Many times our minds and our hearts are far from God until we walk into the main room. Yet, there is power in preparation. When we take the time to prepare our hearts, we are so much more apt to experience God in worship. Do you come to church distracted or prepared? We are meeting with the King of kings and the Lord of lords. There is a call, and a responsibility, to prepare our hearts before our bodies arrive. We would not think about walking into a business meeting unprepared or a school classroom, and yet we are meeting with Someone so much more important. One who loves us, but also One who is worthy of our time, respect and best.

Begin to prepare your heart for worship and watch your spiritual life come alive. Take some time to read through the Songs of Ascent. Try reading Psalm 120-134 this coming Sunday before you arrive, and see the difference in your experience with God.

[](http://jeffsimmons.org/author/jeffsimmons/)

*by*[**jeffsimmons**](http://jeffsimmons.org/author/jeffsimmons/)

* [Faith](http://jeffsimmons.org/category/faith/)

* [Israel](http://jeffsimmons.org/category/spiritual-growth/israel/)

* [Spiritual Growth](http://jeffsimmons.org/category/spiritual-growth/)

“I Am the Gate for the Sheep”: A Devotional on John 10:7b by Rev. Steve Swets

Friday, September 30, 2016

We continue our study of the seven “I Am” statements of Christ. We have seen that He is the bread of life, the light of the world, and now the gate for the sheep. As we think about sheep, there are likely a number of different images that come to mind, but much of the way that modern sheep farming is done is foreign to the first-century mind. When a modern sheep farmer wants to round up his sheep, he jumps on a quad or a dirt bike and sets off. Oftentimes sheep farms are much bigger now than they were in Jesus’ day, and often a large number of different animals make up the average farm. For these next two studies, let us put modern farming out of our minds.

As Jesus gives this allegory or figure of speech in our text, the average shepherd cared for twenty to eighty sheep. He walked with the sheep, spending all day and night with them. He didn’t have much of a social life, so to speak. He named his sheep, and his sheep knew his voice. He was entrusted to care for the sheep, protect the sheep, lead the sheep, water and feed the sheep. John 10 contains two “I Am” statements of Jesus dealing with shepherds and sheep. In the next study we plan to see Jesus as the good shepherd; this month, that Jesus is the gate to the sheep. Our Lord Jesus proclaims Himself to be the way of salvation.



**The Meaning**

God has always governed His people through the means He has appointed. What we see taking place in the Old Testament is a continual word picture of the leaders of the people being shepherds, and the people of God as sheep. The shepherds were to serve the great Shepherd of the sheep, which was God: think of Psalm 23 or Isaiah 40:10. The problem was that so many of the shepherds of Israel were wicked (Jer. 23; 25; Isa. 56:9–12). If we look closely at Ezekiel 34 (it is best to turn there in your Bible) we see that after renouncing the wickedness of the shepherds in the first ten verses, in verse 11 God says that He Himself will be the one who will have to shepherd His sheep. Notice verse 12, “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered.” We will have to keep that in mind when later in John 10 Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd.” He is the one God is ultimately speaking about in Ezekiel 34. In Ezekiel 34:23 it says, “I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd.” Jesus is the Son of David who would be greater than David. Most of this principle we will study in the next article, God willing, but keep it in your mind as we keep looking at our text.

The opening picture of our text is that of a sheep pen or a sheepfold. During the day, a shepherd would lead the sheep from pasture to pasture, from watering hole to watering hole, to ensure their nourishment and livelihood. At night it was unsafe to leave the sheep out on a hillside, so he would have to put the sheep in some type of pen. Depending on the size of his flock, sometimes a cave would be used and the shepherd would sleep by the entrance of the cave to ensure no one or nothing went in or out. In a village, there would be an open roofed enclosure made of wood or likely stone, sometimes even connected to the back side of a house. In this type of closure, the sheep would be brought in and then the gate would be locked or closed to make sure none of the sheep wandered out. This is the picture we have of our text.

It was an enclosure which had more than one flock, so it had different shepherds sharing an enclosure for the evening. There would be a watchman, John 10:3 says, who would open the gate for the shepherd. He was not to open it for others, and therefore, if someone or some animal wanted to steal a sheep, he would climb over the wall. When these structures were out in the wilderness, the dangers would be bears, lions, or wolves; in town this was less of a danger. The danger then became someone rustling or stealing sheep. John 10:1 calls this person a thief or a robber. Those terms refer to mostly the same thing, but the difference is that the robber uses violence to accomplish his goal.

Jesus, in this allegory, compares Himself as the faithful shepherd with those others who are thieves and robbers. Sheep will follow the voice of their shepherd, and they will not follow the voice of a stranger. So, to go back to the sheep pen, if there are three shepherds who keep their sheep in the same pen, how do they divide them again the next morning? What happens is the watchman opens the gate for the shepherd, and he calls out to his sheep and they follow him; the other sheep ignore the stranger’s voice and wait only for the voice of their own shepherd. This is still done in many Eastern cultures where shepherds share watering holes and flocks come together and they all leave with their own flock by following the shepherd’s voice. There is a closeness between a shepherd and his flock: he knows the name of the sheep and they are with him 24/7. It is like having a faithful dog: as soon as the owner comes home and the dog hears the voice, the ears perk up and the dog wags its tail. When a stranger comes, there isn’t trust at first. This idea is the same with sheep.

The Pharisees and the others who are listening did not understand what Jesus was saying. John 10:6 says: “Jesus used this illustration, but they did not understand the things which He spoke to them.” So, in verses 7–10 of John 10, he makes it more explicit. Some have said that this becomes a mixed metaphor. In the first five verses Jesus is a shepherd; now, in verses 7–10, he is a gate. How is this? The way we must understand this is that verses 7–10 amplify what Jesus was saying. Also, as with an allegory, we must be careful not to be too particular of every detail.

So, now the picture focuses upon Jesus as the gate for the sheep. Notice Jesus uses the “I Am” statement again. This is a divine claim! But now, Jesus is the gate. Jesus calls Himself that very thing that brings the sheep into the safety of the sheep pen and brings them back out into the place where they can be fed and nourished. Whoever enters through the gate, Jesus says in John 10:9, will be saved. So, coming in through the gate is a picture of salvation. Salvation here is pictured as a place of safety, going in and out of the sheepfold, and having an abundant life. This is what John 10:10 means when it says, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”

A full life or an abundant life is one of fellowship with God. It is a life that is so full that it cannot be destroyed by death. It is a life of abundant grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is this the life you are living—a full life in the grace of God? Or are you living a life of fear? If you believe, if you have entered through the gate which is Christ, by faith, you can go in and out of the sheep pen without fear. The sheep pen can be the church—John 10:16 makes this clear. It is initially speaking about Israel, but for us today it speaks of the church. Are you afraid of what is out there? Are you afraid of your neighbors? Are you afraid of ISIS? Are you afraid of Satan? You need not be, because the shepherd gives abundant grace to the sheep. Be wise out there, be loving out there, be active out there, get involved in your community. Invite your neighbors over for supper and then invite them to church or just invite them into your lives. We will ask ourselves in the next article, but if we are afraid, then do we really trust that Jesus is the good shepherd who will not lose one of His sheep?

Brothers and sisters, there is only one way in. At some point, that shepherd is going to call the sheep in at night, and if you are not in the sheep pen, then you are in danger, eternal danger because one of these nights will be the last one. Do you hear the voice of the Savior? He says, “Come unto me and I will give you rest.”

**The Danger**

After explaining to you that you do not need to be afraid if you have entered the gate, now let me warn you of two obvious but serious dangers.

The first of these dangers is listening to the wrong voice. In John 10:3 Jesus says that the shepherd calls his sheep by name and leads them out. Notice that beautiful phrase, “He leads them.” Most modern shepherds drive the sheep. They walk behind the sheep and have a dog or two to keep the sheep in line. Not Jesus; He leads the sheep. The way that He leads them is not by the fact that they see Him but rather that they hear Him. The danger then is to follow the wrong voice.

The wrong voice is described by Jesus as that of a robber or thief or a stranger. What would the wrong voice sound like? In Jesus’ day, it was the voice of unbelieving Pharisees. It was a voice of threatening. Just as they threw the man who was healed of blindness out of the temple, so a false shepherd threatens the sheep. Pastors (which is the Latin word for shepherd) must not threaten the sheep; they should lead the sheep and teach them to run away from strange voices. Like what? Who are the thieves of our day?

The thieves of our day are those who teach that there is another way to be saved; those who teach that all religions ultimately lead to the same place. A thief might also say that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. Thieves today who have a false voice are those who promote a false religion, whether it is naturalism and its daughter evolution. Namely, it is that which is contrary to God’s Word. Another false voice is that of prosperity preachers who teach that God wants you to be wealthy and have all of your carnal desires met, and the reason you are sick or weak is your own fault. The first danger is listening to the wrong voice.

The second danger is seeking to enter by the wrong entrance. Jesus claims to be the exclusive gate. The only other way into the sheep pen is an illegitimate way: the way of thieves and robbers. We have already mentioned false religions and the like under the first danger. Likely the great danger of seeking the wrong entrance is seeking to enter the kingdom of God without the church.

This is the notion that someone can be a part of the universal church without being faithfully involved in a local church. This is the teaching that says that you can live a healthy Christian life without the communion of the saints, without accountability, without corporate worship, and most dangerously, without the means of grace—the preaching and sacraments.

What has become obvious to those watching is the role of religion in American politics. How many of the candidates attended worship on Sunday? How many attended worship on this Sunday last year? It is a show, and it is a joke. An individualistic faith with an individualistic salvation isn’t entering by the gate, which is Christ. It is sitting on the wall, it is straddling the fence. Cyprian, the early church father, said, “You cannot have God as your Father if the church is not your mother.” These people are the opposites of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were members of the local church but were not members of the universal church. We need both, and it is local church where we express our membership in the universal church.

Beware of the dangers.

**The Application**

As we take a step back from this “I Am” statement, what can you take home from the knowledge that Jesus is the gate for the sheep?

First (and we will build on this in the next article), be comforted in the fact that Christ will protect and feed us. John 10: 27–28 says, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” Jesus will not leave us out in the wilderness for the lions, bears, and wolves to devour. Rather the I Am is an iron gate of protection for the sheep. He feeds us as the bread of life, He nourishes us with streams of living water, and He does so in His Word and by grace through the Holy Spirit.

Second, it is the calling of the Christian pastor to teach the sheep to run away from a strange voice. An important part of preaching is the defense of the faith or apologetics and polemics. This is especially the case in catechism sermons. In the faithful preaching of the Word, the sheep ought to be able to hear the voice of the good shepherd. The shepherd at times has to keep sheep from cliffs, pitfalls, and predators.

Third, enter in at the gate and follow the voice of Jesus. Many of you were welcomed into the sheep pen in a sense when you were baptized as members of the covenant. Praise God for that, but don’t rest merely on that. The picture of our text is that of sheep going in and out. Sometimes when sheep go out, they get lost. The shepherd with the one hundred sheep left the ninety-nine to go and find the one that was lost. When he found that sheep, he picked it up, put it on his shoulders, and carried it back to the flock. How would that sheep have gotten lost? That sheep entered dangerous territory or didn’t follow the shepherd. This is what our sin does. Flee from it. Repent and believe and experience abundant life.

There is only one gate, and that is Jesus. Come to Him. Enter through Him and have life, true, eternal, life.

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**Rev. Steve Swets**  
is the pastor of Rehoboth United Reformed Church in Hamilton, ON.

I Am the Good Shepherd

**10**“Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber.**2**But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. **3**To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4**When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. **5**A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” **6**This figure of speech Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

**7**So Jesus again said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. **8**All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. **9**I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. **10**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. **11**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. **12**He who is a hired hand and not a shepherd, who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.**13**He flees because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.**14**I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, **15**just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. **16**And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. **17**For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. **18**No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father.”

**19**There was again a division among the Jews because of these words.**20**Many of them said, “He has a demon, and is insane; why listen to him?” **21**Others said, “These are not the words of one who is oppressed by a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

**America’s Top Fears 2016**Chapman University Survey of American Fears

October 11, 2016

**Wilkinson College**

Browse Related:

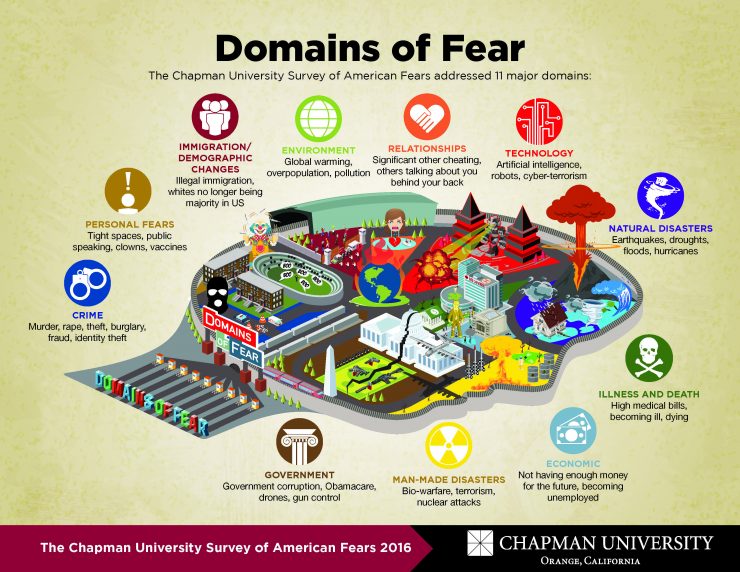
* [The Chapman University Survey on American Fears](https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/category/fear-index/)
  + [[](https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2016/10/26/surviving-the-end-of-the-world-interstices-2017/)](https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2016/10/26/surviving-the-end-of-the-world-interstices-2017/)

The Chapman University Survey of American Fears Wave 3 (2016) provides an unprecedented look into the fears of average Americans. In April of 2016, a random sample of 1,511 adults from across the United States were asked their level of fear about 79 different fears across a huge variety of topics ranging from crime, the government, disasters, personal anxieties, technology and many others.

**Domains of Fear**

There were 11 major “domains” of fear addressed by the survey, including:

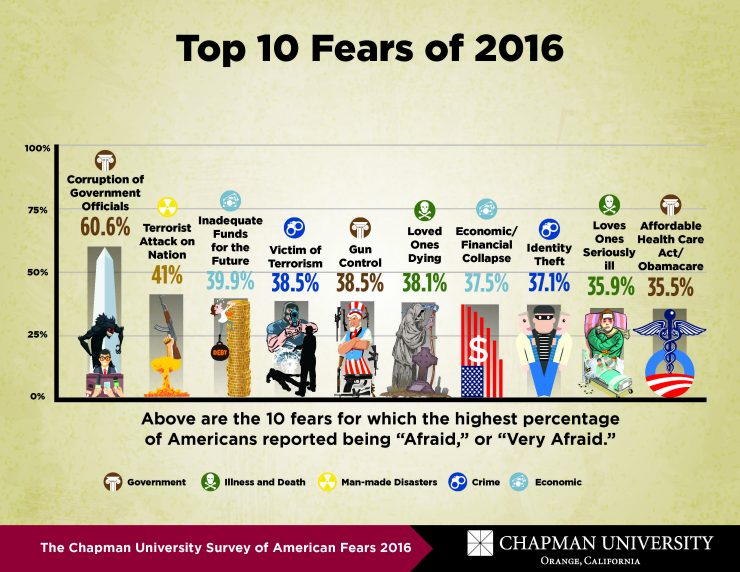
| **Fear Domain** | **Types of Questions Included** |
| --- | --- |
| Crime | Murder, rape, theft, burglary, fraud, identity theft |
| Economic | Not having enough money for the future, becoming unemployed, etc. |
| Environment | Global warming, overpopulation, pollution |
| Government | Government corruption, Obamacare, drones, gun control, etc. |
| Illness and Death | High medical bills, becoming ill, dying |
| Immigration/Demographic Changes | Illegal immigration, whites no longer being majority in US |
| Man-Made Disasters | Bio-warfare, terrorism, nuclear attacks |
| Natural Disasters | Earthquakes, droughts, floods, hurricanes |
| Personal Fears | Tight spaces, public speaking, clowns, vaccines |
| Relationships | Significant other cheating, others talking about you behind your back |
| Technology | Artificial intelligence, robots, cyber-terrorism |



**Top 10 Fears of 2016**

Below is a list of the 10 fears for which the highest percentage of Americans reported being “Afraid,” or “Very Afraid.”

| **Fear** | **Fear Domain** | **% Afraid or Very Afraid** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Corrupt government officials | Government | 60.6 |
| Terrorist Attack | Manmade Disasters | 41 |
| Not having enough money for the future | Economic | 39.9 |
| Terrorism | Crime | 38.5 |
| Government restrictions on firearms and ammunition | Government | 38.5 |
| People I love dying | Illness and Death | 38.1 |
| Economic/financial collapse | Economic | 37.5 |
| Identity theft | Crime | 37.1 |
| People I love becoming seriously ill | Illness and Death | 35.9 |
| The Affordable Health Care Act/Obamacare | Government | 35.5 |



**The Complete List of Fears, 2016**

The following is a complete, list of all of the fears addressed by the Chapman University Survey of American Fears Wave 3 (2016), including the percent of Americans who reported being afraid or very afraid.

**Sorted by Percent Afraid/Very Afraid**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Fear** | **Fear Domain** | **% Afraid or Very Afraid** |
| Corrupt government officials | Government | 60.6 |
| Terrorist Attack | Manmade Disasters | 41 |
| Not having enough money for the future | Economic | 39.9 |
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| Economic/financial collapse | Economic | 37.5 |
| Identity theft | Crime | 37.1 |
| People I love becoming seriously ill | Illness and Death | 35.9 |
| The Affordable Health Care Act/Obamacare | Government | 35.5 |
| Credit card fraud | Crime | 35.5 |
| Biological warfare | Manmade Disasters | 34.8 |
| Reptiles | Personal Fears | 33.2 |
| Government tracking of personal data | Technology | 33.1 |
| High medical bills | Illness and Death | 33.1 |
| The US will be involved in another World War | Manmade Disasters | 32.3 |
| Global warming and climate change | Environment | 32.3 |
| Nuclear weapons attack | Manmade Disasters | 31.5 |
| Cyber-terrorism | Technology | 30.7 |
| Being hit by a drunk driver | Crime | 30.4 |
| Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes | Environment | 30 |
| Devastating tornado | Natural Disasters | 29.7 |
| Pandemic or a major epidemic | Manmade Disasters | 29.3 |
| Corporate tracking of personal data | Technology | 28.7 |
| Extinction of plant and animal species | Environment | 27.9 |
| Pollution of drinking water | Environment | 27.9 |
| Break-ins | Crime | 27.6 |
| Widespread civil unrest | Manmade Disasters | 27.6 |
| Nuclear accident/meltdown | Manmade Disasters | 27.5 |
| Random/mass shooting | Crime | 26.9 |
| Oil spills | Environment | 26.8 |
| Collapse of the electrical grid | Manmade Disasters | 26.2 |
| Public speaking | Personal Fears | 25.9 |
| Theft of property | Crime | 25.5 |
| Losing my data, photos or other important documents in a disaster | Natural Disasters | 25.2 |
| Insects/arachnids | Personal Fears | 25 |
| Becoming unemployed | Economic | 24.6 |
| Heights | Personal Fears | 24.5 |
| Devastating drought | Natural Disasters | 23.9 |
| Illegal immigration | Immigration/Demographic change | 23.8 |
| Devastating hurricane | Natural Disasters | 23.3 |
| Devastating earthquake | Natural Disasters | 22.7 |
| Devastating flood | Natural Disasters | 22.2 |
| Murder by a stranger | Crime | 21.9 |
| Devastating blizzard/winter storm | Natural Disasters | 21.8 |
| Government use of drones within the US | Government | 21.7 |
| Financial fraud (such as a Ponzi scheme, embezzlement, etc.) | Crime | 21.5 |
| Sexual assault by a stranger | Crime | 21.5 |
| Mugging | Crime | 21.3 |
| Gang violence | Crime | 21.1 |
| Walking alone at night | Crime | 21.1 |
| Deep lakes and oceans | Personal Fears | 20.8 |
| Air Pollution | Environment | 20.7 |
| Becoming seriously ill | Illness and Death | 20.3 |
| Racial/hate crime | Crime | 19.9 |
| Police brutality | Crime | 19.6 |
| Abduction/kidnapping | Crime | 19.5 |
| Becoming the victim of a violent crime | Crime | 19.4 |
| Dying | Illness and Death | 19 |
| Becoming the victim of a property crime | Crime | 18.6 |
| Sexual assault by someone you know | Crime | 18.1 |
| Whites no longer being the majority in the US | Immigration/Demographic change | 17.9 |
| Murder by someone you know | Crime | 17.5 |
| Stalking | Crime | 17.4 |
| Small enclosed spaces | Personal Fears | 16.8 |
| Needles | Personal Fears | 16.7 |
| Computers replacing people in the workforce | Technology | 16.6 |
| Technology I don’t understand | Technology | 15.7 |
| Large volcanic eruption | Natural Disasters | 15 |
| Germs | Personal Fears | 14.9 |
| Flying | Personal Fears | 12.1 |
| Blood | Personal Fears | 11.7 |
| Animals (dogs, rats, etc). | Personal Fears | 10.9 |
| Significant other cheating on you | Relationships | 10.2 |
| Zombies | Personal Fears | 10.2 |
| Strangers | Personal Fears | 9.8 |
| Ghosts | Personal Fears | 8.9 |
| Clowns | Personal Fears | 7.8 |
| Others talking about you behind your back | Relationships | 6.8 |

**Sorted Alphabetically**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Fear** | **Fear Domain** | **% Afraid or Very Afraid** |
| Abduction/kidnapping | Crime | 19.5 |
| Air Pollution | Environment | 20.7 |
| Animals (dogs, rats, etc). | Personal Fears | 10.9 |
| Becoming seriously ill | Illness and Death | 20.3 |
| Becoming the victim of a property crime | Crime | 18.6 |
| Becoming the victim of a violent crime | Crime | 19.4 |
| Becoming unemployed | Economic | 24.6 |
| Being hit by a drunk driver | Crime | 30.4 |
| Biological warfare | Manmade Disasters | 34.8 |
| Blood | Personal Fears | 11.7 |
| Break-ins | Crime | 27.6 |
| Clowns | Personal Fears | 7.8 |
| Collapse of the electrical grid | Manmade Disasters | 26.2 |
| Computers replacing people in the workforce | Technology | 16.6 |
| Corporate tracking of personal data | Technology | 28.7 |
| Corrupt government officials | Government | 60.6 |
| Credit card fraud | Crime | 35.5 |
| Cyber-terrorism | Technology | 30.7 |
| Deep lakes and oceans | Personal Fears | 20.8 |
| Devastating blizzard/winter storm | Natural Disasters | 21.8 |
| Devastating drought | Natural Disasters | 23.9 |
| Devastating earthquake | Natural Disasters | 22.7 |
| Devastating flood | Natural Disasters | 22.2 |
| Devastating hurricane | Natural Disasters | 23.3 |
| Devastating tornado | Natural Disasters | 29.7 |
| Dying | Illness and Death | 19 |
| Economic/financial collapse | Economic | 37.5 |
| Extinction of plant and animal species | Environment | 27.9 |
| Financial fraud (such as a Ponzi scheme, embezzlement, etc.) | Crime | 21.5 |
| Flying | Personal Fears | 12.1 |
| Gang violence | Crime | 21.1 |
| Germs | Personal Fears | 14.9 |
| Ghosts | Personal Fears | 8.9 |
| Global warming and climate change | Environment | 32.3 |
| Government restrictions on firearms and ammunition | Government | 38.5 |
| Government tracking of personal data | Technology | 33.1 |
| Government use of drones within the US | Government | 21.7 |
| Heights | Personal Fears | 24.5 |
| High medical bills | Illness and Death | 33.1 |
| Identity theft | Crime | 37.1 |
| Illegal immigration | Immigration/Demographic change | 23.8 |
| Insects/arachnids | Personal Fears | 25 |
| Large volcanic eruption | Natural Disasters | 15 |
| Losing my data, photos or other important documents in a disaster | Natural Disasters | 25.2 |
| Mugging | Crime | 21.3 |
| Murder by a stranger | Crime | 21.9 |
| Murder by someone you know | Crime | 17.5 |
| Needles | Personal Fears | 16.7 |
| Not having enough money for the future | Economic | 39.9 |
| Nuclear accident/meltdown | Manmade Disasters | 27.5 |
| Nuclear weapons attack | Manmade Disasters | 31.5 |
| Oil spills | Environment | 26.8 |
| Others talking about you behind your back | Relationships | 6.8 |
| Pandemic or a major epidemic | Manmade Disasters | 29.3 |
| People I love becoming seriously ill | Illness and Death | 35.9 |
| People I love dying | Illness and Death | 38.1 |
| Police brutality | Crime | 19.6 |
| Pollution of drinking water | Environment | 27.9 |
| Pollution of oceans, rivers and lakes | Environment | 30 |
| Public speaking | Personal Fears | 25.9 |
| Racial/hate crime | Crime | 19.9 |
| Random/mass shooting | Crime | 26.9 |
| Reptiles | Personal Fears | 33.2 |
| Sexual assault by a stranger | Crime | 21.5 |
| Sexual assault by someone you know | Crime | 18.1 |
| Significant other cheating on you | Relationships | 10.2 |
| Small enclosed spaces | Personal Fears | 16.8 |
| Stalking | Crime | 17.4 |
| Strangers | Personal Fears | 9.8 |
| Technology I don’t understand | Technology | 15.7 |
| Terrorism | Crime | 38.5 |
| Terrorist Attack | Manmade Disasters | 41 |
| The Affordable Health Care Act/Obamacare | Government | 35.5 |
| The US will be involved in another World War | Manmade Disasters | 32.3 |
| Theft of property | Crime | 25.5 |
| Walking alone at night | Crime | 21.1 |
| Whites no longer being the majority in the US | Immigration/Demographic change | 17.9 |
| Widespread civil unrest | Manmade Disasters | 27.6 |
| Zombies | Personal Fears | 10.2 |

<https://blogs.chapman.edu/wilkinson/2016/10/11/americas-top-fears-2016/>

1. It reminds us of the words of the prophet Jeremiah who wrote:
2. “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord,  
       whose trust is the Lord.  
   **8**He is like a tree planted by water,  
       that sends out its roots by the stream,  
   and does not fear when heat comes,  
       for its leaves remain green,  
   and is not anxious in the year of drought,  
       for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. “*I called out to the Lord, out of my distress, and… He answered me*.” [Jonah 2:2] [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. We rarely refer to God as our “keeper” – even though we all have an “expiration date”. (T.Turley) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)