

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

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Senior Sermon
1 October 2010

Imagine a younger, and even shorter, version of myself ready to face the ski slopes at the age of 13. I was feeling really cool with my new flashy red ski pants and I was bundled in a hundred layers and a big blue winter coat, prepared for any blizzard that could come my way. I was on a church youth trip over President's Day Weekend and I was so excited to be able to ski for my first time and the Wisconsin slopes were calling my name. After mastering the basics of skiing on the bunny hill and only *nicking* a five year old while I sped past, the instructor felt I was ready for the big hill! However, there was one major thing wrong with the big slope; it didn't have a chair lift--it had a tow rope. For those who don't know, this a rope you must grab and hold on to with dear life while holding your body and skis strait as the rope pulls you up the hill with great speed. Now for some, a tow rope wouldn't be a big deal. They could hold on with their strong arms, glide to the top, and sail down on their skis without a care in the world. However, I fit the definition of *gummy worm arms* perfectly and this proved to be a difficult task for me. The first time I grabbed onto the rope I fell instantly because I didn't quite understand how it would work and I got scared that it was all of a sudden dragging me at a fast pace, so I basically just jumped off and scooted out of the way with a nervous giggle. No big deal, right? Then I got in line for my second try, this time I was ready! I grabbed on with all my might and let the rope pull be like a leashed St. Bernard, bounding and pulling its owner. Soon enough my arms gave out and I was face first in the snow with my legs sprawled out in the path exactly where all the skiers behind me wanted to get by. Then I heard the horrid noise of the clanging bell to warn all other skiers of the inept tow rope rider as the rope stopped and everyone was forced to wait for me to get out of the way. But I couldn't even do that! I had no idea how to uncross my legs and dig myself out of the snow with ginormous

attachments on my feet. Thus all the skiers had to wait even longer for an instructor to come and help me move. I was mortified as the crush of my life wizzed by and asked, "Everything ok, Kim??"yup. I then proceeded to explain to the ski instructor that it wasn't my fault, that my gloves didn't have very good grip, and that I could try it again with a friend's pair of gloves and he wouldn't have to worry about me. Determined, I got in line for a third time. I just had to prove myself and make it up that hill and try to impress the cute instructor, Titus, at the top. Can you tell I was in junior high? I grabbed the rope and was gliding, holding my legs and body straight, when again, half way there, my arms gave out and I fell off. At least I only momentarily stopped the rope this time because I had mastered getting up off the ground quickly. The same instructor came to help me out and he could see that I was extremely disappointed and embarrassed. He was very caring and patient and offered to help me get up the hill by following from behind. However, he actually ended up needing to hold on to me and push from behind because I needed so much help getting up that hill. He was very reassuring and the whole time he kindly coached me on how I was standing and encouraged me to keep going and not give up. Then, with his help, I made it to the top! I did great at the skiing part and loved gliding down the hills and feeling the wind in my face! Every time I got back in line the kind older man would see me, and with a smile, he'd ask if I needed help. I was so thankful he was there to help me enjoy that weekend of skiing and by the end, I barely needed him but it was still so nice to know he was right behind me making sure I didn't fall.

Perhaps you have an idea where I'm going with this story and know who that instructor is in my life today. As a junior higher I had a hard time accepting that I needed help and could not do everything on my own. I am the same way today, especially when it comes to trusting God and letting him lead me. I have a hard time truly surrendering my life to Him and trusting that he really can and will help me. God is the ski instructor in my life today, who quietly offers his help, but so often I push him aside, busying myself with my own ideas of how things should go and what **I** need to do. I have read Psalm 121

countless times over the years, thinking, wow—God is awesome, I’m glad he’s there for me—but I’ve never really paused to truly think about how he IS there for me and how I need not worry about all that I consume myself with because it’s in His hands already. To prepare for today I enjoyed reflecting on how I have seen God work in my life and help me, especially while here at Augie. From the first awkward and nerve racking meet ‘n’ greet with the freshmen under the big white NSO tent to getting up here before you today, God has been helping me. He’s been a long side, in front, and behind me with every test, an inevitable VIDEOTAPED teaching lesson, papers until the wee hours of the morning, through difficulties as a peer advisor, in relationships and friendships...and I must remind myself, he’ll be there even through student teaching, and finding a job. Looking back I can say that all things have turned out for my own good, even if it wasn’t what I thought I wanted or how I perceived things should have turned out at the time. God always knows best and truly has our best interest at heart. I believe that God works in mysterious as well as ordinary ways, and when I stop and reflect on His goodness and how he’s assisted me, I see that he’s spoken through professors who have been there to comfort and guide me, he’s provided me with clarity of mind to get through certain tasks that I thought were impossible, he’s given me peace through prayer in difficult times, and he’s reminded me of scriptures just when I’ve needed them to keep going. God longs to help us and gently push us up the hills in our life, while quietly cheering us on so we can actually enjoy the ride, our life. In fact, as I was thinking of the ways God has been helping me lately, the song “By Your Side” by Tenth Avenue North started to play on my iTunes. The words that were sung into my ear were: “And I'll be by your side, wherever you fall, in the dead of night, whenever you call. And please don't fight; these hands that are holding you, my hands are holding you.” Wow, thank you Lord for that huge and clear reminder! So why do I fight and shove him away and try to do it all on my own? I don’t know what my problem is, but I have come to the realization that I cannot do anything a part from God and I therefore even need to ask God to help me accept his help!

Turning to God's word, instead of leaning on my own understanding, or lack thereof, has also helped me greatly. As I read and re-read Psalm 121 for today, I remained stuck on verse 1 and 2. So what can we learn from this passage? After reading several translations and commentaries, I found some words that really caught me. A 19th Century pastor, Charles Spurgeon, wrote:

It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Help comes to people only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectance, desire, and confidence. Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the proved faithfulness of the Lord -- these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes.

We as sinful, lowly, people are burdened by our worldly pleasures and the troubles and cares we have on this earth. We are hopeless and if we look downward on ourselves we'll find nothing, but will only increase our fears, sins, and imperfection. It isn't even our faith, but God's faithfulness that we must rely on and look up to. We are completely unworthy, but if we focus on this we'll get nowhere. We can never gain an "S" for satisfactory without the Lord. However, we can cry out to the Lord in our pitiful state, and, he hears. He wants us to be free in Him and He's already humbly come down to us, making himself a human, and has given us His crown while taking on our sin and turning our mark of "Unsatisfactory" into "Exceeds Expectations." And, especially as an Education major, *that's* what I love to hear!

So stop making excuses and trying to impress; cry out like a child stuck face-first in the snow! We never grow out of needing God's help. When you are on your knees, whether stuck in the snow, or

the valleys of your life, he'll come to scoop you up and help you off the ground and out of your own desperation. He comes unexpectedly, but always at just the right time, his *perfect* time, and when you need him most. It may be difficult at first to accept. At first I was mortified to have a ski instructor, donned in electric yellow outdoor gear from head to toe, at my side helping me. What if people noticed? The same can be true with accepting help from God. Though I actually wish HE WOULD show up in bright yellow sometime so that I really could understand him and see that he's really there for me! When we give the control to God and let him guide our lives, we often want to run back to our old ways and understandings, mortified of this strange God who does things we do not understand. Others may scoff at our beliefs and it's natural to grapple with doubt and His strange existence in our world. However, I've found that believing and trusting His way is far more refreshing and reassuring than the life of doing it my way. It's as wonderful as a caring man, with a warm smile, and strong hands reaching down to help me and encourage me on a cold February day.

MORNING WORSHIP

Friday, October 1, 2010

Prelude

Britta Stadem

Special Music

“Be Thou My Vision”

(Majken Eckels, Kim Hibma, Jamie Martin, Sawyer Vanden Heuvel)

Scripture Reading

Psalm 121

Robin Bennett

Sermon

Kim Hibma

Hometown: Worthington, MN

Majors: Spec. Ed. and El. Ed

Song

“Jesus, All for Jesus”

Jesus, all for Jesus, all I am and have and ever hope to be.

Jesus, all for Jesus, All I am and have and ever hope to be.

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans I surrender these into Your hands.

All of my ambitions, hopes and plans I surrender these into Your hands.

CHORUS:

For its only in Your will that I am free,

For its only in Your will that I am free, Jesus, all for Jesus,

All I am and have and ever hope to be.

Jennifer Atkinson/Robin Mark © 1991 Authentic Publ.

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Prayers

Mari Stensgaard

Song

“I Lift My Eyes Up”

I lift my eyes up to the mountains, Where does my help come from

My help comes from You. Maker of heaven, creator of the earth

Oh how I need You Lord. You are my only hope

You're my only prayer, So I will wait for You

To come and rescue me, Come and give me life.

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CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICE TRIP (Fall Break) - Campus ministry is offering a service learning trip to Pine Ridge over Fall Break, Oct. 22-25. Cost is approximately \$100; registration with \$50 deposit is due in the chapel office is due by October 8. There is also a survey of j-term and spring break possibilities in the narthex. . .let us know your preferences.

PET BLESSING - In celebration of the feast of St. Francis, we invite you to “paws” for a pet blessing at 10 am, Oct. 8th. Bring your pet or a picture of your pet and celebrate all of God’s creatures! Treats for two and four legged creatures following worship! There will be a collection of pet food for Second Chance Rescue center in the Commons and in the Chapel.

BANQUET – Campus Ministry is serving the Banquet, the local downtown soup kitchen, on **Fri., Oct. 15th**. There is a sign-up sheet on the Narthex table. The food prep shift is from 2-4 pm, and the serving shift starts at 5:15 pm. We will be doing some car pooling if you need a ride to the Banquet, which is on 8th St. and Weber Ave.

OUTREACH – Groups of students lead worship and youth retreats across the region. A great way to get acquainted with a smaller group of students of all ages with a modest time commitment. Applications on the table in the chapel Narthex. Sign up soon!!! Training is Fri., Oct. 1st at Our Saviors Luth.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

- Sunday (3rd) Worship, 11 am - Laurel Duncan, ‘11
- Monday (4th) Walking Worship - walk to Berg. Circle (start at chapel), 10 am
- Tuesday (5th) Catholic Mass, 10 am - Fr. Jim Breem
- Wednesday (6th) Holy Communion, 10 am - Jim Bies; ASA Inaug.
- Friday (8th) Pet Blessing, 10 am
- Sunday (10th) Homecoming worship, 10:30 am