

“Lean On Me” by Rev. Dr. Peter Thompson

Psalms 36:5-10

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

### **1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

**Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says “Let Jesus be cursed!” and no one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.**

**Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.**

The Word of God for the People of God. **Thanks be to God.**

Life can be humbling, can't it? As soon as we think we have everything in line and our retirement is all set or as soon as we are moving forward on our two wheel bike with confidence or as soon as we finally move to that special place with all our special someone's and feel content and satisfied and settled or as soon as we muster up enough courage and nerve to do something we have always wanted to do, it seems something or someone rises up and reminds us to not get too cocky, too confident, too settled, or feel too invincible.

The Christmas season can present these moments as well. We have all the gifts wrapped and placed neatly under the tree and the dog decides it's their turn to have fun and it ruins a bit of a surprise or the table is set and all the food is being prepared and we get the news that our guests are unable to come now due to a sudden cold or stomach bug.

This of course doesn't happen with everything. Some things work out perfectly and without hiccup. I pray that was your Christmas holiday. But it is true that sometimes life throws us the curve and we aren't quite ready with a response or have to do some crazy dance move to make contact. It is true that so much of life is out of our control. So, then what? Well, this morning, in this New Year I want to begin with good news for us all. Actually, our texts for today have good news for us all.

As I read our texts for today, there were three words that rose to the surface; “Lean on Me.”

Whereas life can be unpredictable and out of our control, we all have someone to lean on. Actually, we have lots of someone’s to lean on.

These three words can be interpreted from two perspectives: One is from God’s perspective, as though God is speaking directly to us saying, “lean on me”. That is where we are going to focus today. The second is from a community perspective, as though we are encouraging one another, “lean on me”. We will unpack this more next Sunday in partnership with the Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders.

Let’s start with God’s perspective, which is always a great place to start when we feel stuck in life.

We all need God. Can any of us deny that? Our human nature cries out to God for help. Our mischief, our distractions, our justifications, our waywardness, longs for rescue and renewal. Where do we find this rescue and renewal? God. Augustine would say “in the expansiveness of God’s grace.”

Psalm 36 gives us insight into what that face to face encounter with God might look like. The psalmist’s passionate exposition identifies attributes of God that encourage and assure us that we can and should always “Lean on God”:

God Loves- God’s steadfast love (*hesed*) is for us as God’s people and humanity everywhere and in all times; God’s love is a love which extends all the way to the heavens.

God is Faithful- God’s faithfulness is to all of creation. God will never leave us or forsake us. God’s faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

God is Righteous- God’s righteousness is translated as the power of all that is good. God is the creator of all that is good; the light and the life. God’s righteousness stands like the mighty mountains (unmovable, unshakable).

God Rules- What we are referring to here is God as the ultimate judge. God knows us and holds us accountable to what we do. God’s judgement is as deep as the great deep. There is no place we can go to hide.

God Delivers- God saves. God’s salvation is for humanity, even animals the psalmist declares. God’s salvation is wide and dependable.

Because of these attributes and promises, the psalmist declares that all people are invited to:

Take refuge- Lean on God, for God is our refuge and strength. In God we will receive shelter from the storm, release from captivity. In the shadow of God's wings, like a mother bird protecting her young, we can take refuge.

Feast- Lean on God and we will be fed and filled on the abundance of God's house and table. God knows what we need and will provide enough.

Drink- Lean on God and we will quench our thirst with the living water from the river of God's delight. As we acknowledge the sacrament of baptism, the waters of baptism link us with the waters of creation, the flood and the exodus, connecting us with God's creative purpose, cleansing power, and redemptive promise from generation to generation. Jesus tells the woman at the well "those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty; it will become a stream gushing up to eternal life (Jn 4:14)."

Have Life- When we lean on God, we find true life. It is only in the one who created life that we can find true life. "What has come into being in him (Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of all people (Jn 1:4)." "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I (Jesus) came that they may have life and have it abundantly (Jn 10:10)."

See- When we lean on God, we can see. Not just physically, but spiritually. God is the light, the light that overcomes all darkness, making it possible for any of us to truly see. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then (in God's glory) I will know fully, even as I have been fully known (1 Cor 13:12)."

God, who is both almighty and personal, is our rock, our refuge, our strength. God looks to each of us as God's beloved and says, "lean on me." Brothers and sisters in Christ, when the waters of life rise up, we can trust God. We must trust in God. For when we do, not only do we benefit from God's presence and power with us, we also gain an army of people around us called the church, who also trust in God, declare "Jesus is Lord", and are convicted by God's call upon their lives to serve and teach and comfort and be there for others. Trusting and leaning on God will lead us to trust and support from others. Others as Paul said, who are filled with the gifts of the Spirit. Again, we will unpack our opportunity to lean on others more next week in partnership with Ordination and Installation of Ruling Elders.

Today, we will close with Jeremiah 29:11- "I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." God was and is very intentional about our design, our opportunities, and our purpose for living. And the cool part is, God doesn't leave us to fend for ourselves. God stays with us and God is telling us... Lean on Me.

*Sometimes in our lives we all have pain, We all have sorrow,  
But if we are wise, We know that there's (hope in) always tomorrow...*

*Lean on me, when you're not strong, And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on,  
For it won't be long, 'Til (you're) I'm gonna need, Somebody to lean on...*

*Please swallow your pride, If I have things you need to borrow,  
For no one can fill those of your needs, That you won't let show...*

*You just call on me brother (or sister), when you need a hand,  
We all need somebody to lean on  
I just might have a problem that you'll understand, We all need somebody to lean on...*

*Lean on me, when you're not strong, And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on,  
For it won't be long, 'Til (you're) I'm gonna need, Somebody to lean on...*

*If there is a load you have to bear, That you can't carry, I'm right up the road,  
I'll share your load, If you just call me, If you ever need a friend call me...(by Bill Withers)*