

Wednesday, December 10, 2014

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Scripture

Psalm 17

¹Hear a just cause, O LORD; attend to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.

²From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.

³If you try my heart, if you visit me by night,
if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.

⁴As for what others do, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.

⁵My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.

⁶I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my words.

⁷Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O savior of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.

⁸Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,

⁹from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.

¹⁰They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

¹¹They track me down; now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.

¹²They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.

¹³Rise up, O LORD, confront them, overthrow them!

By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,

¹⁴from mortals — by your hand, O LORD —
from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.

May their bellies be filled with what you have stored up for them;

may their children have more than enough;

may they leave something over to their little ones.

¹⁵As for me, I shall behold your face in righteousness;
when I awake I shall be satisfied, beholding your likeness.

Devotional

Advent is a time of waiting and hope. It's a time of eager excitement.

The world's adaptation of messages of hope, however, can cloud the reality that during Advent we sometimes await the promise of salvation while suffering.

Some of us navigate Advent through raw grief, thinking of loved ones with whom we will no longer share the miracle of Christmas. Others experience these days amid illness that poses uncertainty. For others, conflicts in relationships make life disorienting. Holding on to hope while suffering deeply can prove challenging.

Yet, even in the midst of struggle, we find that the Psalmist holds fast to God's promise of protection and salvation. The Psalmist remains confident that God hears the cry of the one who suffers.

As we consider the realities we hope to be delivered from this Advent, let us trust the Psalmist's confidence in God's powerful and protective love. And, when our own suffering makes the promise of divine healing difficult to grasp, may there be those around us who are able to carry and proclaim that promise on our behalf.

Prayer

Gracious God, incline your ear to us. Hear our supplications – our desire for celebration, our longing as we wait, and especially our expressions of pain or doubt. Holy Lord, as we anticipate and wait, help us to do so confident of your steadfast love. We pray for ourselves, and for all who suffer, to find refuge in the shadow of your wing during this season of Advent. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.