

Scripture

Psalm 17

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

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

³ If 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³ Rise up, O LORD, confront them, overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,

¹⁴ from 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.

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

Devotional

This psalm is an interesting bedtime prayer. As oppose to the sweet prayer we teach or were taught to recite as children; “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep...” we find David offering a desperate prayer of protection and revenge and vindication. David is practically begging God to pay attention to his prayer and request for help. Protect me from these evil people who seek to destroy me. But, what if the evil, the callous hearts, the mouths that speak arrogance and the ferocious lions seeking to devour your joy, peace, progress, and faithfulness are coming from within? What if your own mind, your own unforgiving heart, your own fears, your own self-loathing or self-hatred are your biggest enemies? Advent is a time of introspection as we wait in anticipation for the proof of the promise of our Savior. Christ came to save us even from ourselves.

Prayer

Gracious God, I pray that during this Advent season you help make us mindful and aware of the things within that seek to destroy us. Help us to pray just as desperately that you protect us and avenge us from thoughts of self-hatred, callous and bitter hearts, depression, grief, unforgiveness, shame, isolation, stagnation, and all the dark lioness things that often grip your people during the holiday season. I pray that you give to all of us peace and renewed joy and a glimmer of hope during this time. Let us be satisfied with seeing Your likeness for we were all made in Your image and after Your likeness. We wait in anticipation and with expectation and gratitude of what You will do in our lives and in this season. We pray all these things in Your precious Son, Jesus’ name. Amen.