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Scripture

Psalm 53

¹Fools say in their hearts, "There is no God."

They are corrupt, they commit abominable acts;
there is no one who does good.

²God looks down from heaven on humankind

to see if there are any who are wise,
who seek after God.

³They have all fallen away, they are all alike perverse;

there is no one who does good,
no, not one.

⁴Have they no knowledge, those evildoers,
who eat up my people as they eat bread,
and do not call upon God?

⁵There they shall be in great terror,
in terror such as has not been.

For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly;
they will be put to shame, for God has rejected them.

⁶O that deliverance for Israel would come from Zion!

When God restores the fortunes of his people,
Jacob will rejoice; Israel will be glad.

Devotional

Psalm 53 (cf. Psalm 14) presents a dismal picture of humankind: "Fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God'" and "there is no one who does good no, not one." Fools are "corrupt" and "perverse" (vv. 1, 3). They are "practical atheists," living without reckoning with God in any dimension of existence. God does not matter.

But "fools" run a risk—certain jeopardy of God's judgment. They will live "in terror such as has not been. For God will scatter the bones of the ungodly" and "they will be put to shame" (v. 5).

What can change? Help can come from only one source: God. The prayer is for "deliverance" ("salvation")—that "God restores the fortunes of his people" (v. 6).

This need is humankind's greatest—the need for "salvation," deliverance from our sin and from disregard for God. In Advent we anticipate God's deliverer to come: Jesus Christ! In him true help is ours!

Prayer

O God, we live as fools, denying your presence and power. We prefer our own ways, apart from you. O God, deliver us. Save us. Help us. As we anticipate our Savior Jesus Christ this Advent season, make our hearts full of the knowledge of you. May we rejoice! Amen.