



LENTEN DEVOTIONAL MARCH 25, 2023

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 31

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.
Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

6 You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.

7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;

I have become like a broken vessel.
13 For I hear the whispering of many —
terror all around! —
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, “You are my God.”
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.

18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!

20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.

22 I had said in my alarm,
“I am driven far from your sight.”
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Carol Divens Roth '85

Today is March 25. In exactly nine months, it will be Christmas Day. Some church traditions celebrate this day as the Annunciation, when God's messenger, Gabriel, announces to a young woman that she will conceive a child who will be called Son of God. This reflection is being written on the fourth Sunday of Advent, a season to anticipate the Word made flesh coming into our lives. Today is the 32nd day of Lent, a time to ponder the wondrous love of the cross, the empty tomb, and how to live between the already and the not-yet, in the hope that all God's intentions will be completed.

Psalms 31 sings of a powerful faith in a God for all seasons: a rock and a refuge in the lonesome valley when we are called to face down injustice, a hand that reaches out to wipe away the tears of grief and misery that threaten our ability to take one more step, and a steadfastness that sparks the courage to live and love when "NOs" are omnipresent.

I wonder if Mary learned this psalm at her mother's knee; if it might have been her earworm as she listened in astonishment to Gabriel, and if it was this image of God she kept in her heart that inspired her astounding "YES." May we, too, reflect on the ways to enflesh the "YES" of faith in our lives on the Lenten journey.

PRAYER

Holy One, in this sacred season, we seek to deepen our faith in you as rock and refuge, as giver of abundant goodness, and as one who hears. Show us how to live as those created in your image as we live and love and give. Amen.

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