

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 7, 2015

Rebecca DePoe, Senior M.Div. Student at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 40

- 1 I waited patiently for the LORD;
he inclined to me and heard my cry.
- 2 He drew me up from the desolate pit,
out of the miry bog,
and set my feet upon a rock,
making my steps secure.
- 3 He put a new song in my mouth,
a song of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear,
and put their trust in the LORD.
- 4 Happy are those who make
the LORD their trust,
who do not turn to the proud,
to those who go astray after false gods.
- 5 You have multiplied, O LORD my God,
your wondrous deeds and your thoughts toward us;
none can compare with you.
Were I to proclaim and tell of them,
they would be more than can be counted.
- 6 Sacrifice and offering you do not desire,
but you have given me an open ear.
Burnt offering and sin offering
you have not required.
- 7 Then I said, "Here I am;
in the scroll of the book it is written of me.
- 8 I delight to do your will, O my God;
your law is within my heart."
- 9 I have told the glad news of deliverance
in the great congregation;
see, I have not restrained my lips,
as you know, O LORD.
- 10 I have not hidden your saving help within my heart,
I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation;
I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness
from the great congregation.

11 Do not, O LORD, withhold
 your mercy from me;
 let your steadfast love and your faithfulness
 keep me safe forever.
 12 For evils have encompassed me
 without number;
 my iniquities have overtaken me,
 until I cannot see;
 they are more than the hairs of my head,
 and my heart fails me.
 13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me;
 O LORD, make haste to help me.
 14 Let all those be put to shame and confusion
 who seek to snatch away my life;
 let those be turned back and brought to dishonor
 who desire my hurt.
 15 Let those be appalled because of their shame
 who say to me, "Aha, Aha!"
 16 But may all who seek you
 rejoice and be glad in you;
 may those who love your salvation
 say continually, "Great is the LORD!"
 17 As for me, I am poor and needy,
 but the Lord takes thought for me.
 You are my help and my deliverer;
 do not delay, O my God.

DEVOTIONAL

The poem "Yesterday's Pain," by Ann Weems, explains our need for deliverance during Advent:

Some of us walk into Advent
 tethered to our unresolved yesterdays
 the pain still stabbing
 the hurt still throbbing.
 It's not that we don't know better;
 it's just that we can't stand up anymore by ourselves.
 On the way to Bethlehem,
 will you give us a hand?

Amid the hustle and bustle of Advent, it's easy to forget why we need a Savior. We need a Savior because we cannot deliver ourselves from yesterday's pain.

But our deliverance is best embodied in Christian community. The Psalmist writes, "I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; see, I have not restrained my lips . . . I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation."

On your journey to Bethlehem this Advent, I encourage you to reflect on the role Christian community plays in your deliverance from yesterday's pain. Yes, we need a Savior to deliver us from yesterday's pain, but we also need a community of faith to remind us that our identity comes from our deliverance, not from yesterday's pain.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we look with anticipation for the birth of your Son to deliver us from yesterday's pain. We pray this Advent that you would provide us with great congregations to give us a hand when we can't stand up by ourselves anymore. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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