

Devotion for December 6, 2008

Psalm 90

- ¹ Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.
- ² Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
- ³ You turn us back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."
- ⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.
- ⁵ You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;
- ⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.
- ⁷ For we are consumed by your anger;
by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
- ⁸ You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
- ⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.
- ¹⁰ The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.
- ¹¹ Who considers the power of your anger?
Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.
- ¹² So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.
- ¹³ Turn, O LORD! How long?
Have compassion on your servants!
- ¹⁴ Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
- ¹⁵ Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,
and as many years as we have seen evil.
- ¹⁶ Let your work be manifest to your servants,
and your glorious power to their children.
- ¹⁷ Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,
and prosper for us the work of our hands —
O prosper the work of our hands!

Isaiah 4:2-6

²On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel. ³Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, ⁴once the Lord has washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. ⁵Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over its places of assembly a cloud by day and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night. Indeed over all the glory there will be a canopy. ⁶It will serve as a pavilion, a shade by day from the heat, and a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

¹³But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have died. ¹⁵For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. ¹⁶For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air; and so we will be with the Lord forever. ¹⁸Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Luke 21:5-19

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶"As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

⁷They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?"

⁸And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is near!' Do not go after them. ⁹When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately." ¹⁰Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹²"But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

Devotional for December 6

Our Scripture passages for today deal with hope. The Psalmist hopes in the Lord, that He will turn from His anger and once again be a shelter for His people. Isaiah hopes in the day of the Lord when He will cleanse Zion from its stains of blood and will once again make Jerusalem a

refuge. Paul hopes in the death and resurrection of Jesus, that even those who have died have life in Him and a future in the Kingdom. Jesus tells his disciples to have hope when the world is crashing around them for it is at that time that they will proclaim the gospel with power.

Notice that these are not examples of the hope that the world offers. The world hopes for a bright future, for a better tomorrow, brought about by human hands and human goodness. The world puts its hope in education, in the economy, in charismatic leaders. The people in Luke's gospel put their hope in the Temple. The Israelites had put their hope in the strength and wisdom of their own armies and kings. And the early church, using the wisdom of the world, could not find its hope when confronted with the continuing reality of death.

The Christian, however, knows that tomorrow is filled with the same worries, pains, and sorrows that fill today because sin and death will still rule tomorrow. The Christian knows that human leaders, institutions, and man-made things are tainted with sin. Even though these things are good and necessary, we do not put our hope in them, for they have no power to save us. The Temple would fall, Israel would go into exile, and Christians will be persecuted by this generation. Nations will fall, economies will fail, and those on whom we depend will not live up to our expectations; because these things are not Jesus.

No, as Christians, we put our hope in Jesus Christ. He will be our guide through trials and hardships. He is our hope of life to fullest. It is he who will cleanse Mt. Zion. It is he who intercedes for us in our day of trouble. He is our hope and refuge today, tomorrow, and for all time. In this advent season, we remember the waiting and the hoping of ages past. And we too wait and hope for the coming of our Lord. And until that day, we live and work in this world, proclaiming the hope that we have, the real hope, for our hope is founded on the promises of God. And though we too will fail, we will also be lifted up in Christ.

Let us pray,

O Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You have sent your Son for us, that we may have hope. You have sent your Spirit that we may walk through this world with your guidance. You have promised us eternal life in Christ. And for all these things, we thank you. It is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.