

Lenten Devotional March 27, 2021

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. Rebecca McGee '09

"Into your hand I commit your spirit" were the words that I prayed after my 99-year-old maternal grandmother took her last breath. My mother, brother, and I were with her when she died on March 15, 2011. I would say these words again during her funeral service, the first service I ever officiated.

I have quoted these words from Psalm 31:5—the same words which were the last that Jesus spoke from the cross in Luke 23:46—at every funeral and memorial service since my grandmother's funeral. I prayed them brokenheartedly shortly after my father died—once I had stopped keening and wailing with an intensity I didn't think possible.

The Psalms, and in this particular case a personal lament such as Psalm 31, give voice to practically all the emotions we human beings experience, yet sometimes can't articulate. Our afflictions, distress, sorrows, and grief are poured out to our faithful God, who hears them all and gives us shelter and refuge. Blessed be the LORD, who hears our cries of despair and covers us in God's incredible, never-ending steadfast love!

Prayer

Merciful and compassionate God of all creation, we thank you for your care of our whole beings—body, mind and spirit—in both life and death. Help us to continue to grow in our trust of your abundant goodness and unwavering love so that, whatever we encounter, we know in both our heads and our hearts on whom we can depend. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.