

Lenten Devotional March 14, 2023

Scripture

Psalm 25

1 To you, O LORD, I lift up my soul.

*2 O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.*

*3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.*

*4 Make me to know your ways, O LORD;
teach me your paths.*

*5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.*

*6 Be mindful of your mercy, O LORD, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.*

*7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O LORD!*

*8 Good and upright is the LORD;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.*

*9 He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.*

*10 All the paths of the LORD are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.*

*11 For your name's sake, O LORD,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.*

*12 Who are they that fear the LORD?
He will teach them the way that they should choose.*

*13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.*

*14 The friendship of the LORD is for those who fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.*

*15 My eyes are ever toward the LORD,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.*

*16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.*

*17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.*

*18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.*

*19 Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
20 O guard my life, and deliver me;
do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.
21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.*

*22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.*

Devotion

The Rev. Jacob Judy '19

What I see as the fundamental ask in Psalm 25 is for God to change the circumstances of the psalmist's situation. I assume many people would sympathize with the psalmist's request. But even when change is sought, many individuals still experience elevated anxiety levels, often leading to avoidance of the situation altogether. Before 2015 I had not sat in a classroom, listened to an academic lecture, or taken notes for nine years. Honestly, I was not particularly good at doing any of those things. The last time I was enrolled in a four-year academic program, it took me five years to complete.

Nonetheless, I sat in Dr. Tappy's Old Testament class—my first class in nine years—and let me say I had more than a few doubts about how I would do this time around. Have you ever felt as if there was a continuously wide and infinitely deep chasm between where you are in life and where you desire to be, without any discernable way to get across? That is the exact feeling I had in the pit of my stomach when I looked at the chalkboard and saw several lines of text written in Hebrew.

Seminary proved to be a lesson in understanding that the most effective way to change circumstances is by allowing God to change the person in the midst of them. Just as the psalmist cried out for God to help change, what seemed to be, a desperate situation, my cry to God during those four years in the master of divinity program was the same. I wondered whether God had meant to call me or if I was just supposed to relay that message to someone else. Even though I expected change would happen, I did not expect that the thing that would change so drastically would be me. Psalm 25:4-5 states, "Make me to know your ways, O LORD; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long." If I had fought the circumstances as I intended to, I am sure my doubts and fears would have overtaken me. If I had tried to create my own route instead of waiting on God to reveal the right path, I would never have had a chance to experience the life waiting for me on the other side of that chasm.

Prayer

Merciful and wise God, thank you for the life-changing gift of your son, Jesus the Christ. Help me see all others in light of Christ's love displayed on the cross for me. Let me receive that mercy and grace as an invitation to be better in chaotic circumstances according to your plans and not my own. I pray these things in the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen.