

Lenten Devotional February 28, 2023

Scripture

Psalm 34

*1 I will bless the LORD at all times;
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.
2 My soul makes its boast in the LORD;
let the humble hear and be glad.
3 O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.
4 I sought the LORD, and he answered me,
and delivered me from all my fears.
5 Look to him, and be radiant;
so your faces shall never be ashamed.
6 This poor soul cried, and was heard by the LORD,
and was saved from every trouble.
7 The angel of the LORD encamps
around those who fear him, and delivers them.
8 O taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are those who take refuge in him.
9 O fear the LORD, you his holy ones,
for those who fear him have no want.
10 The young lions suffer want and hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*

*11 Come, O children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.
12 Which of you desires life,
and covets many days to enjoy good?
13 Keep your tongue from evil,
and your lips from speaking deceit.
14 Depart from evil, and do good;
seek peace, and pursue it.*

*15 The eyes of the LORD are on the righteous,
and his ears are open to their cry.
16 The face of the LORD is against evildoers,
to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.
17 When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears,
and rescues them from all their troubles.
18 The LORD is near to the brokenhearted,
and saves the crushed in spirit.*

*19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous,
but the LORD rescues them from them all.
20 He keeps all their bones;
not one of them will be broken.*

*21 Evil brings death to the wicked,
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.
22 The LORD redeems the life of his servants;
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.*

Devotional

The Rev. Connie Bennett Hoeke '94

This psalm calls us to continually bring praises before the Lord. God is near to us and sees us as beloved children. Even when things are going wrong, or we are struggling or brokenhearted, God surrounds us and loves us through these times. However, God also desires our praises and gratitude. When we are alone with God or when we gather as a community of faith, we are to praise God continually and bless God's holy name. God wants our desire and our longing to be for God and not for material things.

God does exhibit anger when we love other things more than God. He was angered by the Israelites in the wilderness when they grumbled and complained to Moses because the wilderness was not a comfortable place for them to be. They wanted to return to captivity and Egypt because they did not trust God to provide for their needs.

Jesus drove out the money changers from the Temple because it was not being used to praise God. He made a promise at that time that he would "raise this Temple in 3 days" (John 2:19). He was referring to his body and the resurrection that would come. Through Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, God was praised and glorified and we were given eternal life and forgiveness. We will stray from God but we are loved deeply. We are called to repent. God will walk with us through difficult times and they will not overcome us. Let us praise God and give ourselves to God that we may glorify God in all that we say or do and with all that we are!

Prayer

Almighty and most merciful God, We love you and offer praise to you because you are God. We confess that we often turn away from you, but we know of your forgiveness and love. Thank you for meeting our needs and loving us as we are. We are filled with gratitude for the gift of your son, Jesus, and the gift of what his resurrection means. May we forever bless your name and bask in your love. Guide us to follow your will. Amen.