

Advent Devotional November 30, 2020

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

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"Do not delay, O my God" (v. 17). With a sense of urgency and trust, the psalmist petitions the Lord. This same immediacy drives our souls to sing Advent hymns such as "Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus" and "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." These sweet melodies carry lyrics of longing and desperation, and with them we join all the saints across time and miles in crying out, "Do not delay, O my God."

As we enter this season of waiting, may we be encouraged to cry out to God with this kind of candor. We can be this direct with God, who knows the chaos of our hearts and of our world, for in Psalm 40 we are promised God's listening ear—an ear that does not turn from our cries and frustration. "He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God" (v. 3).

And so we wait, and while we ask God not to tarry, we give God our whole selves in worship! We raise our voices in adoration because God is faithful in raising us up from the pit and giving us stability. The psalms model for us patterns of praise even in times of trouble and uncertainty. May we give honor to the God who beckons us near, whose love knows no bounds.

Our God invites us to postures of both urgent longing and exuberant praise. God welcomes our exhaustion and our gratitude. Let Psalm 40 be our prayer this Advent as it gives voice to the tensions we feel as we approach this season of expectation.

Prayer

Lord, do not delay your coming. We need you in our midst to change our hearts and our world. We praise you, our God of strength and tender care, who listens to our longings with love. Draw us near to yourself as we wait. Amen.