

Advent Devotional December 1, 2020

Scriptures

Psalm 33

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous. Praise befits the upright. 2 Praise the LORD with the lyre; make melody to him with the harp of ten strings. 3 Sing to him a new song; play skillfully on the strings, with loud shouts. 4 For the word of the LORD is upright, and all his work is done in faithfulness. 5 He loves righteousness and justice; the earth is full of the steadfast love of the LORD. 6 By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and all their host by the breath of his mouth. 7 He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle; he put the deeps in storehouses. 8 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him. 9 For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. 10 The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. 11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. 12 Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people whom he has chosen as his heritage. 13 The LORD looks down from heaven; he sees all humankind. 14 From where he sits enthroned he watches all the inhabitants of the earth—15 he who fashions the hearts of them all, and observes all their deeds. 16 A king is not saved by his great army; a warrior is not delivered by his great strength. 17 The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save. 18 Truly the eye of the LORD is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love, 19 to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. 20 Our soul waits for the LORD; he is our help and shield. 21 Our heart is glad in him, because we trust in his holy name. 22 Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Psalm 146

1 Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul! 2 I will praise the LORD as long as I live; I will sing praises to my God all my life long. 3 Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals, in whom there is no help. 4 When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish. 5 Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God, 6 who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever; 7 who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The LORD sets the prisoners free; 8 the LORD opens the eyes of the blind. The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down; the LORD loves the righteous. 9 The LORD watches over the strangers; he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. 10 The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, for all generations. Praise the LORD!

Devotional

The Rev. Jeffrey Conn '00

Psalm 33 celebrates the power of God as our creator and redeemer: “By the word of the LORD the heavens were made and all their host by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea as in a bottle” (vv. 6-7a). Since God created these vast arrays of matter and energy, surely he can help us with our problems.

“The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing” (v. 10a), yet “the counsel of the LORD stands forever” (v. 11a). There is no end of disagreement about how to handle the affairs of state. How can we align ourselves with God’s counsel? “Happy is the nation whose God is the LORD” (v. 12a).

In his letter to the Philippians, Paul writes, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6-7). When we do this, “our heart is glad in him because we trust in his holy name” (Ps. 33:21).

In Psalm 146 the writer says, “Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals in whom there is no help. When their breath departs they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish” (vv. 3-4). On whom can we depend? “Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD their God . . . who keeps faith forever; who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry” (vv. 5, 7a).

Jesus told a parable about a “judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people” yet helped a widow: “‘I will grant her justice so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.’ And the Lord said ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you he will quickly grant justice to them,’” (Luke 18:2, 5-7). The writer of Psalm 146 reminds us that “The LORD will reign forever”—so we should “Praise the LORD!” (v. 10).

Prayer

Thank you, God, that your power to save is not limited by our weakness. Your love for us is not limited by our sinfulness. Hear the cries of our heart and grant us justice. May we find your presence as close as our breath and the ground beneath our feet. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.