

Advent Devotional December 18, 2021

Scripture

Psalm 72

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
- ² May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice.
- ³ May the mountains yield prosperity for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ May he defend the cause of the poor of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor.
- ⁵ May he live while the sun endures,
and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.
- ⁶ May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass,
like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
- ⁸ May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.
- ⁹ May his foes bow down before him,
and his enemies lick the dust.
- ¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles
render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba and Seba
bring gifts.
- ¹¹ May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service.
- ¹² For he delivers the needy when they call,
the poor and those who have no helper.
- ¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy.
- ¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life;
and precious is their blood in his sight.
- ¹⁵ Long may he live!
May gold of Sheba be given to him.
May prayer be made for him continually,
and blessings invoked for him all day long.
- ¹⁶ May there be abundance of grain in the land;
may it wave on the tops of the mountains;
may its fruit be like Lebanon;
and may people blossom in the cities
like the grass of the field.
- ¹⁷ May his name endure forever,
his fame continue as long as the sun.

*May all nations be blessed in him;
may they pronounce him happy.*

¹⁸ *Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
who alone does wondrous things.*

¹⁹ *Blessed be his glorious name forever;
may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen.*

²⁰*The prayers of David son of Jesse are ended.*

Devotional

The Rev. Paula Cooper '10/'13

As I write this reflection, there's a heaviness on my heart; perhaps on yours as well. The factors causing this heaviness have tirelessly held residence in my life for so very long. Yet it appears that many people have become anesthetized to them, probably because these things don't affect all of us. I'm puzzled by the way some can just ignore the police killings happening in our society. The racial injustices and systemic structures that are perpetuating violence and brutality against our fellow Christian siblings, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color.

As anesthetized people, are we so possessed with unsympathetic and impenetrable hearts, minds, ears, and eyes that we ignore these issues and accept the status quo? Is this how we love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength? Is this how we love our neighbors?

Is this "stinking thinking" by some Christians produced by faith, or has it trickled down from those who possess wealth or have powerful leadership positions? I learned in 2014, when Michael Brown was killed in Ferguson, Mo., that one driver of racism is "privilege and power." Some of us have used our privilege and power to lord it over "the least of these," marginalized people, to keep them in their less-powerful, less-privileged places. And at the very same time, we demonstrate that we think their lives don't matter! Shame on us!

All lives matter, true, but the lives of Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color matter particularly to God, because they are among "the least of these" who have been oppressed by those with privilege and power. When Jesus comes again, how will he find Christians treating one another? Will he find us acting out of our privilege and power? Will we, especially those in leadership positions, be humbly transformed and possess the justice of God that the psalmist prays for in Psalm 72?

My hope is that all who are in leadership positions will use their privilege and power to humbly observe verses 2-4. As verse 7 says, may peace abound for all under their leadership. May these leaders hear the calls of our needy siblings and respond as specified in verses 12-14. As these transformations and righteous actions are evident in their leadership, may they be blessed according to verses 15-17.

Prayer

Gracious Lord, with heavy hearts we pray that the season of Advent and Jesus' return will find leaders who live by the words of Psalm 72. We ask that those in leadership positions, who possess privilege and power, would work for the good of all people. As this happens, help us to remember to give you, Lord God, all of the glory and praise. Amen.