

Lenten Devotional March 23, 2018

Scripture

Psalm 22

- ¹My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
- ²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.
- ³Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- ⁴In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- ⁵To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
- ⁶But I am a worm, and not human;
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
- ⁷All who see me mock at me;
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
- ⁸“Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver —
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!”
- ⁹Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother’s breast.
- ¹⁰On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
- ¹¹Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help.
- ¹²Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- ¹³they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- ¹⁴I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
- ¹⁵my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- ¹⁶For dogs are all around me;
a company of evildoers encircles me.
My hands and feet have shriveled;
- ¹⁷I can count all my bones.
They stare and gloat over me;
- ¹⁸they divide my clothes among themselves,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- ¹⁹But you, O LORD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
- ²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword,

life from the power of the dog!
²¹Save me from the mouth of the lion!
From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
²²I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
²³You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
²⁴For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.
²⁵From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!
²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.
²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.
²⁹To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
and I shall live for him.
³⁰Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord,
³¹and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying that he has done it.

Devotional

The Rev. B. De Neice Welch '04, Pastor, Bidwell Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, Pa. / Theological Reflections on Ministry Course Discussion Leader

We often think of prayer as an act of faith initiated by us. We seek the Lord with all our hearts in times of great need, in times of devotional meditation, and in times of thanksgiving. We are often taught to strengthen our spiritual discipline through the practice of prayer. Since we believe that we initiate the act, we struggle with words: we struggle with eloquence, and we struggle with articulation, whether we are praying privately or publicly. But as we turn our attention to the depth of the meaning of Lent, we should remember that prayer is an act of the heart where God is the constant observer. God calls us to prayer and then “words” our mouths, because God gives speech to mortals. God will teach us as God reads our hearts and understands what mere words cannot possibly capture. It is never our initiation that meets God in “the deep,” where only deep calls. It is always God who summons us by the Spirit to answer the longing of our hearts. Our public prayers should not be a function of the mind, wit, or language without being connected to our hearts that long for the Divine. Let God guide your prayers and give you speech this Lenten season.

Prayer

Holy One, We are ever in your mind and you are ever present in our lives. Word our mouths and give us speech so that we might thank you, praise you, adore you in our private time and in our public lives. Lead us to the place where the cross is overcome by the empty tomb so that we might know that our eloquence will never match your power. Amen.