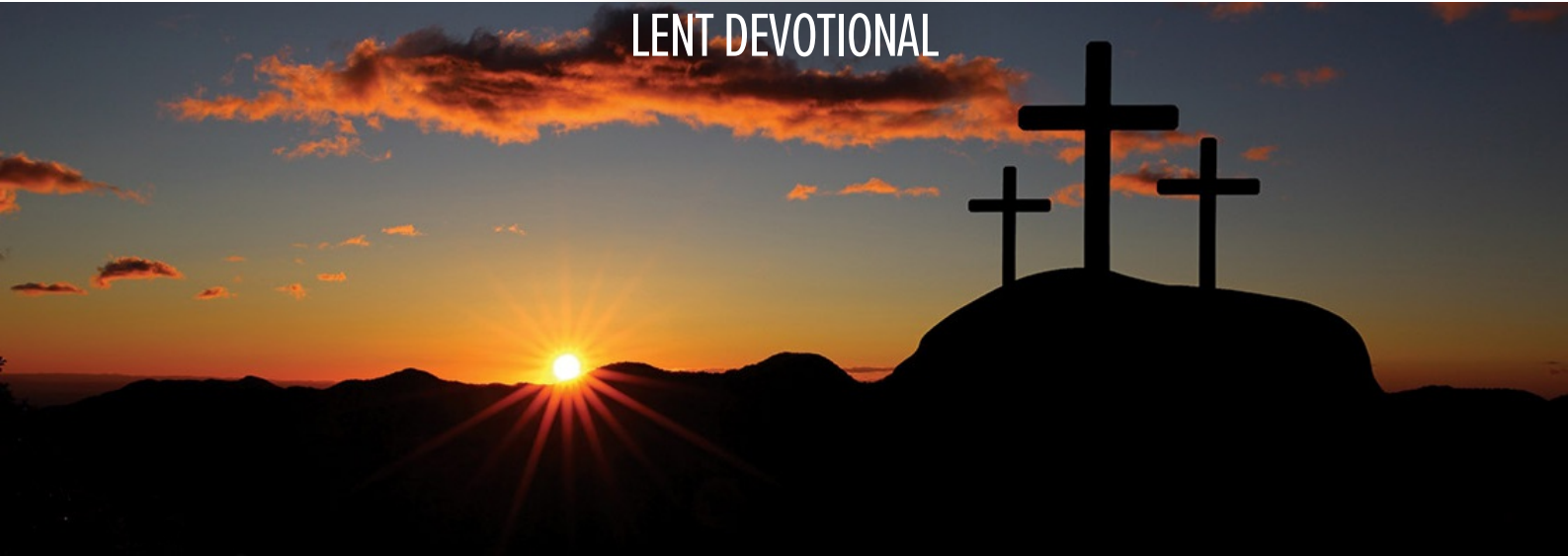


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SCRIPTURE

Psalm 31

1 In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;

in your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.

6 You hate those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the LORD.

7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;

you have taken heed of my adversities,
8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

9 Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;
my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.

12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.

13 For I hear the whispering of many —
terror all around! —
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O LORD;
I say, "You are my God."

15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.

16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.

17 Do not let me be put to shame, O LORD,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.

18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!

20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the LORD,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.

22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far from your sight."
But you heard my supplications
when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the LORD, all you his saints.
The LORD preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the LORD.

DEVOTIONAL

Dr. Franklin Tanner Capps, Director of the Miller Summer Youth Institute

There is an important piece of advice in wilderness training that goes like this: if you're ever lost in the forest, find running water and follow it downhill. The idea is that if you do this then, hopefully, you'll come to some sort of structure—a dam, culvert, or road crossing that might guide you to help.

But what happens when you hear no running water, when everywhere you turn, things look unfamiliar? The hard swallow. Shortness of breath. The dizziness that comes with the feeling of being utterly alone. Do you move? Or do you stay put and wait on help that may never come?

The words of Psalm 31 roar with dread and with the angst of desolation, like being lost in the wilderness with no clear path. In the pain of solitude that gives way to disorientation, the psalmist opens with a cry: "In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust!" That which was familiar has

become strange and friends have become enemies. There is no solace in the solitude, only grief.

Many people have recently experienced something of the turmoil that leaks from the psalmist's mind and heart. We've witnessed incredible material loss, the decay of social relationships, and failed friendships resulting in profound isolation. The emotions that follow are familiar. Psalm 31 sets them out in excruciating detail.

But after darkness, light. "I will rejoice in your steadfast love," comes the refrain. "Let your face shine upon me" is the hopeful petition, even as the psalmist declares, "Blessed be the LORD, for the LORD has wondrously shown steadfast love to me."

These words remind us that we are accepted by the one whom the psalmist calls Lord and God, the one who "hears our supplications" amid our pain. To pray Psalm 31 is to hope, and to hope is to believe that God is for us, not against us. And in this there is great comfort, like running water in the wilderness.

PRAYER

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the words of Psalm 31 that affirm us in our distress and in our sadness. We ask for deliverance from despair, that we would take heart, knowing that you are indeed our rock and our fortress. Amen.

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