

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 14, 2019

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 80

1 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
you who lead Joseph like a flock!
You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth
2 before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh.
Stir up your might,
and come to save us!
3 Restore us, O God;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
4 O Lord God of hosts,
how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?

5 You have fed them with the bread of tears,
and given them tears to drink in full measure.
6 You make us the scorn of our neighbors;
our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Restore us, O God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.
8 You brought a vine out of Egypt;
you drove out the nations and planted it.
9 You cleared the ground for it;
it took deep root and filled the land.
10 The mountains were covered with its shade,
the mighty cedars with its branches;
11 it sent out its branches to the sea,
and its shoots to the River.
12 Why then have you broken down its walls,
so that all who pass along the way pluck its fruit?
13 The boar from the forest ravages it,
and all that move in the field feed on it.
14 Turn again, O God of hosts;
look down from heaven, and see;
have regard for this vine,
15 the stock that your right hand planted.
16 They have burned it with fire, they have cut it down;
may they perish at the rebuke of your countenance.
17 But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand,
the one whom you made strong for yourself.
18 Then we will never turn back from you;
give us life, and we will call on your name.
19 Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;
let your face shine, that we may be saved.

DEVOTIONAL

The Rev. Nathan W. Carlson '11

Within this Psalm, we find imagery that provides theological depth for our Christian faith. From the psalm's opening with the image of a shepherd and its calling on God for the restoration of Israel—not only the restoration of a people but also of a “vine” out of Egypt—we clearly see contained here in messianic imagery associated with Jesus. The great Shepherd, Redeemer, and Restorer of life in this passage understands the trials of the day-to-day living we face.

During the season of Advent, each loss, each pain, and each sorrow we experience feels weightier. An unexpected illness, death, betrayal, or bill introduces that much more unease to our souls. The God described in Psalm 80 has seen it all before—on both a personal and a national scale.

When the vine from Egypt was “broken down,” “plucked,” and “ravaged,” the psalmist turned for revival to the God of hope. This passage does not end in defeat, but instead in new life, as the God of hosts restores the people of God. Psalm 80 reassures us that whatever “scorn” we face, “tears” we shed, and rebuke we bear, our God has gone with us through all of it.

PRAYER

Redeemer and Restorer of life, before we know what we need, you are at work in our lives. During this Advent season, when trials and pains may feel particularly acute, be with us to guide and lead us through these valleys. As you restore us to life, may we remember to praise your name continually.

Amen.

ABOUT PITTSBURGH THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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