

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL DECEMBER 20, 2013

The Rev. Steven Werth '09, Pastor, Crooked Creek United Presbyterian Church, Ford City, Pa.

SCRIPTURE

PSALM 102

- 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD;
let my cry come to you.
- 2 Do not hide your face from me
in the day of my distress.
Incline your ear to me;
answer me speedily in the day when I call.
- 3 For my days pass away like smoke,
and my bones burn like a furnace.
- 4 My heart is stricken and withered like grass;
I am too wasted to eat my bread.
- 5 Because of my loud groaning
my bones cling to my skin.
- 6 I am like an owl of the wilderness,
like a little owl of the waste places.
- 7 I lie awake;
I am like a lonely bird on the housetop.
- 8 All day long my enemies taunt me;
those who deride me use my name for a
curse.
- 9 For I eat ashes like bread,
and mingle tears with my drink,
- 10 because of your indignation and anger;
for you have lifted me up and thrown me
aside.
- 11 My days are like an evening shadow;
I wither away like grass.
- 12 But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever;
your name endures to all generations.
- 13 You will rise up and have compassion on Zion,
for it is time to favor it;
the appointed time has come.
- 14 For your servants hold its stones dear,
and have pity on its dust.
- 15 The nations will fear the name of the LORD,
and all the kings of the earth your glory.
- 16 For the LORD will build up Zion;
he will appear in his glory.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute,
and will not despise their prayer.

18 Let this be recorded for a generation to come,
so that a people yet unborn may praise the
LORD:

19 that he looked down from his holy height,
from heaven the LORD looked at the earth,
20 to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were doomed to die;
21 so that the name of the LORD may be declared
in Zion,
and his praise in Jerusalem,
22 when peoples gather together,
and kingdoms, to worship the LORD.

23 He has broken my strength in midcourse;
he has shortened my days.

24 "O my God," I say, "do not take me away
at the mid-point of my life,
you whose years endure
throughout all generations."

25 Long ago you laid the foundation of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

26 They will perish, but you endure;
they will all wear out like a garment.
You change them like clothing, and they pass
away;

27 but you are the same, and your years have
no end.

28 The children of your servants shall live secure;
their offspring shall be established in your
presence.

DEVOTIONAL

One of my most vivid memories of childhood is stepping outside in the early evening one December and finding the world in pitch darkness. I can't remember why I found it so shocking, or even where we had been. But I very distinctly remember stepping off the curb, looking up, and being in complete disbelief at the dense darkness of a moonless night. I've always found it strange that the things that we sometimes recall most clearly aren't the monumental moments of life, but moments of still, silent, disbelief. It's in those moments that the words of the psalmist speak into our lives. "Hear my prayer, O Lord; let my cry come to you." And we wait. We wait with patience and we wait with hope to know and to see the presence of God with us. Still, silent, nights give way to vibrant new mornings. Still, silent, disbelief gives way to the clear presence of God who has heard us, and has set us free to new life in this moment.

PRAYER

God of joy, in the stillness of this morning open our eyes to see your presence here. We know that we are no longer prisoners, but you have set us free to new life. As the long, dark nights break and give way to longer days and new mornings, Lord, make us instruments of your mercy. Help us to use each day and each morning to proclaim boldly that your love, your justice, and your presence are in this place. Amen.

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