

Lent Devotional March 11, 2025

Scripture

Psalms 25; 91

Psalm 25

*1 To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.
2 O my God, in you I trust;
do not let me be put to shame;
do not let my enemies exult over me.
3 Do not let those who wait for you be put to shame;
let them be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.
4 Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
5 Lead me in your truth, and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all day long.
6 Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love,
for they have been from of old.
7 Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions;
according to your steadfast love remember me,
for your goodness' sake, O Lord!
8 Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.
9 He leads the humble in what is right,
and teaches the humble his way.
10 All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his decrees.
11 For your name's sake, O Lord,
pardon my guilt, for it is great.
12 Who are they that fear the Lord?
He will teach them the way that they should choose.
13 They will abide in prosperity,
and their children shall possess the land.
14 The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him,
and he makes his covenant known to them.
15 My eyes are ever toward the Lord,
for he will pluck my feet out of the net.
16 Turn to me and be gracious to me,
for I am lonely and afflicted.
17 Relieve the troubles of my heart,
and bring me out of my distress.
18 Consider my affliction and my trouble,
and forgive all my sins.
19 Consider how many are my foes,
and with what violent hatred they hate me.
20 O guard my life, and deliver me;*

do not let me be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

*21 May integrity and uprightness preserve me,
for I wait for you.*

*22 Redeem Israel, O God,
out of all its troubles.*

Psalm 91

*1 You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,*

*2 will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;
my God, in whom I trust."*

*3 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler
and from the deadly pestilence;*

*4 he will cover you with his pinions,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.*

*5 You will not fear the terror of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,*

*6 or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.*

*7 A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right hand,
but it will not come near you.*

*8 You will only look with your eyes
and see the punishment of the wicked.*

*9 Because you have made the Lord your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling place,*

*10 no evil shall befall you,
no scourge come near your tent.*

*11 For he will command his angels concerning you
to guard you in all your ways.*

*12 On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.*

*13 You will tread on the lion and the adder,
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.*

*14 Those who love me, I will deliver;
I will protect those who know my name.*

*15 When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,*

I will rescue them and honor them.

*16 With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.*

Devotion

The Rev. Kristen Renee Barner '97

The question of theodicy comes up regularly for me. I had a spinal stroke in 2017. I'm partially paralyzed. Life is tricky.

People often presume: "You must be angry with God!" To all of this, I say, "I am not angry with God. All kinds of people are subject to a hard time. I am not excluded from this."

They ask, "Why did this terrible thing happen to a good person?" To this, I say, "You presume I am good. I am as human, as fragile, as faulty as the next person. (I just really hope God isn't keeping score.)"

People offer, "I shall pray for your recovery." To all of this, I say, "I am deeply grateful. I will take all the good will that is offered. But I don't think science and biology work quite that way."

My Dad, as retired PC(USA) minister, asked me once, "What does it mean to you when people say they are praying for you?"

I explained how the history of applause comes from the ancient Greek theater—or so I've been told. The audience wanted to reach out and touch the performers, but this was impossible. Instead, they reached their hands together and clapped. Prayer felt to me like clapping. It was a way for people to reach out, to touch God, to touch me, to touch whatever was the subject of their prayer. Knowing that the intent was to connect with me, I was strengthened, empowered, buoyed. The action of prayer didn't/doesn't necessarily feel like miracle-making, but rather, Community. A reminder to me that we all, regardless of how we worship, share the same God, the only God. Therefore, we are connected.

My hunch, from the community that we live in, the global community of citizens of this world, we seek the same things: comfort, forgiveness, grace, strength, courage, support, community, love, kindness.

Prayer

O God of All of Us, whatever my failures—whatever our failures—let us applaud one another, clapping and praying for one another, recognizing that we are merely creatures inhabiting one space. For better or worse. God forgive us. May we forgive one another. May we strive to do better for ourselves and for one another. Let it be so. Amen.