

Advent Devotional December 4, 2019

Scripture

Psalm 50

- 1 The mighty one, God the LORD,
speaks and summons the earth
from the rising of the sun to its setting.*
- 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God shines forth.*
- 3 Our God comes and does not keep silence,
before him is a devouring fire,
and a mighty tempest all around him.*
- 4 He calls to the heavens above
and to the earth, that he may judge his people:*
- 5 "Gather to me my faithful ones,
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!"*
- 6 The heavens declare his righteousness,
for God himself is judge.*
- 7 "Hear, O my people, and I will speak,
O Israel, I will testify against you.
I am God, your God.*
- 8 Not for your sacrifices do I rebuke you;
your burnt offerings are continually before me.*
- 9 I will not accept a bull from your house,
or goats from your folds.*
- 10 For every wild animal of the forest is mine,
the cattle on a thousand hills.*
- 11 I know all the birds of the air,
and all that moves in the field is mine.*
- 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell you,
for the world and all that is in it is mine.*
- 13 Do I eat the flesh of bulls,
or drink the blood of goats?*
- 14 Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving,
and pay your vows to the Most High.*
- 15 Call on me in the day of trouble;
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."*
- 16 But to the wicked God says:
"What right have you to recite my statutes,
or take my covenant on your lips?*
- 17 For you hate discipline,
and you cast my words behind you.*
- 18 You make friends with a thief when you see one,
and you keep company with adulterers.*
- 19 You give your mouth free rein for evil,
and your tongue frames deceit.*
- 20 You sit and speak against your kin;
you slander your own mother's child.*
- 21 These things you have done and I have been silent;*

*you thought that I was one just like yourself.
But now I rebuke you, and lay the charge before you.
22 "Mark this, then, you who forget God,
or I will tear you apart, and there will be no one to deliver.
23 Those who bring thanksgiving as their sacrifice honor me;
to those who go the right way
I will show the salvation of God."*

Devotional

The Rev. Catherine Mallick Gillis '90

In Psalm 50 I see the Temple of Zion—God's beacon of light shining for all to see. The Temple is high and therefore receives the light of the sun in the morning, as well as the evening's setting sun. Day and night, God is a welcoming beacon of hope for all who go *up* to worship God. For God's presence is in his Temple.

Like the ancient Hebrews, today God judges his people, but not like the Gentiles, who do not know God because they are not in a covenantal relationship. God judges his people—judges *us*—because we hate his discipline. Judgment comes upon God's people who have ignored his teaching and whose lives do not glorify God. The psalmist specifically mentions that it is our mouths which condemn us; it is our own deceit and slander that diminishes the God who demands single-minded obedience.

Now we are rebuked because we have forsaken the sacrifice of thanksgiving for falsehoods. At this time of preparation, as *always*, we are to choose the way of thanksgiving. We are to call out to God during these days of trouble. In each one of our own hearts, we are to turn away from disobedience and trust God to deliver us to his goodness. We are to walk God's pathway so as to give all glory to God—not to humans, not to institutions, but only to God, who alone is worthy of praise.

Prayer

O God, as I prepare to celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus, remove all falsehood from my heart. Fill me by your mercy with a heart of truth and thankfulness. Then your light will shine, day and night, for all to see, so that all the world will acknowledge your truth and glory by the witness of your eternal truth and light in the lives of your covenantal people. In the name of Jesus, our Savior, amen.