

Sunday 7 June 2020

## Songs from the heart: Psalm 31

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*Loving God, as I draw near to you, draw near to me. As I seek your face, speak to me. As I confess my faults and failings, cleanse me through the saving love of Christ. As I am reminded of all you have done for me, challenge me to make my response. As I recognise my lack of vision and courage, inspire me through your Holy Spirit.*

I rejoice in the quiet security of God's powerful arms and praise him in the words of Psalm 117.

- <sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD, all you nations!  
Extol him, all you peoples!
- <sup>2</sup> For great is his steadfast love toward us,  
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.  
Praise the LORD!

The praise of Psalm 117 is to be shouted from the rooftops for all to hear. Psalm 31, while no less confident in God's love and power, is a quiet, personal reflection.

- <sup>1</sup> In you, O LORD, I seek refuge;  
do not let me ever be put to shame;  
in your righteousness deliver me.
- <sup>2</sup> Incline your ear to me;  
rescue me speedily.  
Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a strong fortress to save me.
- <sup>3</sup> You are indeed my rock and my fortress;  
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,
- <sup>4</sup> take me out of the net that is hidden for me,  
for you are my refuge.
- <sup>5</sup> Into your hand I commit my spirit;  
you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.
- <sup>15</sup> My times are in your hand;  
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
- <sup>16</sup> Let your face shine upon your servant;  
save me in your steadfast love.

Psalm 31:15f (NRSV)

This Psalm is remembered because it contains Jesus' dying words: "Into your hand I commit my spirit." (Luke 23:46) As is often the case, quoting a small section brings to mind the whole passage. Taken in isolation, these words on Jesus' lips might be simple resignation, but taken as a whole they speak of confidence in a loving, just and above all, faithful God.

If Jesus, in the face of death, can put his trust in God, then I, as his follower, ought at least to be willing to do the same. But like the Psalmist himself, I have no right to expect God to hear and answer. My confidence rests not on any merit of mine, but on God's steadfast love.

In these strange times I want my trust to remain in my God, my rock, my refuge, my strong fortress. This is how he has consistently revealed himself in the past. Why would I believe he has changed and will no longer be true to himself? So I hold on, confident in him alone, and say, "It is up to you, God, what becomes of me, and I am willing to have it so."

*Pause and pray*

The truth of God's faithfulness to me is counter-balanced by the question of my faithfulness to him. It is easy to say, "I believe!" but it is much harder to do so. But I am not without hope or help. If my desire is to know and live the truth of Psalm 31, then it is God's desire also, and so he sends help.

Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26f)

*Pause and pray*

*As I go from here, may God go with me. May he shine a light on my path, and lead me into a deeper friendship with himself, so that I might better know his heart, and feel my own being renewed. Amen.*