

# From the Depths of My Soul

Thomas Robinson, *Journeys Toward God in the Psalms* 1, August 17, 2014

## *Psalm 22:1-31*

*To the choirmaster:*

*according to "The Doe of the Dawn."*

*A Psalm of (to) David.*

### **A Cry to God**

<sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mt 27:46)

Why are you so far from saving me,  
from the words of my groaning?

<sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,  
and by night, but I find no rest.

### **Israel's Trust and Praise**

<sup>3</sup> Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

<sup>4</sup> In you our fathers trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.

<sup>5</sup> To you they cried and were rescued;  
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

### **The Mockery of Failed Trust**

<sup>6</sup> But I am a worm and not a man,  
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

<sup>7</sup> All who see me mock me;  
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; (Mt 27:39)

<sup>8</sup> "He trusts in the LORD (Yahweh); let him deliver him;  
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!" (Mt 27:43)

### **God Built My Trust like a Midwife**

<sup>9</sup> Yet you are he who took me from the womb;  
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.

<sup>10</sup> On you was I cast from my birth,  
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.

### **Overwhelmed by Troubles – I Need You!**

<sup>11</sup> Be not far from me, for trouble is near,  
and there is none to help.

<sup>12</sup> Many bulls encompass me;  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;

<sup>13</sup> they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.

<sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;

<sup>15</sup> my strength is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.

### **I'm Near Death from Enemies, Sickness, Troubles**

<sup>16</sup> For dogs encompass me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me;  
they have pierced my hands and feet –

<sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones –  
they stare and gloat over me; (Mt 27:36)

<sup>18</sup> they divide my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots. (Mt 27:35)

### **A Cry for God's Deliverance**

<sup>19</sup> But you, O LORD (Yahweh), do not be far off!  
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!

<sup>20</sup> Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my precious life from the power of the dog!

<sup>21</sup> Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

### **Praising God in the Assembly of Israel**

<sup>22</sup> I will tell of your name to my brothers;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:

<sup>23</sup> You who fear the LORD (Yahweh), praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,  
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

<sup>24</sup> For he has not despised or abhorred  
the affliction of the afflicted,  
and he has not hidden his face from him,  
but has heard, when he cried to him.

<sup>25</sup> From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.

<sup>26</sup> The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the LORD (Yahweh)!  
May your hearts live forever!

### **All the Nations Worship Yahweh**

<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD (Yahweh),  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you.

<sup>28</sup> For kingship belongs to the LORD (Yahweh),  
and he rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup> All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
even the one who could not keep himself alive.

<sup>30</sup> Posterity shall serve him;  
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;

<sup>31</sup> they shall come and proclaim his righteousness  
to a people yet unborn, that he has done it.

## *Mark 15:34*

<sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

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## **Poetry, Prayer, Song, Worship, Weeping, Praise**

We begin today exploring the Psalms leading toward our Congregational Retreat. Psalms is the longest book of the Bible (5 hr.), an anthology of Hebrew poetry, the hymnal of ancient Israel. Psalms is a powerful resource of meditation, passion, theological reflection, personal faith.

Orientation: Five Books (1-41, 42-72, 73-89, 90-106, 107-150) that vary in emphasis from lament to praise. The collection of Psalms grew over time. The earliest psalms, Ex 15 (Red Sea), Judg 5 (Deborah), are not in the book but in narrative (2 Sam 22 = Ps 18). It's impossible to get dates or settings for most psalms. They became part of scripture in the first century (Lk 24:44)

Many have notes at the beginning that are not part of the original poetry, but relate to their use in the temple, to tunes, to instruments, and their association with an early poet, especially David, Asaph, or Korah. “To David” – dedicated to / associated with / by David (2 Sam 23:1). Historical notes may reflect ancient tradition or may be meditation aids: “Think about this.”

The psalms are poetry. Vary in length from 2v (117) to 176v (119). They mark poetic structure differently from English poetry. “Parallelism”: repetition, reversal, or extension of an image. Some use acrostic structure following the Hebrew alphabet (25, 34, 111, 112, 119, 145).

All use rich imagery, metaphor, allusive language. Sometimes the imagery is strange to us.

## **Psalms through the Lens of Jesus**

The psalms are both close to us and distant. They are very human, personal, passionate. We easily recognize and identify with a fellow worshiper, sufferer, questioner. This makes them wonderful.

In the great drama of the Biblical story, the psalms come from different acts, all before the great climax of Jesus. There is a strong sense of incompleteness, waiting, longing, that we share but from a different point of view. Striking themes of Jesus are only hinted at or are missing (love of enemies, forgiving one who's wronged you). But Jesus built on the psalms, a passionate relation with God, questions, insights. His last words are from Ps 22:1 and Ps 31:5 (Lk 23:46).

Psalms are human words and God's Word. God chooses to give us this wide-ranging collection to feed us, give us language and images for worship, lead us in various stages of relation to him.

## **Authenticity and the Invitation to Participate**

As poems, the psalms are artistic creations. They distill a journey, an experience, a question into a poetic musical form and give it forth for others to experience and use in their own ways. The psalmist reflects back/out on a personal experience or story and gives it powerful expression. Others perhaps set it to music; others sing it in assembly. The personal becomes communal.

Most poems are lost. Those that survive, last because of their authenticity of expression, sensed in the community. They may be distinct but can be shared by others. They invite the worshiper or meditator to enter the experience as the psalmist is able to express it. It's sometimes painful, sometimes delightful. The worshiper brings his/her own experience before God. The scriptures show (esp. in Job) that not all poetry praising or blaming God has face value.

## **A Varied Journey with a Psalm**

Read Ps 22. A dramatic journey from abandonment to praise, from personal isolation overwhelmed by sickness/enemies/troubles, to universal proclamation of God. Powerful images of predators.

It leads us in the struggle with reality. It shouldn't be this way. Why? Do I have a bargain with God? Is that why I trusted him? What if he doesn't pay off? Or do I worship God because he is God?