

**35B* THE TIMELESS PSALMS:
A CALL TO WORSHIP
EASTER 5B 2018
PSALM 22: 25-31**

Holy God, in grateful thanks we gather to praise you for your grace and mercy!
“In the presence of your people I will praise your name; for alone you are holy” ... [1]

All-embracing God, in warm acceptance of your generous love, we thank you!
“In the presence of your people...let us celebrate your goodness, and your steadfast love; may your name be exalted here on earth and in heaven above.” [1]

God of the Ages and people of all times and places: in response to God's gifts of life and love; we come together as your people - to sing, to pray, to share and to bless each other; before we are sent out to share God's healing grace.
Liberating God of all that you created: *“In the presence of your people, I will praise your name; for alone you are holy...Let us celebrate your goodness, and your steadfast love; may your name be exalted here on earth and in heaven above.”* [1] Amen.

PSALM 22: 25-31

For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be sung to the tune “Doe of the Dawn.”

25 I will praise you in the great assembly. I will fulfil my vows
in the presence of those who worship you.

26 The poor will eat and be satisfied.

All who seek the LORD will praise him.

Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy.

27 The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him.

All the families of the nations will bow down before him.

28 For royal power belongs to the LORD. He rules all the nations.

29 Let the rich of the earth feast and worship.

Bow before him, all who are mortal, all whose lives will end as dust.

30 Our children will also serve him.

Future generations will hear about the wonders of the Lord.

31 His righteous acts will be told to those not yet born.

They will hear about everything he has done.

**PRAYERS OF THANKFULNESS & PRAISE:
EASTER 5B 2018
PSALM 22: 25-31**

Holy God, in grateful thanks we gather to praise you for all your grace and mercy! As we come together to worship our Glorious God and to celebrate God's liberating love and compassion. Individually and collectively, we join with countless saints and martyrs from times past; along with all the heavenly host to praise and bless your Holy Name.

We give thanks for many blessings of life, for love, for kindness, for gentle caring; and for a conscience that disturbs and activates us when we witness injustice, especially amongst the most vulnerable of your people. We join with the psalmist in giving thanks that: "... *All who seek the LORD will praise him. Their hearts will rejoice with everlasting joy. The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD...*" and may: "...*your kingdom come...*" [2]

All-embracing God, in warm acceptance of your generous love, we come to thank you! We again join with the psalmist in singing God's praises: "*In the presence of your people ...let us celebrate your goodness, and your steadfast love; may your name be exalted here on earth and in heaven above.*" [1] We come together in awed reverence, because the Holy One whom we worship is the LORD, who "...*rules all the nations...*" and we are all called to: "...*Bow before him, all who are mortal, all whose lives will end as dust...*" We pray that: "*Our children will also serve him. Future generations will hear about the wonders of the LORD....They will hear about everything he has done...*" We pray that each one will faithfully proclaim God's "good news"; and may: "...*your kingdom come...*" [2]

God of the Ages, of people from all times and places: in response to God's gifts of life and love; we come together as your people - to sing, to pray, to share and to bless each other; and to be challenged by the needs of the world around us. Together, we pray for sensitivity and a generous attitude to those people who do not know the pleasures of ample food, drink and shelter, and the health to enjoy them; for people who have only limited access to health care, education or the experience of employment; or working at a job that brings enjoyment and involvement. We come too, to make a new commitment to being your faithful follower in your Name; and so may: "...*your kingdom come, your will be on earth as it is in heaven...*" [2] Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:
EASTER 5B 2018
PSALM 22: 25-31**

Psalm 22 is regularly used in the Lectionary readings, and I often find it difficult to be differently creative in my reflections on the various selected verses, as at times, I think I have a love/hate relationship with Psalm 22! The author's cries of betrayal, rejection and abandonment resonate very clearly with the life experiences of many people. There is the pain and grief of separation and the harsh feeling of abandonment, experienced by people who are ageing, infirm or people with an incurable disease, as their circle of family and friends shrink through the deaths of their peers; and then narrows with ever-increasing speed. Another grief is that brought about through broken relationship and that sense of loss and abandonment experienced by people is very painful, especially when there are additional complicating issues when 'outsiders' play the 'blame-game'! When we also feel abandoned by God - that adds to the pain! On one such journey, I discovered through study and reflection, that God also feels as abandoned and rejected as we do when we move away from God's loving care – but who rejoices at any reunion! Through all the pain and misery of rejection, there is always the hope and longing for reconciliation and renewal; and when that blessing occurs – life is blessed with new joy!

Creative pause: God shares in our sense of abandonment when we become separated.

Another aspect of this psalm that resonates with me is the change that occurs when we move away from our introspection, self-centredness and loneliness; to see the real world around us - and the people that make up that world. Suddenly, the light of God's love breaks through the gloom of painful memories, and again there was life and vitality—because God's love is transformative and can remake old memories into lessons in life. The community in which I had felt rejected welcomed me 'home' again; and 'my' people wanted to learn from my experiences. But even better, I was able to share in the praise and thankfulness for all God's blessings; and in that sharing, was renewed in my life's commitment to God; and God's people in the world here and beyond my local scene.

"...I will praise you in the great assembly ...in the presence of those who worship you...."

Creative pause: God's transforming powers of love and acceptance!

"...The whole earth will acknowledge the LORD and return to him. All the families of the nations will bow down before him...." This psalm takes us on a journey through isolation and rejection, into new beginnings on a person's faith journey; a renewed sense of the world in which we are all a part, including the discovery of poverty, oppression and loss of liberty; and to the news that Israel not alone in receiving God's favour. All of creation recognises that is God their LORD, their Creator and their Liberator – and in God's own time and grace; all peoples - along with creation - will bow in reverent awe, before God. That is our hope as we seek to faithfully worship and praise God with our living and loving.

Creative pause: *"...All the families of the nations will bow down before him..."*

[1] From "Together in Song" #727
"In the presence of your people"
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[2] *"...May your kingdom come..."*
An extract from "The LORD's Prayer"

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