

**29A\* THE TIMELESS PSALMS:  
GOOD FRIDAY A 2017  
PSALM 22  
A CALL TO WORSHIP**

Faithful God, we come, asking to be accepted into your warm fellowship.

**When we feel lost and bewildered – God accepts us into God’s presence.**

Ever-present God, we come to you this day with our fears and troubles.

**When we feel abandoned and forgotten, our God is always there for us.**

Comforting God, when we are feeling less than human, you remind us again that we are always the dearly beloved children of God the Father!

**When we falter with doubts and mistrust, thanks to be our God that the presence and power of God is as near as our heartbeat and breathing. Amen.**

**PSALM 22**

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

**1** My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?

Why are you so far away when I groan for help?

**2** Every day I call to you, my God, but you do not answer.

Every night I lift my voice, but I find no relief.

**3** Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel.

**4** Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them.

**5** They cried out to you and were saved.

They trusted in you and were never disgraced.

**6** But I am a worm and not a man. I am scorned and despised by all!

**7** Everyone who sees me mocks me.

They sneer and shake their heads, saying,

**8** “Is this the one who relies on the LORD?

Then let the LORD save him! If the LORD loves him so much, let the LORD rescue him!”

**9** Yet you brought me safely from my mother’s womb and led me to trust you at my mother’s breast.

**10** I was thrust into your arms at my birth.

You have been my God from the moment I was born.

**11** Do not stay so far from me, for trouble is near, and no one else can help me.

**12** My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls;

fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in!

**13** Like lions they open their jaws against me, roaring and tearing into their prey.

**14** My life is poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint.

My heart is like wax, melting within me.

**15** My strength has dried up like sunbaked clay.

My tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth.

You have laid me in the dust and left me for dead.

**16** My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs; an evil gang closes in on me. They have pierced my hands and feet.

**17** I can count all my bones. My enemies stare at me and gloat.

**18** They divide my garments among themselves and throw dice for my clothing.

**19** O LORD, do not stay far away! You are my strength; come quickly to my aid!

**20** Save me from the sword; spare my precious life from these dogs.

**21** Snatch me from the lion's jaws and from the horns of these wild oxen.

**22** I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters.

I will praise you among your assembled people.

**23** Praise the LORD, all you who fear him! Honour him, all you descendants of Jacob!

Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel!

**24** For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy.

He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help.

**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 LAMENT & TRUST:  
GOOD FRIDAY A 2017  
PSALM 22**

Faithful God, we come before you today on this sacred day, asking to be accepted into your warm fellowship as we feel lost and bewildered by the events of life; and in the broken relationships that are troubling us; all of which makes us feel badly about ourselves. We feel abandoned and rejected by people who are important to us; and we are puzzled by the turn of events, over which we had no control. In our pain and the uneasy confusion, we turn to you for help and guidance. Our own forebears have always trusted in you, and you have never let them down; and we are trying to take confidence from that; and to believe that we are acceptable and welcomed by you. In hope and trust we remember God's promises and come again to you for blessing.

Ever-present God, we have Jesus' promise that God will be with us in all situations of life and death; in joy and in sorrow; in pain or in health; and in certainty and doubt—and today we claim those promises. Come to us and welcome us into your arms of faithfulness and enduring love; so that we can regain our balance and understanding of who and what we are in your sight! Grant to us the peace and quiet joy that comes when we experience the wonder of you as our Still Centre in a turning world; and free us from all that hinders our growth in faith and trust in your abiding, holy presence. In hope and trust we remember God's promises and come again to you for blessing.

Comforting God, when we are feeling less than human, you remind us again that we are always the dearly beloved children of God the Father! When we falter with doubts and fear, thanks to be our God that the presence and power of God is as near as our heartbeat and breathing. Compassionate God, guide us past all that belittles us as human beings that are created in your image with that holy spark of God in our inner being; so that we may worship and serve you with renewed purpose and zeal. In hope and trust we remember God's promises and come again to you for blessing. Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:  
GOOD FRIDAY A 2017  
PSALM 22**

Our language is littered with colloquial sayings about birds and animals as a way of expressing our emotions or situations in life. The Bible is no different! When there was a situation that describes protection and care, there are several references to hens with chickens gathered under her wings; and when there are situations of fear or anger, large and dangerous beasts are used as expressions to explain a person's emotional, political or their general state of mind. These types of saying are quite frequent in psalms of lament and Psalm 22 is one such example. *"...My enemies surround me like a herd of bulls...fierce bulls of Bashan have hemmed me in! Like lions they open their jaws against me, roaring and tearing into their prey. ...My enemies surround me like a pack of dogs...Snatch me from the lion's jaws and from the horns of these wild oxen..."* The abandonment associated with verse one of this psalm is characteristic of the many psalms of lament in its expression of utter helplessness and an apparent loss of hope and help coming from their God.

Creative pause:           How would you describe a situation of abandonment?

Professor Walter Brueggemann writes in one of his most recent books: *"...Psalm 22 voices three characteristic elements of the lament. The first of these is the description of suffering, that is presented in order to get God's attention. In verses 6-8, the speaker describes social humiliation and shame through which we see he is God-abandoned... Second, the speaker issues a powerful petition to God that summons God back into action because the speaker cannot save himself...Third, the psalm provides motivation for God to act because God cannot want God's covenant partner to be in such dire circumstances..."*<sup>1</sup> The response from God is celebrated with these words: *"...Praise the LORD, all you who fear him! Honour him, all you descendants of Jacob! Show him reverence, all you descendants of Israel! For he has not ignored or belittled the suffering of the needy. He has not turned his back on them, but has listened to their cries for help..."*

Creative pause:           God does not ignore or belittle suffering or needy people.

Even as the sense of utter abandonment is verbalised by the speaker, *"My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help..."*? yet that same speaker recalled the past history of his people and the defining trust that they had in God! *"...Our ancestors trusted in you, and you rescued them. They cried out to you and were saved. They trusted in you and were never disgraced..."* The Professorial Jacobson brothers write: *"...the appearance of these calm expressions of trust right next to the agitated complaint can confuse...suffice to say that just as questions and accusations in these psalms were not seen as a lack of faith on the part of the pray-ers...Such expressions of trust do not signal simply a shift in mood. Rather they signal that in the midst of the crisis, the psalmist's faith included hoping in and clinging to the faithfulness of God – often in the absence of any external reason for such hope..."*<sup>2</sup> When we feel or name ourselves as being "beastly" or like a "worm" and therefore less than human; God blesses us by reminding us that we are always the dearly beloved child of God the Father!

Creative pause:           God's faithfulness is trustworthy and endless.

<sup>1</sup> Text by Professor Walter Brueggemann from *"From whom no secrets are hidden"* Chapter 10, pages 100/101 © 2014 Westminster/John Knox Press Louisville Kentucky, USA

<sup>2</sup> Text by Professors Rolf A & Karl N Jacobson From *"Invitation to the Psalms – a readers guide for discovery & enlightenment"* © 2013 Chapter 2, Page 45 Baker Academic, a Division of Baker Publishing Group Grand Rapids MI 49516-6287, USA

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