

Devotion: June 30, 2020

Psalm 4

To the leader: with stringed instruments. A Psalm of David.

¹ *Answer me when I call, O God of my right!
You gave me room when I was in distress.
Be gracious to me, and hear my prayer.*

² *How long, you people, shall my honour suffer shame?
How long will you love vain words, and seek after lies?
Selah*

³ *But know that the Lord has set apart the faithful for himself;
the Lord hears when I call to him.*

⁴ *When you are disturbed, do not sin;
ponder it on your beds, and be silent.
Selah*

⁵ *Offer right sacrifices,
and put your trust in the Lord.*

⁶ *There are many who say, 'O that we might see some good!
Let the light of your face shine on us, O Lord!'
⁷ You have put gladness in my heart
more than when their grain and wine abound.*

⁸ *I will both lie down and sleep in peace;
for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety*

As a lot of you know, my 87 year old mom had to move in with us, due to safety concerns.

A lot of you know that she suffers from dementia related to her Alzheimer's disease.

Those of you who have experienced a loved one with a sickness, know how sad and stressful life can be.

Let me say that it's not all gloom and doom. There are times when the Mom I know pops through and we have good laugh. Communication with mom is like playing *Jeopardy* so that can be annoyingly funny at times.

And then there are the bad days and bad nights, when nobody sleeps.

Those are the days when I sing along with Cristy Lane:

One day at a time sweet Jesus, is all I'm asking of you.....

And through those bad times I discovered that the bottom line that keeps me anchored in my faith is this: EVERYONE has bad times, stuff happens; faithful disciples will face depression. These same disciples will sometimes encounter the silence of the Lamb, and committed Christians will often need to slog through some crap on their way to the kingdom of heaven.

I can plead and holler for help, but when the reality check is cashed, we discover that sometimes we are not going to be helped. About the best we can hope for is a sense of God's peace.

So how do we get there?

In my case, I prayed and prayed for something different to happen and became discouraged and depressed when God did not reply. But then I preached from Isaiah 40 this past Sunday and realized, we, you and I, my sick mom, are central players in God's coming Kingdom, and if God puts wind under the wings of eagles, why would God do less for me, for us?

Some would call that a cop-out. But if you've ever been down in the dumps, you've heard folks say

- Hang in there. You have to take the downs with the ups, the rough with the smooth;
- Every cloud has a silver lining. Some good will come out of this;
- This is a test of your faith to see if you really trust God.

But if you've read any holy Scripture you know God will have nothing to do with empty phrases.

It's not an empty phrase when God says in Psalm 4: "*The Lord has set apart the faithful for himself; the Lord hears when [we] call to him*" (v. 3). We may not get the divine answer we want, but at the end of the day we can "*both lie down and sleep in peace; for you alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety*" (v. 8).

With God at the center of creation, I can sleep in peace.

I can sleep in peace knowing that I am not responsible for making sense of every tragedy in life; I may not be Mister Smiley all the time; and I may not reasonably expect to bring order out of chaos in every troubling situation around me, but I do know that *God has set apart the faithful for himself.*

"Want to know the difference between God and me?" joked a man who was proud of himself, but able to see his own foibles. "God never thinks he's me."

Let us pray:

God above us, leading us to exaltation; God beneath us, lifting us out of degradation; God around us, attracting our adoration; God before us, leading us to perfection; God behind us, guarding us from discouragement. Where would we be without you? What future could we anticipate without your leading? We worship you, God of all nations. We follow you, loving Messiah. We welcome you, indwelling Spirit. Amen. *-David Hostetter,*

Let me close by thanking all of you for your prayers, your thoughts and your gifts since Mom moved in. Plus, thank you for allowing me to take my Mom in, and having to work from home at a time when she needs constant care. I am truly blessed to have such a wonderful church family.