

## Psalm 49: 1-3,5-6,10-11,16-20

<sup>1</sup> Hear this, all you peoples;  
give ear, all inhabitants of the world,  
<sup>2</sup> both low and high,  
rich and poor together.

<sup>3</sup> My mouth shall speak wisdom;  
the meditation of my heart shall be understanding.

<sup>5</sup> Why should I fear in times of trouble,  
when the iniquity of my persecutors surrounds me,

<sup>6</sup> those who trust in their wealth  
and boast of the abundance of their riches?

<sup>10</sup> When we look at the wise, they die;  
fool and dolt perish together  
and leave their wealth to others.

<sup>11</sup> Their graves are their homes for ever,  
their dwelling-places to all generations,  
though they named lands their own.

<sup>16</sup> Do not be afraid when some become rich,  
when the wealth of their houses increases.

<sup>17</sup> For when they die they will carry nothing away;  
their wealth will not go down after them.

<sup>18</sup> Though in their lifetime they count themselves happy  
—for you are praised when you do well for yourself—

<sup>19</sup> they will go to the company of their ancestors,  
who will never again see the light.

<sup>20</sup> Mortals cannot abide in their pomp;  
they are like the animals that perish.

In his book “The Road to Character,” David Brooks begins by making a distinction between what he calls the “resumé” virtues” and the “eulogy” virtues. In his words: “The resume virtues are the ones you list on your resume, the skills that you bring to the job market and that contribute to external success. The eulogy virtues are deeper. They’re the virtues that get talked about at your funeral, the ones that exist at the core of your being – whether you are kind, brave, honest or faithful; what kind of relationships you formed.” Brooks goes on to tell how for much of his life he was taught to focus on the resume virtues and that this is what society teaches us to focus on. And yet, at the end of life, what kind of virtue will really have mattered to have cultivated throughout your life?

Psalm 49 is a cold burst of reality on the bubble of success and wealth as the measure of life's fulfillment. It reminds us that we're all born vulnerable and we die vulnerable. Those who are wealthy and successful may be praised, adored and full of "pomp" in their own sense of accomplishment. And yet, will they have neglected the most important things of life in their pursuit of success and wealth?

And what about you and me? What matters most in our lives? What has mattered most in our lives? Has that shifted as we have aged and grown? Psalm 49 is composed by one who understands the temptation of beholding the successful and the wealthy, those who often look down and even mistreat those who are more "ordinary" in their estimation, with feelings of both envy and contempt. How is it that those who seem to have it all are all too often undeserving of it?

And yet, this psalm is also teaching us not only that rich and poor, successful and ordinary are all mortal and vulnerable at the end of the day. No. In meditating on our mortality and vulnerability, perhaps, our values may shift, from the "résumé" ones to the "eulogy" ones. Perhaps with the little time we have of life on this earth, we may rethink and refocus what is worth pursuing and cultivating. Perhaps our connection with the whole, our search for authentic connection and community with human and non-human life, our opportunity to serve and give and help, and perhaps our capacity to savour the sacredness of life in ourselves and others, may be the best gift we are given. Indeed, this psalm may be a beautiful reset, reminding us to ground ourselves in life's true value... while we have time.

PRAYER: Eternal God... the beginning, middle and end of all time... remind us of our mortality. Remind us that our time on this earth is not forever and for some of us less than more... May we honour the gift that life is with gratitude... May we honour the sacredness of life by filling it with your love flow received deep within our hearts and shared out of an abundance you make possible... May we find our deepest joy in serving and our richest fulfillment in giving... May we find that still point of peace deep within us beyond all the turmoil of life around us... Come O Holy Spirit, O Spirit of Jesus, O creator and ever-creating Spirit... Come upon us... Come upon me... Amen.

