

May 7, 2021

Psalm 3: 1-4

A Psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom

O Lord, how many are my foes!
Many are rising against me;
Many are saying to me,
“There is no help for you in God.”

But you, O Lord, are a shield around me,
My glory, and the one who lifts my head.
I cry aloud to the Lord,
And God answers me...

Have you ever felt harassed and surrounded by trouble? Have you ever heard voices telling you not to bother calling up to God in prayer because it won't make a difference because God doesn't care or is not there?

The beautiful thing about psalms is that they touch on universal human experiences. Clear for the psalmist, the most immediate trouble they're facing are concrete foes all around. The kind of context that would inspire the writing of this Psalm is given in the heading: “A Psalm of David when he fled from his son Absalom.” This story, found in 2 Samuel 14-18, is heartbreaking, as David is betrayed by his son, forced to run for his life and forced to engage him violently with tragic consequences. David's grief at the death of his son, mingled with guilt and shame for his failure as a father, is profound.

But Christians through the ages have also read scripture and the psalms in “spiritual” terms. That means we read scripture in a way that becomes relevant to our experiences of life. In this case, we may not be a king, betrayed by a child hungry to take over the throne, and seeking salvation (salvation means wholeness) from human enemies all around. But we may see so many situations and circumstances in our lives as enemies. What are those situations and circumstances in your life? What are those fears that torment you in the middle of the night? What kind of wholeness are you in search of right now in your life? What relationship, health concern, financial stress or uncertainty in your life is fracturing or fragmenting the possibility of your wholeness? What commitment is awaiting your greater investment? What door is awaiting your opening and walk-through?

You are the only one who can think this through. Ask for the courage to think truthfully and act while the door is open and the opportunity if offered you. “I cry aloud to the Lord, And God answers me.” If you are not praying with persistence for

clarity, truth and the courage to act, nothing will come of it. If you are praying with persistence and you do not hear an answer, ask yourself whether it's because you do not want to hear what is being spoken into you. If you don't bother praying with any intention or you make little space for it in your life, ask yourself: have I lost my faith or set it aside?

PRAYER: O God, all too often I am surrounded by enemies around and within. Doubts arise and voices keep telling me you don't care or are not even there. Meet me in those difficult moments of doubt verging on despair. Meet me in my fear of listening to what you may be telling me. Give me the courage to open and walk through doors before me. I ask this through Jesus who is your way through death to life; Amen.