

## PSALM 57: 1-3, 6-11

*To the leader: Do Not Destroy. Of David,  
when he fled from Saul, in the cave.*

<sup>1</sup> Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me,  
for in you my soul takes refuge;  
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,  
until the destroying storms pass by.  
<sup>2</sup> I cry to God Most High,  
to God who fulfills God's purpose for me.  
<sup>3</sup> God will send from heaven and save me,  
the Lord will put to shame those who trample on me.

God will send forth God's steadfast love and faithfulness.

<sup>6</sup> They set a net for my steps;  
my soul was bowed down.  
They dug a pit in my path,  
but they have fallen into it themselves.

<sup>7</sup> My heart is steadfast, O God,  
my heart is steadfast.  
I will sing and make melody.

<sup>8</sup> Awake, my soul!  
Awake, O harp and lyre!  
I will awake the dawn.

<sup>9</sup> I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples;  
I will sing praises to you among the nations.

<sup>10</sup> For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;  
your faithfulness extends to the clouds.

<sup>11</sup> Be exalted, O God, above the heavens.  
Let your glory be over all the earth.

The heading of this psalm provides a context which gives meaning to the words. Well before David was the celebrated King of Israel, he was a young man marked to be future king. Saul was the king at the time and saw David as a threat. At a certain point, Saul pursued him. 1 Samuel 22 records an occasion when David needed to hide from Saul and found a cave in enemy Philistine territory. Here, we're told, all those who were in trouble or in distress gathered and David became their leader. Out of a place of fear and despair David found opportunity and possibility. Hiding in a cave, he emerged out of it a leader.

What I find particularly beautiful in this psalm is how it is composed to be visualized. It begins in a cave, in hiding, in fear and a "destroying storm". I visualize myself bowed down or crouched in the dark, hiding, my soul scared, tired and hopeless. But as the psalm moves, it takes me out of the cave into the light, the storm has passed and I am standing.

As I straighten, my feet feel light. I'm starting to float. I have wings and I fly upwards into the heavens. As I make my journey I begin to hear music. From whispering in fear I begin to speak and then I begin to sing, sing praises at full volume.

Or else, I can visualize being in a cave where it's all dark, it is night and it is stormy, but then I awake and emerge from the cave, into the dawn light and then the brightness of the day. Read the psalm a few times and see if you feel this movement in your body and soul too. What words stand out for you in the progression from fear to new hope, from darkness to light, from storm to a bright day, from down below to flying sky high?

Through it all, of course, there is God, and God is imaged as an eagle under whose wings I take refuge; God sending forth "steadfast love and faithfulness" which is like an energy flow I feel within me and through me, taking me like wings take a bird into flight for "your steadfast love is as high as the heavens; your faithfulness extends to the clouds". God's "glory" is also over all the earth. Glory is light and splendour seen in the brightness of the sun. Imagine what this psalm can do when it is sung or prayed with an open heart and spiritual imagination. Try visualizing it and see where it takes you.

**PRAYER:** You are everywhere, O God, in the darkness and in the light, down below and high above, in me, around me, above me and in all things... In you I can hide. You create space for me to weep and to rage. You stay with me in silence when I have no words. You watch me when I sleep and you are there when I wake. You show your face to me through others, and you find me when others disappoint me, let me down or betray me. You give me the gift of imagination, of faith, of hope for a new day when I'm tired and lonely and in distress. Show your face to me anew, O God. Take me from the cave out into the light, from below ground above and into the heavens. Give me wings to fly, or stand with me as I try to find my footing again... In Jesus' name; Amen.