

# Revd Canon Dr Rosalyn Murphy

## Week 3: Reflection 3: Psalm 33.1-22

A little brown girl sat in a yellow dress and white pinafore on the recently mowed lawn of the large church in southeast Texas. This must be the house where God lives, because it's so large. But, every building seems large to a 5-year old.

Pulling on her pigtails, and basking in the hot summer sun she looked up at her mother and the other women in long dresses and colourful sunhats – many decorated with flowers, ribbons, tinted beading, and netted veils. The men beside them in ties and shirt, had placed their suit coats on the grass where the women sat. To the little brown girl, it looked more like a fancy picnic than a place where you went to worship God.

And, then the organ music began to peal outside the church over bullhorn speakers, and the people rose to sing. Some swayed with the music, others raised their hands reaching out to the sky, while others 'touched a bit with the spirit' danced and cried out to an unseen God, and an invisible king called Jesus. When the music stopped, the preacher (from somewhere inside the church) begins to speak – about the steadfast love of God.

He was excited to tell everyone listening about coming into God's house, to meet a God who loves righteousness and justice. God is the one true God who made the heavens, the seas, and the earth – the God who looked down from heaven and saw everyone in the whole wide world. He must be a really big God to see the whole world, and this is his big house – but, everything seems big to a 5-year old girl.

This God sits on a huge throne and watches everyone – he sees the bad things people do, and the good things they should do, but don't. This God has his eyes on everyone, but especially those who trust him and live in hope that He alone can make their lives better.

Shouts of 'amen' and 'hallelujah' seem to stir up the preacher's enthusiasm, as he encourages the people to 'wait for the Lord', to 'trust in his holy name', and place their 'hope' in his 'steadfast love'.

After another song, with dancing and swaying, tears falling and rejoicing over the love of God, a quiet prayer for hope and love is spoken, everyone bows their head and the service ends. Those seated on the grass, rise to stand with the others, as the church doors open and the minister comes out.

He stands patiently at the door to shake the hand of every member as they leave. All heads are lowered, and the little brown girl is told 'don't look up' – 'don't look anyone in the eyes' – 'be humble'. But, how will she get to see God, if she looks down at the ground.

Surely, this God who loves everyone won't mind if she sees him. So, she manages a small peek and sees big, tall white people – but, everyone looks big and tall to a 5-year old girl. She catches a brief glimpse of

white women, in beautiful dresses with matching hats, gloves and handbags, the hair flowing, gleaming in the sunlight. The white men walk proudly beside them, in Sunday 'best' suits and ties - their arms intertwined protectively. The minister follows them, as the church doors to the large house where God lives are closed and bolted. God isn't leaving his house, but, everyone else is.

As they walk to her grandmother's house for Sunday supper, the little brown girl is disappointed and she can't help but wonder: "Maybe if we didn't sit out in the sun, we wouldn't all be so brown." And, "if we weren't brown, perhaps we could go inside the big church in southeast Texas." "Then, we could sit in God's house and get to meet him, too." But, sometimes things look too big to a little brown-skinned girl, that's only 5-year old.

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous.  
For praise befits the upright.

