

Psalm 21

21:1-7,13 – Evening Prayer Tuesday Week 1
Office of Readings Common of Pastors

In Psalm 20 the people prayed that God would give victory to the king. Here they thank God for answering their prayer. Comparisons can be made with Psalm 2 and Psalm 18. The title reads: ‘To the leader. A Psalm* of David’.

Part One

Victory carries with it the promise of many blessings,
including long life, authority, glory, honour and joy.

As disciples of Jesus we pray this thinking of Jesus’ resurrection – the victory over death. Verse four speaks of life:

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.

– Romans 6:9

I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades.

– Revelation 1:17-18

Just as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.

– John 5:26

God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

– 1John 5:11-13

Verse five speaks of glory:

Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him.... Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

– John 17:1-2,5

Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself.’

– John 13:32

We do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death.

– Hebrews 2:9

¹YHWH*, the king rejoices in your power. How he celebrates the victory* which you have gained!

²You have given him his heart’s* desire, and have not withheld the request of his lips.

[Selah*]

³You have gone before him to bless* him with good things. You have placed on his head a golden crown.

⁴He asked you for life; you gave it to him – length of days forever and ever.

⁵His glory* is great thanks to your help*; you have bestowed on him honour and majesty.

Trust in YHWH

**⁶You have given him limitless blessings*;
you have filled him with joy in your presence.**

Verse six speaks of joy:

I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

– John 15:11

I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves.

– John 17:13

We might conclude our reflections with Paul's prayer:

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

– Philippians 3:10-11

⁷For the king trusts* in YHWH, and through the kindness* of the Most High he shall not waver.

This is the central verse of the psalm. The king can remain steadfast because of God's fidelity to his kindness, his covenant love.

In the light of Jesus' resurrection we can pray this psalm, reflecting on God's fidelity that reaches beyond death.

In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.

– John 14:2-3

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.

– Romans 8:18

Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

– 1Corinthians 13:12

Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is.

– 1John 3:2

Part Two

In these verses it is possible that ‘you’ may refer to the king. However, it is more probable that it refers to God. Note that only verse thirteen is used in the Christian liturgy. Verses eight to twelve are omitted. We are to oppose evil in ourselves and in others, but Jesus taught us to distinguish between the sin and the sinner, and he insisted on a very different attitude to one’s enemies (see Matthew 5:43-48).

**⁸You left hand will deal with your enemies;
your right hand will deal with your foes.**

**⁹You will make them like a fiery furnace
when suddenly you appear, YHWH.**

(His anger* will devour them, the fire will consume them.)

The words in brackets may be a gloss. See the article ‘Anger of God’ in the Introduction.

**¹⁰Destroy their offspring from the earth,
their children from among the human race.**

**¹¹All they do is plan evil against you,
they devise intrigues, but they will not succeed.**

**¹²For you will put them to flight;
you will pick them off with your bows.**

**¹³Rise up, YHWH, in your power.
To the sound of instruments we will sing of your strength.**

This last verse reveals that the psalm is being sung by the assembled community.