

Psalm 36

Morning Prayer Wednesday Week 1

After giving a graphic description of those who have no concern for God, the psalmist praises God's kindness to those who take refuge in him. He prays that this kindness will continue. The title reads: 'To the leader. Of David, the servant of YHWH'.

Part One. The irreligious

Those who disregard God have allowed evil to enter and corrupt their hearts. They should be terrified at what they are doing and at the path of destruction that they have chosen to follow - but they are not!

Sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.

– Genesis 4:7

It is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come.

– Mark 7:21

There is no fear of God before their eyes.

– Romans 3:18

¹Transgression* speaks to the irreligious deep within the heart.*

God is watching him, but still he experiences no fear.*

²He deceives himself that his guilt* will not be discovered, nor detected.

³His words are full of mischief and deceit; he refuses to be wise or to do good.

⁴He plots mischief while on his bed; he is set on a way that is bad; he does not regret evil.

Compare the following from the prophet Micah:

Alas for those who devise wickedness and evil deeds on their beds! When the morning dawns, they perform it, because it is in their power.

– Micah 2:1

Part Two. God

You love all things that exist, and detest none of the things that you have made. You would not have made anything unless you had loved it. How would anything have endured if you had not willed it? How would anything not called forth into being by you have been preserved?

– Wisdom 11:24-25

All these creatures look to you to give them their food in due season. When you give to them, they gather it up; when you open your hand, they are filled with good things.

– Psalm 104:27-28

⁵YHWH*, your kindness*, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds.

⁶Your justice* is like the high mountains, your judgments* are like the great deep.

YHWH, you save* human beings and animals alike.

The light of life

⁷How precious is your kindness*, O God! People take refuge in the shade of your wings.

YHWH dwelt in the inner sanctuary of the tent (later, the temple). The mercy-seat, God's gold throne, covered the ark of the covenant and was guarded by the cherubim whose wings extended over it. God's people sought refuge in God's presence, shaded by these outstretched wings.

They have come under the shelter of my roof.

– Genesis 19:8

They were under YHWH's protection:

Come and take refuge in my shade.

– Judges 9:15

**⁸They feast on the abundance of your house, and you slake their thirst from the river of your delights.
⁹For with you is the fount of life.**

A fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Wadi.

– Joel 3:18

On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out: Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.' Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

– John 7:37-39

One of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once blood and water came out.

– John 19:34

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city.

– Revelation 22:1

In your light we see light.

In him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

– John 1:4

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

– John 8:12

I have come as light into the world, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness.

– John 12:46

Part Three. A prayer

We are reminded of the beautiful words of the prophet Jeremiah:

I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

– Jeremiah 31:3

God's love reaches out to everyone. It is received by those who 'know' God. The psalmist is not speaking here of those whose knowledge of God is correct – though erroneous ideas about God are an obstacle. Nor is he speaking about those who know about God. Throughout the bible, knowing refers to the knowing of intimate communion, knowing in love. People can be in intimate communion without realising that it is God with whom they are in communion. People can know about God or have correct ideas about God (in so far as this is possible), but not be in communion with God. God is offering love unconditionally, but we are free to welcome or reject this love. If we do not welcome it, and are unwilling to be drawn into intimate communion with God, we are unable to receive the steadfast love so faithfully and so persistently offered to us.

**¹⁰O continue your kindness*
to those who know you,
your justice* to the upright*
of heart*!**

**¹¹Do not let the foot of the
arrogant tread on me,
or the hand of the wicked
drive me away.**

**¹²See how the evildoers lie
prostrate; thrust down, they
are unable to rise.**