

Psalm 69

12th Sunday Year A
15th Sunday Year C
Office of Readings Friday Week 3

The life of the psalmist is under threat because of the stand he is taking in obedience to God's will. He pleads for God's help, trusting that in God's good time it will be forthcoming, for he believes that 'YHWH hears the needy and does not despise his own that are in bonds'(verse 33). The psalm could have been composed by Jeremiah (see, for example Jeremiah 38:6). It could also have been composed by one of the leaders of the exiles in the years prior to the destruction of Jerusalem, who was being ridiculed because he refused to give up hope that 'God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah'(verse 35).

Much of the psalm can be prayed by Christians thinking of Jesus in his passion. The title reads: 'To the leader: according to Lilies. Of David.' Psalm 45 and Psalm 80 are also sung to the melody of 'The Lilies'.

I anxiously waited for YHWH; he stooped down to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the desolate pit, from the miry bog. He set my feet upon a rock, and made my steps secure.

– Psalm 40:1-2

The floods covered the Egyptians; they went down into the depths like a stone.

– Exodus 15:5

Your trusted friends have seduced you and have overcome you; Now that your feet are stuck in the mud, they desert you.

– Jeremiah 38:22

Was it not you who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to cross over?

– Isaiah 51:10

The psalmist is continually peering at the horizon with eyes worn out with crying. His throat is hoarse from calling for help.

Woe is me! YHWH has added sorrow to my pain; I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.

– Jeremiah 45:3

¹Save* me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.

²I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold.

I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

³I am weary with my crying; my throat is hoarse. My eyes grow dim with waiting* for my God.

Isolated even from family

⁴More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause; stronger than my bones are my enemies who speak lies about me.

^{4b}What I did not steal must I now restore?

⁵O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

⁶Do not let those who hope* in you be put to shame because of me, O Lord YHWH of hosts*; do not let those who seek you be dishonoured because of me, O God of Israel.

⁷It is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that shame has covered my face.

This is quoted by John:

This was to fulfil the word that is written in their law, 'They hated me without a cause'.

– John 15:25

YHWH, do not withhold your tender compassion from me; let your kindness and your faithfulness keep me safe always. For evils have encompassed me without number; my guilty deeds have overtaken me, until I cannot see; they are more than the hairs of my head, and my heart fails me.

– Psalm 40:11-12

I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.

– Jeremiah 15:10

Malicious witnesses rise up; they accuse me of things about which know nothing. They repay me evil for good; they leave me defenceless.

– Psalm 35:11-12

You know what came from my lips; it was before your face.

– Jeremiah 17:16

If God fails to hear his plea others will give up hope in God! They will be 'put to shame', shown up as having been foolish in trusting God.

Israel is saved by YHWH with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity.

– Isaiah 45:17

I am YHWH; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.

– Isaiah 49:23

Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; do not be discouraged, for you will not suffer disgrace.

– Isaiah 54:4

Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

– Psalm 44:22

YHWH, you know; remember me and visit me, and bring down retribution for me on my persecutors. In your forbearance do not take me away; know that on your account I suffer insult.

– Jeremiah 15:15

Do not let the downtrodden be defrauded; let the poor and needy praise your name. Rise up, O God, plead your cause; remember how the impious scoff at you all day long.

– Psalm 74:21-22

Even your kinsfolk and your own family, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; do not believe them, though they speak friendly words to you.

– Jeremiah 12:6 (see Job 19:13-15)

Phinehas has turned back my wrath from the Israelites by manifesting such zeal among them on my behalf.

– Numbers 25:11

Come with me, and see my zeal for YHWH.

– 2Kings 10:16 (Jehu is speaking)

This is the only example in the Bible of zeal for the temple. The first part of the verse is placed on Jesus' lips by John in the scene where Jesus empties the temple:

Zeal for your house has consumed me.

– John 2:17

The second half of the verse is quoted by Paul:

Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.'

– Romans 15:3

'Myself' translates the Hebrew *nepeš*. See the article 'Being' in the Introduction.

You have made us the taunt of our neighbours,
the derision and scorn of those around us.
You have made us a byword among the nations,
a laughing stock among the peoples.
All day long my disgrace is before me,
my face is covered in shame
at the insults of the taunters and revilers,
at the sight of the enemy attacking.

– Psalm 44:13-16

We think of Jesus mocked by the soldiers (Matthew 27:27-30).

⁸I have become a stranger to my family, an alien to my mother's children.

⁹It is zeal for your house that has consumed me; the insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.

¹⁰When I humbled myself* with fasting, they insulted me for doing so.

¹¹When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them.

¹²I am the subject of gossip for those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

Longing for God to draw near

¹³But as for me, my prayer is to you, YHWH. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your kindness*, answer me with your faithfulness which saves*.

¹⁴Rescue me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.

¹⁵Do not let the flood sweep over me. Do not let the deep swallow me up, or the Pit close its mouth over me.

¹⁶Answer me, YHWH, for your kindness* is good; according to your tender compassion* turn to me.

¹⁷Do not hide your face from your servant, for I am in distress – make haste to answer me.

¹⁸Come close. I long for you*. Redeem* me. Free me from my enemies.

¹⁹You know the insults I receive, and my shame and dishonour. My foes are all known to you.

²⁰Insults have broken my heart*, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.

Thus says YHWH: In a time of favour I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you.

– Isaiah 49:8

You will rise up and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to favour it with your grace; the appointed time has come.

– Psalm 102:13

YHWH, YHWH, a God tenderly compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in kindness and faithfulness.

– Exodus 34:6

This picks up the imagery of verses one and two. Compare Jeremiah 38:6-13.

They flung me alive into a pit and hurled stones on me; water closed over my head; I said, “I am lost.” I called on your name, YHWH, from the depths of the pit.

– Lamentations 3:53-55

Do not hide your face from me in my distress. Listen to me; answer me speedily when I call.

– Psalm 102:2

Answer me quickly, YHWH; my spirit fails. Do not hide your face from me, or I shall be like those who go down to the Pit.

– Psalm 143:7

You came near when I called on you; you said, ‘Do not fear!’

– Lamentations 3:57

‘I long for you’ is an attempt to pick up the nuances of *nepeš*. ‘Come close to my *nepeš*’. See the article ‘Being’ in the Introduction.

My heart is crushed within me, all my bones shake.

– Jeremiah 23:9

Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed?

– Jeremiah 15:18

This verse lies behind the following text from the description of Jesus' passion:

They offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall;
but when he tasted it, he would not drink it.

– Matthew 27:34 (and Mark 15:23)

The psalmist pleads for the utter destruction of his enemies. In verse twenty-two he uses the image of cloth laid on the ground hiding a pit. A victorious sacrificial banquet turns out to be a trap. Verses 22-23 are quoted by Paul:

And David says, 'Let their table become a snare and a trap, a stumbling block and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and keep their backs forever bent.'

– Romans 11:9-10

Verse twenty-five is quoted by Luke:

For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'Let his homestead become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it.'

– Acts 1:20

Moses said: 'If you will only forgive their sin - but if not, blot me out of the book that you have written.'
But YHWH said to Moses, 'Whoever has sinned against me I will blot out of my book.'

– Exodus 32:32-33

Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem.

– Isaiah 4:3

At that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book.

– Daniel 12:1

My co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

– Philippians 4:3

I will not blot your name out of the book of life.

– Revelation 3:5 (also 13:8)

²¹They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

²²Let their table be a trap for them, a snare for their allies.

²³Let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and make their loins tremble continually.

²⁴Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger* overtake them.

²⁵May their camp be a desolation. Let no one live in their tents.

²⁶They persecute those whom you have struck down, and those whom you have wounded they attack still more.

²⁷Add guilt to their guilt; may they have no acquittal from you.

²⁸Let them be blotted out of the book of the living. Let them not be enrolled among the just*.

Praise and thanksgiving

²⁹But I am lowly* and in pain. Let your salvation*, O God, protect me.

May YHWH answer you in the day of seige!
May the name of the God of Jacob protect you!

– Psalm 20:1

Rescue me from my enemies, O my God;
protect me from those who rise up against me.

– Psalm 59:1

I will rescue those who love me;
I will protect those who know my name.

– Psalm 91:14

The fear of others lays a snare, but one who trusts in
YHWH is secure.

– Proverbs 29:25

³⁰I will praise the name of God with a song; I will acknowledge his greatness with thanksgiving.

³¹This will please YHWH more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.

³²Let the oppressed* see it and be glad. You who seek God, let your hearts* revive.

³³For YHWH hears the needy*.

That hymns of praise are of more value than sacrifices is a dominant theme in the Books of Chronicles. Compare also the following:

With praise my whole being glories in YHWH;
let the lowly hear and be glad.

– Psalm 34:2

May all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;
may those who love your saving presence
say continually, ‘Great is YHWH!’
As for me, I am poor and needy,
but the Lord thinks of me.

You are my help and my deliverer;
O my God, do not delay.

– Psalm 40:16-17

He raises up the needy out of distress.

– Psalm 107:41

The psalmist is thinking of the bonds of Egypt.

God gives the desolate a home to live in;
he leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
but the rebellious live in a parched land.

– Psalm 68:6

He is thinking, too, of the bonds of Exile.

Let the groans of the prisoners come before you.

– Psalm 79:11

From heaven YHWH observed the earth,
to hear the groans of the prisoners,
to set free those who were condemned to die.

– Psalm 102:19-20

**³⁵For God will save Zion and rebuild the cities of Judah;
and his servants shall live there and possess it;
³⁶the children of his servants shall inherit it,
and those who love his name shall live in it.**