

Psalm 114

Evening Prayer Sunday Week 1

This is a joyful, festive hymn in praise of God for liberating them from Egypt and marvellously caring for them as they journeyed. It has a special quality of concentrated, lyrical energy. We might reflect on the final words of the Book of Wisdom:

For in everything, O Lord, you have exalted and glorified your people, and you have not neglected to help them at all times and in all places.

– Wisdom 19:22

¹When Israel went out from Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language,

No longer will you see the insolent people, the people of an obscure speech that you cannot comprehend, stammering in a language that you cannot understand.

– Isaiah 33:19

²Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

After the collapse of the northern kingdom of Israel in 721BC, Judah, the home of God's temple, was left alone to continue carrying on God's mission. They considered that the north was still under God's dominion and in the last decades of the seventh century, king Josiah was determined to reconquer the north.

³The sea saw it and fled; the Jordan turned back.

The Red Sea flees like an enemy. The Jordan is a protective frontier and retreats to allow entrance.

⁴The mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
Sirion like a young wild ox.

– Psalm 29:6

⁵Why is it, O sea, that you flee, O Jordan, that you turn back?

God who causes nature to 'turn back' can also bring about conversion in the human heart:

⁶O mountains, why is it that you skip like rams, O hills, like lambs?

Wisdom renews all things. In every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God and prophets.

– Wisdom 7:27

⁷At the presence of the Lord, the earth trembles, at the sight of the God of Jacob, ⁸who turns the rock into a pool of water, the flintstone into a spring of water.

You have turned my mourning into dancing.

– Psalm 30:11

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground.

– Isaiah 42:16

I will turn their mourning into joy, I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

– Jeremiah 31:13

YHWH your God turned the curse into a blessing for you, because YHWH your God loved you.

– Deuteronomy 23:5

God gave him another heart.

– 1Samuel 10:9