

Psalm 130

5th Sunday of Lent Year A; 10th Sunday Year B
Evening Prayer I Sunday Week 4; Office of the Dead
Evening Prayer II Feast of the Annunciation
Night Prayer Wednesday

Along with the other psalms from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134, the title reads 'A Song of Ascents.' Traditionally, this is numbered among the penitential psalms (see also Psalms 6, 12, 38, 51, 102 and 143). The psalmist is deeply aware of the terrible consequences of sin. Relying on God's goodness, he cries out to God in his distress, and calls on Israel to do the same in the certain knowledge that YHWH will redeem his people. A key image is that of 'watching'. God is watching the sinner and the sinner is watching for God.

**¹Out of the depths I cry
to you, YHWH*. Lord,
hear my voice!**

The psalmist finds himself in a tragic situation which he sees as the result of his sin. Is he thinking of the depths of Sheol or the depths of the sea - symbol of chaos?

You cast me into the deep, into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me; all your waves and your
billows passed over me. Then I said, 'I am driven away
from your sight; how shall I look again upon your holy
temple?

– Jonah 2:3-4

**²Let your ears be atten-
tive to the voice of my
pleading!**

Hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel
when they pray toward this place; O hear in heaven your
dwelling place; heed and forgive.

– 1Kings 8:30

**³If you, YH, should mark
our guilt, Lord, who
could stand?**

God is watching closely for any sin we might commit.
We might compare Job:

Will you not look away from me for a while, let me
alone until I swallow my spittle?
If I sin, what do I do to you, you watcher of humanity?
Why have you made me your target?
Why have I become a burden to you?

– Job 7:19-20

You put my feet in the stocks, and watch all my paths.

– Job 13:27

There is no one who does not sin.

– 1Kings 8:46

Forgiveness is something that characterises YHWH. As sinners we must approach God humbly in the hope of receiving this gracious gift.

YHWH passed before him, and proclaimed, 'YHWH, YHWH, a God tenderly compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.'

– Exodus 34:6

Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities under foot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

– Micah 7:18-19

Our transgressions overwhelm us,
but still you pardon them..

– Psalm 65:3

Forgive the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of your steadfast love, just as you have pardoned this people, from Egypt even until now. Then YHWH said, 'I do forgive, just as you have asked.'

– Numbers 14:19-20

Let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to YHWH, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

– Isaiah 55:7

I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

– Jeremiah 31:34

I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

– Jeremiah 33:8

He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

– 1John 2:2

Christ gave himself a ransom for all.

– 1Timothy 2:6

He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

– Titus 2:14

By your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation.

– Revelation 5:9

⁴But with you there is forgiveness. For this we revere you.

Forgiveness

**⁵I wait for YHWH, with
my whole being* I wait,
and in his word I hope*.**

**⁶With all that is within
me I* wait for the Lord,
more than watchmen
for daybreak, more than
watchmen for daybreak.**

**⁷Israel wait for YHWH!
For with YHWH there
is kindness*, and great
power to redeem.**

**⁸He will redeem Israel
from all its guilt*.**

While waiting with expectant hope for God's mercy, however, we are not to be presumptuous.

Do not be so confident of forgiveness that you add sin to sin. Do not say 'His mercy is great, he will forgive the multitude of my sins' ... Do not delay to turn back to the Lord.

– Sirach 4:5-7

Do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

– Romans 2:4

'With all that is within me I' translates the Hebrew *nepeš*. See the article 'Being' in the Introduction. The sinner is watching eagerly for the dawning of God's mercy and the liberation this will surely bring.

As Christians we think of the morning of Jesus' resurrection and we look forward to the morning of our own.

Personal prayer expands out to include the whole assembly. Forgiveness is an expression of God's covenant love and an experience of liberation

Is my hand shortened, that it cannot redeem? Or have I no power to deliver? By my rebuke I dry up the sea.

– Isaiah 50:2

This is the only text in the Old Testament in which redemption is extended to *all* guilt.

God has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

– Colossians 1:14