

## Psalm 131

31st Sunday Year A  
Evening Prayer Tuesday Week 3  
Office of Readings Sat week 1

This psalm adds the words ‘Of David’ to the title that characterises all the psalms in the sub-group 120-134: ‘A Song of Ascents’. The psalmist is humbly aware of his limitations and dependence on God. His confidence is not based on himself but on God’s presence and care for him.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

– Proverbs 16:18-19

A haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not tolerate.

– Psalm 101:5

People are humbled, and everyone is brought low – do not forgive them! Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from the terror of YHWH, and from the glory of his majesty. The haughty eyes of people shall be brought low, and the pride of everyone shall be humbled; and YHWH alone will be exalted in that day. For YHWH of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up and high; against all the cedars of Lebanon, lofty and lifted up; and against all the oaks of Bashan; against all the high mountains, and against all the lofty hills; against every high tower, and against every fortified wall; against all the ships of Tarshish, and against all the beautiful craft. The haughtiness of people shall be humbled, and the pride of everyone shall be brought low; and YHWH alone will be exalted on that day.

– Isaiah 2:9-17 (see also Sirach 10:6-18)

How lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift!

– Proverbs 30:13

I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

– Job 42:3

‘Myself’ and ‘all my longing’ translate the Hebrew *nepeš*. See the article ‘Being’ in the Introduction. In place of ‘quieted’ the Greek Septuagint has ‘humbled’ – one of only two texts in the Septuagint that use the verb ‘tapeinophroneō’, meaning ‘to think of oneself in a lowly way’. The other text is Proverbs 29:23:

One who is *lowly in spirit* will obtain honour.

**<sup>1</sup>YHWH\*, my heart\* is not proud, my eyes are not raised too high. I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvellous for me.**

**<sup>2</sup>I have quieted myself down and stilled all my longing.**

## Trusting in God

<sup>2b</sup>**Like a weaned child with its mother my desires are like the weaned child that is with me.**

Just as a mother calms her two year old, so the psalmist calms his desires, his irrational fears and the turmoil of his feelings. By extension one can see God as a mother and the psalmist as the child being calmed by God.

It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, I took them up in my arms ... I led them with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks. I bent down to them and fed them.

– Hosea 11:3-4

It was you who took me from the womb;  
you entrusted me safe on my mother's breasts.  
Placed on your lap from my birth, since my mother bore me you have been my God.

– Psalm 22:9-10

You, O Lord, are my hope.  
I have placed my trust in you, YHWH,  
from my youth.

– Psalm 71:5

You shall be suckled and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees. As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

– Isaiah 66:12-13

Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

– Matthew 18:3-4

I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

– Luke 10:21

All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted.

– Matthew 23:12

<sup>3</sup>**O Israel, hope\* in YHWH now and forever.**

It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of YHWH.

– Lamentations 3:26