

06. Psalms 9-11

Praying Psalm 9 with Jesus



Psalm 9

¹O GOD, with a full and grateful heart
I proclaim your wonderful deeds.

²In festive jubilation, I celebrate you,
singing your name to music, O Most High.

³As my enemies are turned back,
they stumble and perish before you.

⁴From your throne, O just judge,
you pass judgment in my favour.

⁷GOD sits enthroned forever, issuing judgment.

⁸Justly you judge the world and govern the nations.

⁹You are a stronghold for the oppressed.

You strengthen them in times of trouble.

¹⁰Those who know you put their trust in you,

You never forsake those who seek you.

¹¹Sing praises to GOD who dwells in Zion,

declare GOD's deeds to the people.

¹²God never neglects the cry of the afflicted.

¹³Pour your grace over me, O GOD.

Look how oppressed I am.

You are the one who draws me back from the gates of death,

¹⁴that I may recount your praises at the gates of Zion,

and celebrate your deliverance.

¹⁸The needy will not always be forgotten,

nor the hope of the poor be in vain.

Omitted

⁵You have chastised the nations, you have destroyed the wicked,
blotting out their name forever.

⁶The enemy is destroyed, memory of them has perished.
You razed to the ground their cities;

¹⁵The nations have fallen into the pit they dug;
in the net that they hid has their own foot been caught.

¹⁶GOD makes himself known by executing judgment,
and the wicked are snared by what they themselves have done.

¹⁷The wicked shall depart to Sheol,
the nations that forget God.

¹⁹Rise up, O GOD! Do not allow the insolence of mortal human beings.
In your presence let the nations be judged.

²⁰Strike them with terror, O GOD;
let the nations know that they are but mortal.

⁷GOD sits enthroned forever, issuing judgment.

⁸Justly you judge the world and govern the nations.

Jesus, too, was confident in God's justice: 'Will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?' (Luke 18:7).

Jesus understood his mission as being God's instrument in establishing God's justice:

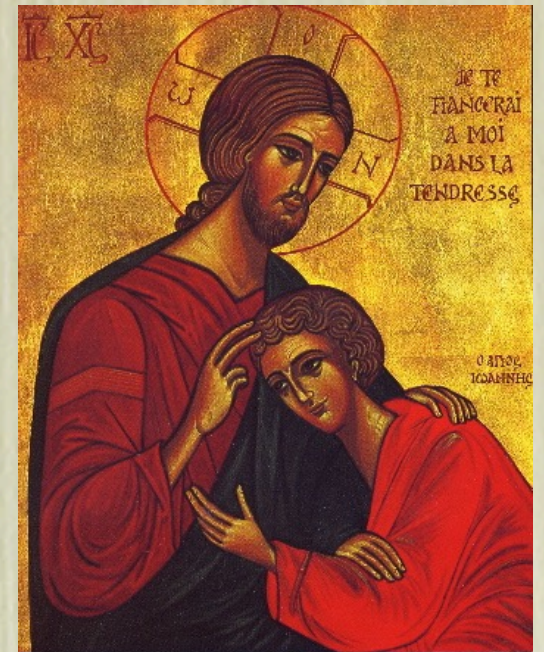
'Here is my servant, whom I have chosen,
my beloved, with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

He will not wrangle or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets.
He will not break a bruised reed
or quench a smouldering wick
until he brings justice to victory.
In his name the Gentiles will hope' (Matthew 12:18-21 = Isaiah 42:1-4).

'As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek to do
not my own will but the will of him who sent me' (John 5:30).

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Praying Psalm 10 (Liturgy: Psalm 9:22-39) with Jesus



¹Why, O GOD, do you stand far off?

Why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?

²The wicked in their arrogance hound the poor,
but they are tangled in their own intrigues.

³The wicked boast of their ambition,
the greedy are full of self-adulation.

⁴They don't care about GOD:

‘There is no god to whom I must give an account!’

What schemes they devise!

How twisted their lives!

⁵They have no concern for your judgments.

They defy all who disagree with them.

⁶They think in their heart: ‘I will never be shaken,
nothing will get in my way!’

⁷From their mouths come deceit and fraud;
their speech is full of malice and lies.

⁸They wait in ambush to murder the innocent
under cover of secrecy.

Stealthily they watch for the helpless.

⁹They lurk in secret like a lion in its den,
that they may seize the poor and drag them away.

¹⁰The innocent, weighed down with oppression,
cannot withstand the violence of the wicked.

¹¹They think: 'God has forgotten.
God has hidden from us and will never notice.'

¹²Rise up, O GOD. Do something.

Do not forget the oppressed.

¹³Why should the wicked spurn you, God,
and say in their hearts, ‘God will not call us to account’?

¹⁴You are the helper of the orphan.

¹⁷O GOD, you hear the longing of the poor;
you listen to them and strengthen their hearts.

¹⁸Protect the rights of the orphan and the oppressed.
Never again may they sow terror,
mortal human beings made from the earth.

Omitted

¹⁴But you do see! Indeed, you observe trouble and grief,
that you may repay those responsible.

You make it your business to take note of evil.

You are the helper of the orphan.

¹⁵Break the arm of the wicked and the evildoers;
so that if anyone seeks them out, they will not be found.

¹⁶GOD is king forever and ever;
the nations shall disappear from the land.

Jesus never stopped hoping that Love would bring about their conversion. As he was about to die he prayed: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing' (Luke 23:34).

‘Why, O GOD, do you stand far off?

Why do you hide yourself in time of trouble?’ (verse 1).

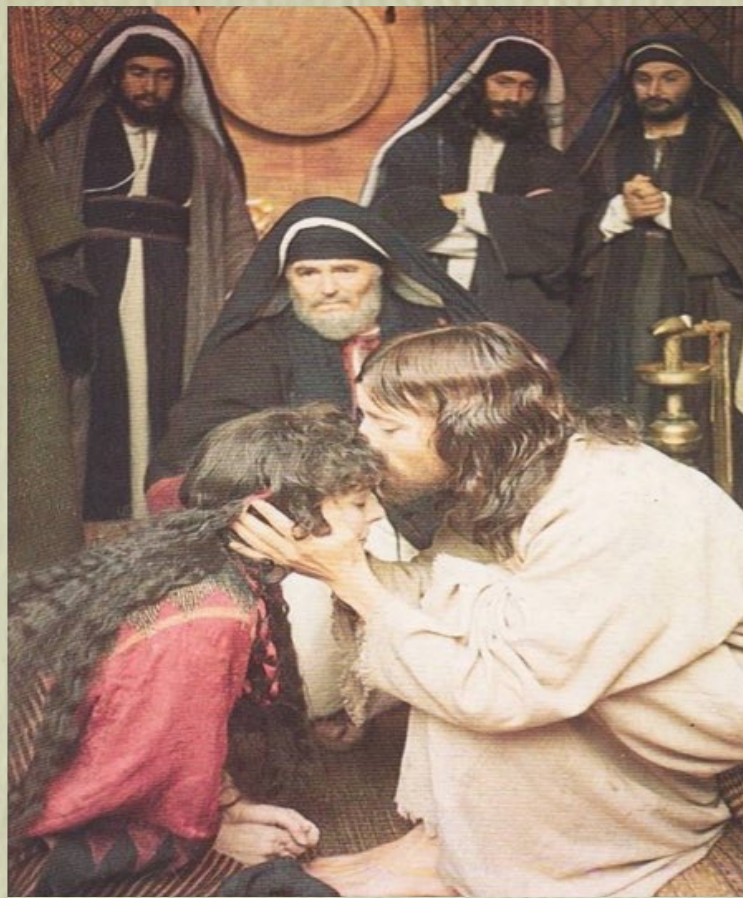
This is echoed on the lips of Jesus as he cried out from the cross:
‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?’ (Matthew 27:46).

His heart was torn, too, for others who felt abandoned, who
‘think in their heart: God has forgotten, he has hidden his face,
he will never notice’ (verse 11).

‘When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd’ (Matthew 9:36). Though he knew the feeling of being abandoned, he knew that God could not ‘stand far off’. Neither could Jesus.



When faced with the suffering of others Jesus' heart could not hold back his love. When a leper said to him: 'If you want to you could heal me', Jesus immediate response was: 'Of course I want to'. He embraced the leper and Love issued in healing (see Mark 1:40-45).



When a woman who had a bad reputation in the town approached him at a meal and burst into tears, Jesus responded to her love and assured her and those at table that ‘her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven, or she could not experience such great love’ (Luke 7:47).

A man with a severe mental disorder was banished from his village, but found acceptance and peace with Jesus (see Mark 5:1-20).

We can imagine the amazement and joy of the parents who had just witnessed their twelve year old daughter dying, when Jesus came to their home, took their daughter's hand, lifted her up and gave her to them (Mark 5:40-43).



‘The wicked in their arrogance hound the poor’ (verse 2)

This picks up a key element in Jesus’ ministry. He said: ‘I came to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!’ (Luke 12:49). He was speaking of the fire of God’s love, but a fire that was determined to challenge and to purify the minds and hearts of those who were oppressing the poor.

With tears in his eyes and an aching heart he challenged the religious leaders, who ‘tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on the shoulders of others; but they themselves are unwilling to lift a finger to move them’ (Matthew 23:4).

‘The wicked boast of their ambition,
the greedy are full of self-adulation’ (verse 3).

Again and again Jesus spoke of the folly of arrogance, the importance of humility.

When Jesus thought of God he knew in every fibre of his being that he was totally dependent upon God. Like a child he looked to God for everything, and experienced the joy that comes with total trust in God’s care.

He was ‘gentle and humble in heart’ (Matthew 11:29).

He wanted everyone to know this trust and to experience this joy, the joy of the humble, for ‘The humble will be lifted up’ (Matthew 23:12).

Psalm 10

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but they are tangled in their own intrigues.

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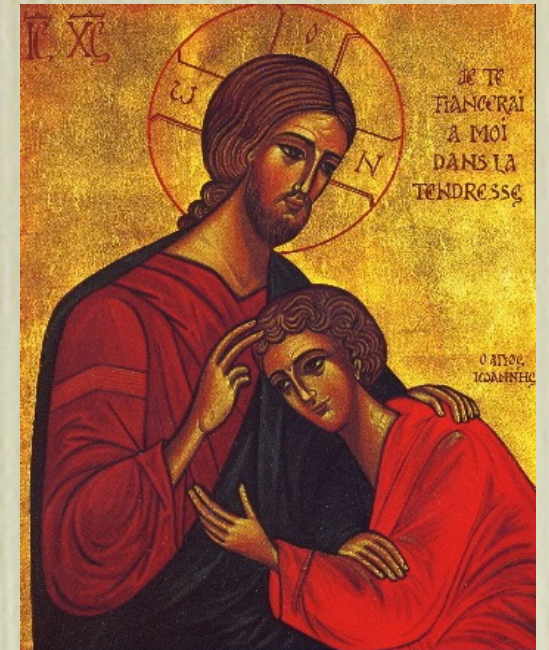
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Never again may they sow terror,
mortal human beings made from the earth.

Praying Psalm 11 with Jesus



¹In GOD I take refuge; how can you say to me:

‘Flee like a bird. Flee to the mountains?’

²Those with no regard for God are bracing their bow.

They are fitting their arrows to the string;
they shoot at the upright from the shadows.

³When foundations are destroyed, what can the just do?

⁴GOD dwells in the holy temple,
GOD, whose throne is in heaven,
whose eyes look down on the world,
whose gaze is on the people on the earth.

⁷GOD is just and loves justice.

The upright will behold God’s face.

Omitted

⁵GOD tests the faithful and the wicked,
and hates the lover of violence.

⁶God will cause coals of fire and sulphur to rain down on the wicked;
a scorching wind shall be their lot.

Jesus does warn us of hell (see Matthew 5:22-30; 10:28; 18:9 and 23:15,33), but it is not divine punishment. As the Catholic Catechism (1994) states (n. 1033): ‘To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining separated from God for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called “hell”.’

¹Flee like a bird. Flee to the mountains?

The psalmist's life is under threat. People are telling him to flee for his life. In advising him to flee to the mountains they are ignoring the deepest longings of his heart, which take him, not to the mountains, but to GOD.

Jesus knew this longing. At the Last Supper he prayed: 'Father, glorify me in your presence' (John 17:5),

and from the cross he prayed: 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23:46).

Jesus knew that we do not go to God alone.

He wanted his disciples to share his longing and his intimate communion with his Father. At the Last Supper he told his disciples: 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer' (Luke 22:15), and at that meal he promised to be with them whenever they gathered to remember him and to carry on his mission. He prayed: 'Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory' (John 17:24).

Paul shared this longing:

for the love of his companions: ‘God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus’ (Philippians 1:8);

and to share Jesus’ communion with God: ‘I long to depart and be with Christ (Philippians 1:23).

³When foundations are destroyed, what can the just do?

Israel is founded upon faith in God, who ‘**loves justice**’ (verse 7). The psalmist deplores the behaviour of those who have no regard for God, and who oppress the poor (verse 2). When the ruthless destroy the foundation of justice (verse 3), where can those who are faithful to the covenant go to find redress?

³When foundations are destroyed, what can the just do?

Praying this psalm as disciples of Jesus we are reminded that ‘the foundation is Jesus Christ’ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

As disciples of Jesus, our lives will be judged by how we respond to him and to his revelation. Peter assures us that it will be Jesus himself who will be our judge: ‘Jesus of Nazareth commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead’ (Acts 10:42).

Having sworn that he did not know Jesus (see John 18:25-27), Peter experienced Jesus’ judgment. All Jesus asked of him was love (see John 21:15-17).

⁴GOD's gaze is on the people on the earth.

We are invited to return that gaze by gazing on Jesus: 'If you have seen me, you have seen the Father' (John 14:9).

We are invited to 'look on the one whom we have pierced' (John 19:37).

With Stephen we are invited to gaze into heaven and see the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!' (Acts 7:56).

As Paul says: 'We look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen' (2 Corinthians 4:18).

'Every eye will see him, even those who pierced him' (Revelation 1:7).

7The upright will behold GOD's face.

The psalmist is confident that those who live a good life will experience God's presence and vindication. They will '**behold GOD's face.**' It is for this that Jesus longed, and he wanted it for everyone: 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God' (Matthew 5:8).

7The upright will behold GOD's face.

Paul speaks of 'what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him' (1 Corinthians 2:9).

'Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known' (1 Corinthians 13:12).

'We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God' (Romans 5:2). '

All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Psalm 11

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