

30. Psalms 90-93

Praying Psalm 90 with Jesus



Feed my sheep

¹O God*, you have been our refuge
from one generation to the next.

²Before there were mountains,
before you formed the earth and its continents,
you are our God, without beginning or end.

³You return us back to dust, children of earth back to earth.

⁴For you a thousand years are like yesterday come and gone,
passing like a watch in the night.

⁵You sweep away the years.

They pass like a dream upon awakening.

⁶They are like grass that springs up in the morning,
to wither and fade by the evening.

⁸You lay bare our guilt,
our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

⁹Our years come to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰Even if we live seventy years, or eighty if we are strong,
life is toil and trouble; the years soon pass, and we are gone.

¹²Teach us to make use of our days
that we may gain wisdom of heart.

Reflecting on the amount of suffering human beings endure in our all too brief life, the psalmist prays that God will desist from punishing us for our sins and look upon us with love so that we may prosper and experience happiness.

¹³How long, O GOD, before you turn back to us?
Have compassion on your servants!

¹⁴Fill us in the morning with your covenant love,
that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

¹⁵Give us joy to balance our affliction,
for the years when we have suffered misfortune.

¹⁶Let your servants, young and old,
witness the splendour of your action in our lives.
¹⁷Let the favour of our God, be upon us.
Give success to the work of our hands.
Give success to the work of our hands.

Omitted

*7 We are consumed by your anger,
overwhelmed by your wrath.*

9 All our days wither beneath your glance.

11 Who can grasp the power of your anger?

Who appreciates the force of your wrath?

Peter reminds us that God does not fit into time as we know it:

‘Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance’ (2 Peter 3:8-9).

The psalmist invites us to pray that God will reveal God’s Self, and through what God does will give meaning and value to what we do, however brief our life.

‘GOD will fulfil his purpose for me.

Your covenant love, O GOD, endures forever.

Do not forsake the work of your hands’ (Psalm 138:8).

Paul writes: 'It is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13).

'God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us [Jews and Gentiles] alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:4-7).

For disciples of Jesus the measure of the value of life is not terminated by physical death. Thanks to Jesus' resurrection, and his promise that we, too, will be raised into God's embrace for ever, we must entrust ourselves to God's love. When we pray **'Give success to the work of our hands'** (verse 17) we are not limiting our hopes to this life.

Paul writes: 'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us' (Romans 8:18).

John writes: 'I heard a voice from heaven saying, 'Write this: Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord.' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'they will rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them' (Revelation 14:13).

Psalm 90

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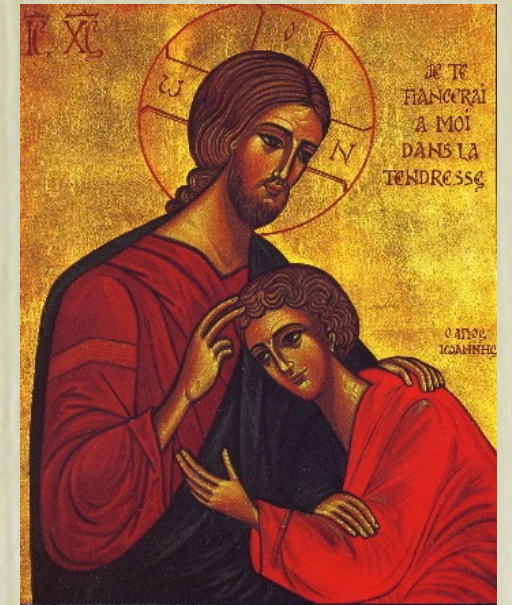
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Give success to the work of our hands.

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Praying Psalm 91 with Jesus



¹You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shade of the Almighty,

²say to GOD, 'My refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust.'

³Yes, God will deliver you from the snare of the hunter
and from the deadly pestilence.

⁴God will cover you as a bird covers its young.

God's wings will shelter you.

God's faithfulness is your armour.

⁵You will not fear the terrors of the night,
or the arrow that flies by day,

⁶or the pestilence that stalks in the dark,
or the destruction that strikes at noon.

⁷A thousand may fall at your side,
ten thousand at your right,
but you, you will not be harmed.

⁸You have only to open your eyes
to see how the wicked are punished.

⁹You have made GOD your refuge,
the Most High your dwelling.

¹⁰No evil will befall you, no scourge come near your tent.

¹¹For God will command the angels to guard you in all your ways.

¹²They will bear you up on their hands
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

¹³You will tread on the lion and the adder.
You will trample on the young lion and the serpent.

¹⁴‘I rescue those who cling to me in love. I protect those who know me.

¹⁵When I hear their cry, I answer, ‘I am with you.’

I am with them in trouble, I rescue them and bring them glory.

¹⁶With a long life I satisfy them, and show them my power to save.’

¹You who live in the shelter of the Most High,
who abide in the shade of the Almighty,
²say to GOD, 'My refuge, my fortress, my God in whom I trust.'

The liturgical leader is encouraging the community to trust in God, whom he calls 'The Most High', 'The Almighty', 'GOD', and 'my God'

⁴God will cover you as a bird covers its young.
God's wings will shelter you.

The wings of the cherubim covered the space over the cover of the ark which GOD had chosen to make his throne. God invites us into communion with God's own life. Sharing the sacred space we find protection.

¹¹God will command the angels to guard you in all your ways.

¹²They will bear you up on their hands
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

These verses are quoted in the scene where he speaks of Jesus being tempted (Matthew 4:6). Compare the following:

‘I am going to send an angel in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared’ (Exodus 23:20).

‘I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites’ (Exodus 33:2).

‘The angel of GOD encamps around those who revere GOD’ (Psalm 34:7).

In reference to his disciples Jesus said: 'Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven' (Matthew 18:10).

God's protection is expressed in terms of protecting from lion and serpent (verse 13). Compare the following from the gospels:

'See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you' (Luke 10:10).

'These signs will accompany those who believe: by using my name they will cast out demons ... they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them' (Mark 16:17-18).

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¹⁵When I hear their cry, I answer, ‘I am with you.’

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¹⁶With a long life I satisfy them, and show them my power to save.’

Here we have an oracle from God. God will care for those who love God, who know God intimately and who enter into dialogue with God.

See the following from the New Testament: ‘Keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering. After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you’ (1 Peter 5:8-10).

Psalm 91

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who abide in the shade of the Almighty,

²say to GOD, 'My refuge, my fortress,
my God in whom I trust.'

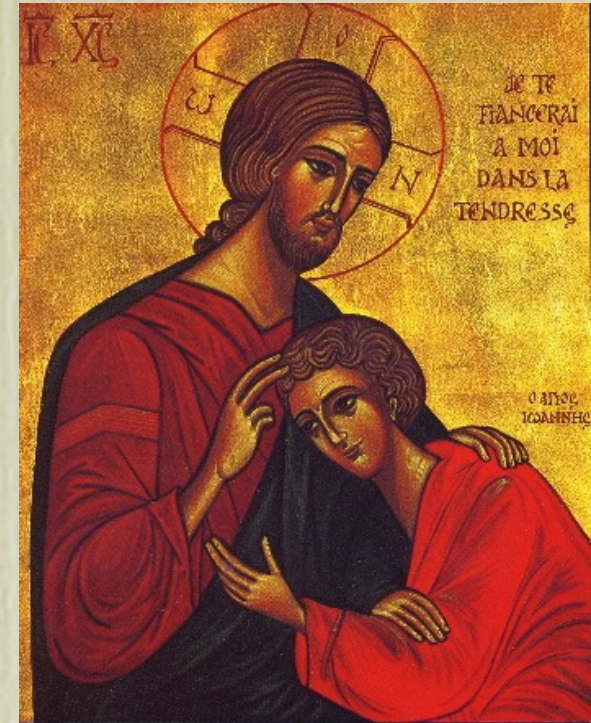
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Praying Psalm 92 with Jesus



¹How good it is to give you thanks, O GOD,
to make music in your honour, O Most High,
²to proclaim your covenant love in the morning,
and in the night your faithfulness,
³to the music of the lute and the harp, to the strumming of the lyre.

⁴Your deeds, O GOD, make me glad.

I sing for joy at the works of your hands.

⁵How great are your works! How deep your designs!

⁶The foolish cannot understand
that though the wicked sprout like grass,
⁷though evildoers flourish,
they are doomed to final destruction.

⁸You, O GOD, are for ever on high.

⁹Your enemies perish; all who do evil are scattered.

¹⁰To me you give the wild ox's strength.

You anoint me with the purest oil.

¹¹I have seen the downfall of my enemies.

I have heard the doom of my evil assailants.

¹²The righteous flourish like the palm tree,
and grow like a Lebanon cedar.

¹³They are planted in the house of GOD;
they flourish in the courts of our God.

¹⁴In old age the righteous still bear fruit;
they are always green and full of sap,

¹⁵proclaiming that GOD is upright;
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

The psalmist is bursting with joy. He takes delight in thanking GOD for the way God acts in history, including the way God has made the psalmist prevail over his enemies. People who lack wisdom are impressed by the fact that godless people are seen to flourish. The psalmist knows that those who do evil will finally be destroyed (verse 7), for ‘there is no wrong (no unrighteousness) in GOD’ (verse 15).

O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. Now in old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, so that I can proclaim your might and your power to the next generation: your power and your justice, O God, which reach to the heavens, and the great things that you have done. O God, who can compare with you?’ (Psalm 71:17-19).

‘I am like a green olive tree in the house of God.

I have always trusted in the covenant love of God’ (Psalm 52:8).

‘Those who are wise understand these things; those who are discerning know them. For the ways of GOD are right, and the upright walk in them, but transgressors stumble in them’ (Hosea 14:9).

‘They do not know the thoughts of GOD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor’ (Micah 4:12).

‘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’ (Matthew 11:25).

‘Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty!
Just and true are your ways, King of the nations!’ (Revelation 15:3).

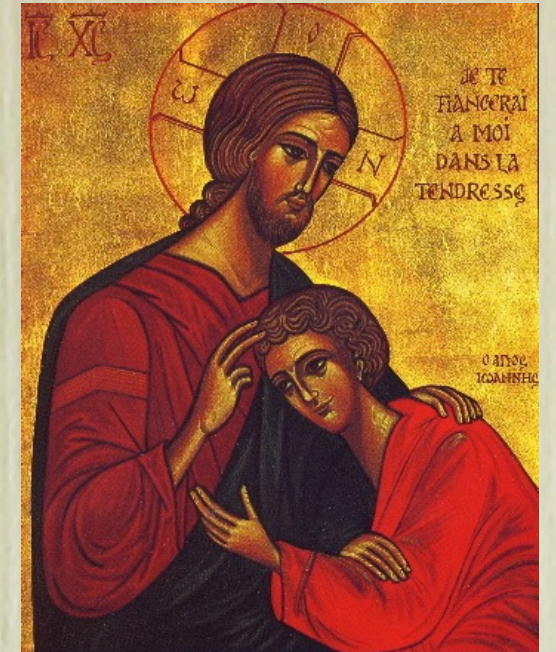
Peter reminds us that not all our enemies are outside. He speaks of ‘the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul’ (1 Peter 2:11).

We recall Jesus’ words: ‘It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person’ (Mark 7:20-23).

As we pray this psalm with Jesus we thank God that we, too, are ‘**planted in the house of GOD**’ (verse 13), as members of the Church, the Body of Christ.

Psalm 92

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my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

Praying Psalm 93 with Jesus



¹GOD is king, with majesty enrobed,
robed with might, girded with power.

The world you established, not to be moved.

²Your throne, O GOD, has stood firm from of old.
You are from all eternity.

³The torrents swell, the waters roar.
Hear the crashing of their waves.

⁴More majestic than the roar of mighty waters,
more glorious than the surging of the sea,
GOD is glorious on high.

⁵Truly your decrees are to be trusted.
Holiness is fitting to your house, O GOD, until the end of time.

This is a hymn to celebrate GOD's majesty and might. It is the first of seven psalms celebrating God's reign. It may have been composed to be sung on the occasion of a New Year re-enactment of God's act of creation. Say among the nations, 'GOD is king! The world is firmly established; it shall never be moved' (Psalm 96:10).

As Christians we reflect on the reign of God through the power and glory of the risen Christ: 'What is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named' (Ephesians 1:19-21).

'We give you thanks, Lord God Almighty, who are and who were, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign' (Revelation 11:17).

Many of Jesus' parables speak of the 'kingdom of heaven'. They describe the 'reign of God': what the world would be like if we opened our hearts and our lives to God's love as revealed by Jesus. In this sense we can speak of Jesus as a 'king' who is committed to bring about the reign of God's love in the world. As Jesus' disciples it is our privilege to be instruments of Jesus in bringing about this reign.

- a kingdom of one who lives: 'I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever' (Revelation 1:18). 'We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him' (Romans 6:9).
- an everlasting kingdom: 'He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end' (Luke 1:33).

- a kingdom of justice and peace (see the beatitudes, Matthew 5:6,9). ‘The kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Romans 14:17). ‘Christ Jesus became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption’ (1 Corinthians 1:30). ‘A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace’ (James 3:18).

- a kingdom of victory over oppression: ‘When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is safe. But when one stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted and divides his plunder’ (Luke 11:21-22). ‘They will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings’ (Revelation 17:14).

- a kingdom in favour of the poor: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5:3). 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free' (Luke 4:18). 'The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them' (Luke 7:22).
- a kingdom of liberation: '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). 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Matthew 20:28).

- a universal, all-embracing, kingdom. This is the point behind the story of the Magi in Matthew chapter two. It is also dramatised in the Pentecost scene in Acts chapter two.
- a kingdom to be acknowledged by all: 'At the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth' (Philippians 2:10). 'I saw an angel flying in mid heaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth – to every nation and tribe and language and people. He said in a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the springs of water"' (Revelation 14:6-7). 'All nations will come and worship you' (Revelation 15:4).

Psalm 93

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robed with might, girded with power.

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You are from all eternity.

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