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Introduction



The image of a small portion of Michelangelo's fresco, "Creation," found above serves as metaphor for this page's means and ends.

- ? How would you characterize God's arm in the fresco?
- ? How would you characterize Adam's arm?
- ? What is the message in Adam's limp wrist? In the fact that his arm rests on his knee?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we engage in scripture study and seek to understand scripture, scripture's divine author and our relationship to Him?
- ? How does Adam, as painted in Michelangelo's fresco, represent all of us as we seek God's enlivening, strengthening, and saving influence and presence in our daily lives?

Michelangelo reminds us of our desperate need for God's presence in our lives if we are to follow Him and be all that He hopes us to be. In relation to this page and its purposes, we are in need of God's help as we seek to understand and apply scripture.

The questions we posed and our brief commentary concerning the fresco represent an example of our approach to each scripture reading.

Scripture readings are accompanied by general and passage-specific questions to ponder along with brief comments. In addition to the passage-specific questions associated with each reading, the reader can apply the following **general questions** to most readings. These questions come from the purposes of scripture as identified in the introduction to our site, ponderthescriptures.com, found on the site's home page

- What does this reading reveal about the character of God?
- How and what does this reading testify of Christ?
- What wisdom and knowledge does this reading provide?
- How does this reading direct the way you think and act?
- Of what dangers does this reading warn? How does it help you avoid these dangers?
- How does this reading gladden your heart, encourage you, and give you hope?
- How does this reading expand your vision and increase your expectations of the possible?
- What does this reading discern or "read" about you?
- How will you apply this reading to your life, to how you relate with others, and to how you relate to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

It is not intended that the reader ponder every question. We introduce numerous and varied questions in hopes that readers will find a question or two that catches their imagination and interest, seems pertinent to their lives, and provides an opportunity for meaningful pondering and further spiritual insight. In addition, if the reader wishes, the many and varied ponder questions allow the reader to spend additional time to consider passages from various perspectives.

Finally, we suggest that during and after your reading and pondering experience you consider how you can incorporate your thoughts and feelings from the scripture reading into your personal prayer life. As you pray, share with Heavenly Father what you thought and felt as you studied and pondered. In your prayer, seek further insight from a God who is anxious to reveal himself, his will, and his interest in our lives. Incorporating your reading and pondering into your prayers can, we think, enliven a prayer life that can all too easily become mundane, mechanical, and rote.

Psalm 1.¹⁻²

¹How truly fulfilled is one who
does not walk as directed by the ungodly,
does not stand in the path of the unethical,
and does not sit in gatherings with sociopaths!
²Rather, their preference is for YHWH's direction
and they consult his Tôrâ at all times (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, following is the KJV.

¹Blessed is the man
that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,
nor standeth in the way of sinners,
nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

²But his delight is in the law of the LORD;
and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

1. The Psalmist speaks of “walking,” “standing,” and “sitting” with “the ungodly,” “sinners,” and “sociopaths” or “scoffers,” according to the KJV.
 - ? What is the significance of this progression?
 - ? How is “sitting” with someone indicative of more involvement or collaboration than either walking or standing with them?
 - ? How does wickedness and wicked behavior escalate in an individual's life?
2. The KJV speaks of “the scornful.”
 - ? What does it mean to you to be “scornful”?
 - ? The Hebrew word that is used usually does not refer to speech but behavior
 - ? What is “scornful” behavior?
 - ? Our translation, “sociopath,” is not meant to suggest a clinical diagnosis, but an individual who is “scornful” of society and societal norms. What does such scorn or sociopathy in and toward society manifest?
3. There are two opposing options. Follow the direction and values of the wicked. Or follow the direction and values of God.
 - ? What is your go to source for God's direction and values?

The Psalmist says that happiness comes through following God's direction and values.

- ? How is knowledge of his direction and values acquired?
- ? How high a priority is it for you to study and consult the scriptures?
- ? What is the evidence of this priority?

Psalm 1.³⁻⁴

³They are like a tree
that is planted near multiple water sources—
a tree that produces its fruit at the proper time
and whose leaves never wither.

So, they are fruitful in all that they do.

⁴The ungodly are not so,
but are like chaff that is blown away in the wind.

Questionary

In verse two of this psalm, the Psalmist reminded us that God’s word is absolutely crucial to our ability to avoid the many deceptions this world presents, to live a happy and enduring life, and to contribute to a healthy and enduring society—either in the here and now or in the hereafter.

For those who wish to compare translations, following is the KJV.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,
that bringeth forth his fruit in his season;
his leaf also shall not wither;
and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.
The ungodly are not so:
but are like the chaff
which the wind driveth away.

1. In today’s reading, the Psalmist utilizes two metaphors: one to emphasize the goodness of God’s word and the necessity of following it, and the other to emphasize the vanity of rejecting the directions God provides in his word.
 - ? What are the two metaphors?
 - ? How is the word of God like “*multiply* water sources”?
 - ? What is “chaff”? From what crop does it originate?
 - ? We understand the fruit enduring and the chaff blowing away, but what is the significance that even before harvest time, the two—the godly and the ungodly—are likened to entirely different plants—fruit trees and strands of wheat?
2. The Psalmist speaks of the fruitfulness of those who pay heed to and follow the word of God.
 - ? What does it mean to be fruitful?

Though a tree’s “fruitfulness,” brings the benefit of reproducing to the tree itself, we usually think of a tree’s fruitfulness in terms of the benefit it brings to those who partake of its fruit.

- ? How does this apply to our own “fruitfulness” that flows from our adherence to God’s word?
- ? What fruit are you producing that is beneficial to those around you?

Psalm 1.⁵⁻⁶

⁵Therefore, the ungodly should not participate in a place of decision making,
or the unethical have place in a just assembly.

⁶For, YHWH approves the norms of those who do right,
but the norms of the ungodly are to be eliminated.

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁵Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

⁶For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

1. With its, “the judgment,” the KJV has led most to read this verse in an eschatological way, seeing it as referencing some final judgment. My translation, on the other hand, places this verse in the context of leadership and governance, consistent with the opening verse’s concern with the direction one follows, accepts, and becomes part of.
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the message found in my translation?
 - ? How do unethical and immoral individuals pollute a body—religious or secular— responsible for making decisions concerning the norms, direction and advancement of society?

Psalm 2.¹⁻³— just scripture

- ¹Why do the nations raise such a ruckus,
and entire populations make a fuss¹ that will come to nothing?
²The world's kings offer resistance;
world leaders form a united front
against YHWH
and against his Māšiah.
³"We will break free of his restraints;
throw off his control," [they say].

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, following is the JKV.

- ¹Why do the heathen rage,
and the people imagine a vain thing?
²The kings of the earth set themselves,
and the rulers take counsel together,
against the LORD,
and against his anointed, saying,
³"Let us break their bands asunder,
and cast away their cords from us."

The original context for this psalm is most likely the rebellion of one of Judah's vassal states against Judah. It is, then, first and foremost, a political/ propagandistic document. It is also likely a cultic document in that it was likely used in Judah's temple. It was later adopted by Christianity as a "Messianic" psalm. The following readings with their questions for meditation will examine the Psalm from both perspectives.

We divide Psalm 2 into seven voices. With the first voice (vs. 1-2), the Psalmist himself wonders at the empty insanity of this world's kingdoms' rebellion against God. The second voice is that of those nations affirming their rebellion (vs. 3). The third voice is once more that of the Psalmist as he describes God's response to the insane rebellion (vs. 4-5). In the fourth voice, we hear that of God announcing his commitment to Judah's king (vs. 6). The fifth voice (vs. 7 a, b) is again that of the Psalmist as he announces his intention to relate God's word, which he does by quoting God's words (sixth voice) in verses 7c-9. In the seventh and final voice (vs. 10-12), we hear the Psalmist issue a stern warning for the kings of the earth that they give up their rebellion against God, recommending that they would be best served by submitting to God however disagreeable it may seem to them.

In today's reading, we examine the first two voices.

1. The Psalmist offers his perspective on the attitudes about and actions toward God on the part of nations and their leaders. He then offers evidence of these attitudes and actions toward God by directly quoting them.
 - ? Based upon the Psalmist's description of these attitudes and actions, how does he feel about the nations' rebellion against God?
 - ? Does he seem fearful? Indignant? Mocking?
 - ? What do you see in the Psalmist's description that makes you answer as you do?
2. While the original context for this complaint against world leaders might have been rebellion against Judah's king, anointed and placed upon the throne through Yahweh's sanction, it might also be read more universally.
 - ? How apt would the charge be today that the earth's nations, led by their ruling elites are in open rebellion against God?
 - ? What policies and activities on the part of the world's kingdoms suggest that the Psalmist's

indictment concerning national leaders' rebellion and crimes against God is as applicable today as it was then?

? What can you do to resist and reverse this ungodly rebellion?

3. In a well-known parable, Jesus tells of a king who makes the following pronouncement:

“Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matthew 25.⁴⁰).

? How does this New Testament assertion relate to the Psalmist's complaint about the rebellion against God on the part of the world's nations and their leaders?

? What does the treatment of “the least of these” on the part of nations and their leaders suggest concerning their attitudes and actions toward God and his rule?

? Comparing the world's treatment of “the least of these” with that of God, how comfortable, would you say, would nations and their leaders be with the Lord's manner of world leadership?

? What attitudes and actions toward “the least of these” on the part of the world's nations and their leaders evidence rebellion against the rule of God?

Psalm 2.⁴⁻⁵

third voice

⁴He who is enthroned in heaven cackles.

My Lord pokes fun of them.

⁵Then, in a flash, he addresses them furiously.

The intensity of his outburst alarms them (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁴He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh:

the Lord shall have them in derision.

⁵Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath,

and vex them in his sore displeasure.

The original context for this psalm is most likely the rebellion of one of Judah's vassal states against Judah. It is, then, first and foremost, a political/ propagandistic document. It is also likely a cultic document in that it was likely used in Judah's temple. It was later adopted by Christianity as a "Messianic" psalm. The following readings with their questions for meditation will examine the Psalm from both perspectives.

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1. In our previous reading from Psalm 2 (vs. 1-3), we read of the useless rebellion of the world's nations against Yahweh. In today's reading, we hear the third voice, that of the Psalmist, describing Yahweh's response to this rebellion.
 - ? How do you feel about God's response to the world's rebellion against him as the Psalmist portrays it here?
 - ? How likely is it, do you think, that this is actually how he response to rebellion against him, a rebellion that brings so much pain and suffering?
 - ? How do you explain the Psalmist's portrayal?
 - ? How does the fact that this psalm is likely a political document used in Judah's temple in response to a rebellion against Judah help you explain the Psalmist's portrayal of Yahweh?
 - ? How often do we project our own feelings and reactions to the world around us upon God?
 - ? How do we today misuse God and his supposed favor toward us as we respond to challenges to our views?
 - ? How do nations and politicians today misuse God and his supposed favor toward them as they respond to challenges to their power and views?
2. This Psalm has been used by Christians to describe Jesus (Messiah and Son of God), the rebellion against him, and his ultimate victory against those who rebel against him (In the N.T., see, for example, Acts 4.²⁵⁻²⁶).
 - ? How do you feel about this application to Christ?

- ? How must today's reading be "cleaned up" in order for it to apply to him—likely most readers are not comfortable with Jesus making sport of and poking fun at those who rebel against him?
- ? How is Jesus a different sort of king than any king of ancient Judah or Israel?

Psalm 2.⁶⁻⁹

fourth voice

⁶ “I have installed my chosen king
on Şîyôn, the mount I set apart for myself.”

fifth voice

⁷ Let me, then, rehearse YHWH’s decree:
He said to me,

sixth voice

“You are my son;
I have, this very day, begotten you.

⁸ Ask me,
and I will give whole nations to you as an inheritance.
Your territory will extend to the ends of the earth.

⁹ You will break their power with an iron scepter;
You will shatter them in pieces as if they were merely clay vessels” (author’s translation).

Q

uestionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁶“Yet have I set my king
upon my holy hill of Zion.”

⁷I will declare the decree:
the LORD hath said unto me,

“Thou art my Son;
this day have I begotten thee.

⁸Ask of me,
and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

⁹Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.”

The original context for this psalm is most likely the rebellion of one of Judah’s vasa states against Judah. It is, then, first and foremost, a political/ propagandistic document. It is also likely a cultic document in that it was likely used in Judah’s temple. It was later adopted by Christianity as a “Messianic” psalm. The following readings with their questions for meditation will examine the Psalm from both perspectives.

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1. We should consider it first in its original political context.
 - ? God calls Judah’s king His Son. What does this mean in the context of ancient near eastern culture?
 - ? What are your thoughts when you consider that many, if not most, ancient monarchs were, to greater and lesser extents, considered “divine”?

- ? What is the objective of God’s reaffirmation concerning his appointment of Judah’s king in light of other nations’ rebellion that sought to throw off Judah’s dominance?
- ? What, do you think, do the rebellious nations hear in God’s promise that

“You [the Jewish king] will break their power with an iron scepter;
You will shatter them in pieces as if they were merely clay vessels.”

- 2. We now consider this reading in light of later Christianity’s Messianic reading.
 - ? How does this reading apply to Jesus of Nazareth?
 - ? What are your thoughts and feelings when you consider that today’s reading, when viewed Messianically, promises that Jesus of Nazareth will “break” the power of nations and “shatter them in pieces as if they were merely clay vessels”?

Consider the following passages from the Doctrine and Covenants.

“For I, the Almighty, have laid my hands upon the nations, to scourge them for their wickedness. And plagues shall go forth, and they shall not be taken from the earth until I have completed my work, which shall be cut short in righteousness— (DC 84.⁹⁶⁻⁹⁷).

“And verily I say unto you, the rest of my servants, go ye forth as your circumstances shall permit, in your several callings, unto the great and notable cities and villages, reproving the world in righteousness of all their unrighteous and ungodly deeds, setting forth clearly and understandingly the desolation of abomination in the last days. For, with you saith the Lord Almighty, I will rend their kingdoms; I will not only shake the earth, but the starry heavens shall tremble” (DC 84.¹¹⁷⁻¹¹⁸).

“For behold, and lo, vengeance cometh speedily upon the ungodly as the whirlwind; and who shall escape it? The Lord’s scourge shall pass over by night and by day, and the report thereof shall vex all people; yea, it shall not be stayed until the Lord come; for the indignation of the Lord is kindled against their abominations and all their wicked works” (DC 97.²²⁻²⁴).

“Mine indignation is soon to be poured out without measure upon all nations; and this will I do when the cup of their iniquity is full” (DC 101.¹¹).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, darkness covereth the earth, and gross darkness the minds of the people, and all flesh has become corrupt before my face. Behold, vengeance cometh speedily upon the inhabitants of the earth, a day of wrath, a day of burning, a day of desolation, of weeping, of mourning, and of lamentation; and as a whirlwind it shall come upon all the face of the earth, saith the Lord” (DC 112.²³⁻²⁴).

- ? What do you think and feel when you read such latter-day warnings?

Psalm 2.¹⁰⁻¹²

seventh voice

- ¹⁰ Now then, O kings, be prudent.
Learn your lesson, O rulers of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve YHWH with deference.
Find contentment in groveling before him.
- ¹² Kiss the Son's feet
lest he become enraged, and you destroyed;
for his fury can flare up in a flash.

benediction/ assurance

Enduring are all who seek refuge in him.

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ¹⁰ Be wise now therefore, O ye kings:
be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
- ¹¹ Serve the LORD with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
- ¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,
when his wrath is kindled but a little.
- Blessed are all they
that put their trust in him.

The original context for this psalm is most likely the rebellion of one of Judah's vassal states against Judah. It is, then, first and foremost, a political/ propagandistic document. It is also likely a cultic document in that it was likely used in Judah's temple. It was later adopted by Christianity as a "Messianic" psalm. The following readings with their questions for meditation will examine the Psalm from both perspectives.

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1. In its original setting, we understand today's reading to be a warning to the kings rebelling against Judah's dominion over them that they cease their rebellion against Judah's king and pledge allegiance to him.
 - ? How would you characterize the difference between my translation and that of the KJV?
 - ? How do you feel about the intimidating language found in my translation?
 - ? When you imagine kings doing obeisance to Judah's king, what does it look like?

In the ancient world, this is what the obeisance of one king to another looked like. This is a relief from a stela known as the "Black Obelisk." On it, the Jewish king, Jehu, is depicted doing obeisance to the Assyrian king, Shalmaneser III, after a failed attempt on the part of Jehu to rebel against Assyrian rule.



- ? What do you think and feel when you relate this image to Psalm 2?
 - ? What is the purpose of having someone kiss one's feet as an act of obeisance?
2. In a Christian Messianic reading of this text, the ruler of this world yield to Jesus Christ.
- ? What, do you imagine, will be the attitude of these rulers?
 - ? Will the handing over of power to Jesus be voluntary and performed happily?

The scriptures speak here and there about worshippers kissing Jesus' feet.

- ? What does this look and feel like when you contemplate it?
- ? Will all do so willingly and worshipfully?
- ? How will it feel to those who, like Satan, really do not wish to yield their will or power to him?
- ? To what degree do you already, in your daily life, yield your will and power to Jesus? Why do you answer as you do?

Psalm 3.¹⁻³

¹YHWH! How my adversaries have multiplied!
How numerous are those that rise against me!

²How many are those who say of me:
“He’ll get no help from ’ēlohîm”!

³But You, YHWH, are my battle shield,
defender of my reputation and the one who restores my standing. (author’s translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹LORD, how are they increased that trouble me!
many are they that rise up against me.

²Many there be which say of my soul,
“There is no help for him in God.”

³But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me;
my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

1. While the Psalms represent Israel’s ancient prayer book utilized in its temple and so, as prayers, has God as the principal focus. That said, “the enemy” appears with extraordinary frequency. “The enemy” is specifically mentioned around one hundred times in the King James Bible’s Book of Psalms and is in the Psalmist’s mind even more often.
 - ? What are your thoughts and feelings as you consider the frequency with which “enemies” appear and occupy the Psalmist’s mind?
 - ? How does this frequent concern about enemies influence and apply to your life?
 - ? With it make a difference if we spoke of feelings of enmity you might feel toward others and others might feel toward you? If so, how?
 - ? How do Satan and his minions play the role of enemies?
2. The enemy asserts that the Psalmist will “get no help from God.” This might, at times, be thought of as a statement of disbelief in God and his ability to help. But here it plays another role.
 - ? What role is that?
 - ? How do you feel when you contemplate the enemy’s claim that their enemies will receive no divine help because of their own character flaws?
 - ? How does Satan use this ploy in his attacks against us?
 - ? What do you do to resist Satan’s strategy of defamation against you?
3. Contrary to the enemy’s assertion that God will not help the Psalmist, the Psalmist possesses unwavering faith that God will act as his “shield.”
 - ? What comes to your mind when you read of God being likened to a “shield”?
4. The King James translates a very literal, “the lifter up of mine head.”
 - ? What does “the lifter up of mine head” mean to you?
 - ? What other meanings could the lifting of the head have?

Psalm 3.⁴⁻⁶

⁴I'll publicly and loudly appeal to YHWH,
and He will answer me from His temple preeminent.

⁵I retire, sleep peacefully,
and awake, knowing that YHWH supports me.

⁶I'll not fear though a force of ten thousand
surround and array themselves against me (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁴I cried unto the LORD with my voice,
and he heard me out of his holy hill.

⁵I laid me down and slept;
I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

⁶I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people,
that have set themselves against me round about.

1. In Psalm 3.1-3, the Psalmist complains of his numerous enemies and of their claim that he cannot depend upon God's support against them. He then challenges his enemies claim.
? What does the Psalmist say in today's reading that demonstrates his continued faith in God?
2. Even in the midst of his challenges, the Psalmist finds that he can sleep well and awake refreshed.
? What do you think when you read this?
? Have you gone through times when challenges and worries kept you up at night? How could the Psalmist testimony help you in such times?
3. The Psalmist says that he will not fear even if he is surrounded by "a force of ten thousand."
? How do you feel when you read such confidence?
? How can you fight your fears through God and faith in Him?
? What could you do to deepen your confidence in God's awareness of, interest in, and willingness to help you in regard to those fears and worries?

Psalm 3.⁷⁻⁸

⁷Arise, then, YHWH;
deliver me, my God
by hitting all my enemies in the mouth—
shattering the teeth of the ungodly.

⁸This victory is YHWH's doing.
Your blessing be upon Your people (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁷Arise, O Lord;
save me, O my God:
for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone;
thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.
⁸Salvation belongeth unto the Lord:
thy blessing is upon thy people.

As we have seen in our previous readings from verses 1-6, the Psalmist's character was under assault from a large number of detractors. These enemies claimed that he had no right to lay claim on God's protection. Yet, he continued to trust in God until he received a reassuring promise that God would come to his defense.

1. It at this point and with this encouraging promise that the Psalmist makes the request found in verse 7.
 - ? What do you see when you envision his enemies being struck in the mouth with such force that their teeth are shattered and broken?
 - ? How do you feel about the violent way in which he hopes to be defended?
 - ? Given that this is poetry, we need not understand the violence to be literal or physical. So how are we to understand the imagery?
 - ? What does it tell you about the Psalmist's enemies that only some dramatic act on the part of God could convince them to reform their ways and cease their defamation of the Psalmist?
2. The Psalmist affirms that "This victory is YHWH's doing."
 - ? What is the importance of this affirmation?
 - ? Why is it important to acknowledge God's hand in all good things?

Psalm 4.¹

¹When I appeal to you, answer me,
Oh, my God, the one who vindicates me.
Make me equal to the challenge before me.
Have compassion, and give heed to my plea (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹Hear me when I call,
O God of my righteousness:
thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress;
have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

1. We structure this psalm as follows:

Verse 1	The Psalmist addresses God
Verses 2-6	The Psalmist enters into disputation with his detractors
Verses 7-8	The Psalmist addresses God

? How does this structuring influence your understanding of the Psalm?
2. In addressing God, the Psalmist asks that God “make me equal to the challenge before me.”

? As you continue to read, what is the nature of the challenge?
? What challenges have you faced that God has given you strength, knowledge, etc. to overcome?
3. In my translation, the Psalmist refers to God as “the One who vindicates me” (literally, God of my vindication). In the KJV, the reference is to “God of my righteousness.”

? What do you think of God as you read these two descriptions of Him?
? Does one or the other come closest to describing God as you think of and experience Him?
Why do you answer as you do?

Psalm 4.²⁻⁶

²How long will you men of repute smear my reputation?

How long will you love falsehood
and seek after deception?

³Know this: YHWH is attentive to those devoted to him;
it is YHWH that responds when I cry out to Him.

⁴Be agitated, but do not act offensively.

Examine yourselves in private.
Just be calm!

⁵Offer approved sacrifices,
and put your trust in YHWH.

⁶Many might respond, “Who will show us what’s right?”

Oh, cast the light of your presence upon us, YHWH! (author’s translation)

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?

how long will ye love vanity,
and seek after leasing?

³But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself:
the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

⁴Stand in awe, and sin not:
commune with your own heart upon your bed,
and be still.

⁵Offer the sacrifices of righteousness,
and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶There be many that say, “Who will shew us any good?”

LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

Remember, we read these verses as disputation between the Psalmist and his detractors against whom the Psalmist asks for help.

1. In verse 2, we learn that the Psalmist’s detractors seek to harm and smear his reputation.

? What are the most common ways that individuals seek to hurt another’s reputation?

? How common today are attempts to smear another’s reputation?

? What are the reasons behind attempts to hurt another’s reputation?

? How does tearing down another serve as an attempt to build oneself up?

2. Consider the following counsel/ warnings that the Psalmist offers his detractors.

- “Know this: YHWH is attentive to those devoted to him;
it is YHWH that responds when I cry out to Him.”

? What should the Psalmist’s detractors take from this?

? How will they become the enemies of God in remaining the enemies of the Psalmist?

- “Be agitated, but do not act offensively.”

? How are the Psalmist’s detractors sinning in their agitation at the Psalmist?

? How does personal frustration often lead to the sin of attacking others?

- “Examine yourselves in private.
Just be calm!”

- ? What does the Psalmist hope his detractors learn about themselves through careful self-examination?
 - ? When has honest self-reflection helped you see your own error and avoid the sin of taking your personal frustrations out on others?
 - “Offer approved sacrifices,
and put your trust in YHWH.”
 - ? How does having confidence in God help us avoid the sin of trying to detract from other’s qualities and achievements?
3. In verse 6, the Psalmist says, “Many respond, ‘Who will show us what’s right?’” We understand this to be response to the Psalmist’s disputation.
- ? What is their complaint about the Psalmist’s counsel to them?

Consider this exchange between Nephi and his brothers, Laman and Lemuel.

“*I beheld my brethren, and they were disputing one with another concerning the things which my father had spoken unto them. For he truly spake many great things unto them, which were hard to be understood, save a man should inquire of the Lord; and they being hard in their hearts, therefore they did not look unto the Lord as they ought.

And now I, Nephi, was grieved because of the hardness of their hearts, and also, because of the things which I had seen, and knew they must unavoidably come to pass because of the great wickedness of the children of men. *I was overcome because of my afflictions, for I considered that mine afflictions were great above all, because of the destruction of my people, for I had beheld their fall.

*After I had received strength I spake unto my brethren, desiring to know of them the cause of their disputations. And they said: ‘Behold, we cannot understand the words which our father hath spoken concerning the natural branches of the olive tree, and also concerning the Gentiles.’

And I said unto them: ‘Have ye inquired of the Lord?’

And they said unto me: ‘We have not; for the Lord maketh no such thing known unto us’” (1 Ne. 15.²⁻⁹).

- ? How does this exchange relate to that found in Psalm 4?
- ? How are those who respond to the Psalmist like Laman and Lemuel in this Book of Mormon passage?

Psalm 4.⁷⁻⁸

- ⁷You bring me a deep-rooted joy,
a joy greater than that induced by an abundant grain harvest or supply of new wine.
⁸Completely at peace, I will lie down and fall fast asleep;
for only you, YHWH, allow me to rest securely (author's translation).

Q

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For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ⁷Thou hast put gladness in my heart,
more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.
⁸I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep:
for thou, LORD, only
makest me dwell in safety.

In psalm 4, the Psalmist addresses his God directly in verses 1 and 7-8. In the intervening verses, he addresses in disputation style an unnamed group of detractors.

1. In today's reading the Psalmist shares the supreme joy he finds in his God.

“You bring me a deep-rooted joy,
a joy greater than that induced by an abundant grain harvest or supply of new wine.”

- ? What do you hear the Psalmist's saying here? Can you relate?

In a day when food is available on demand through fast food restaurants and packed grocery stores, we may not appreciate the Psalmist's sentiments. But let's try. Imagine it is harvest time. Imagine, too, that what and even whether you eat in November and December and January and February and March depends on the quality of the harvest. The harvest is a matter of health or sickness, life or death.

- ? How anxious are you that the harvest be plentiful?
? How happy are you when it becomes clear that the harvest is plentiful enough to carry you safely through the winter?

So, the Psalmist declares that his joy in God surpasses the joy that comes from the security found in a plentiful harvest and supply of food. Consider your own feelings and priorities.

- ? Can you relate to the Psalmist's immeasurable joy in and appreciation for God?
? Do you value your God, your relationship with Him, and His presence and help in your life more than any other thing, place, person, etc.?
? Where are your priorities and how are they reflected in your daily life?

2. Consider the following passages and how they relate to your priorities and the Psalmist's example of priorities properly placed.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6.³³).

“And the angel said unto me: ‘Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father! Knowest thou the meaning of the tree which thy father saw?’

And I answered him, saying: ‘Yea, it is the love of God, which sheddeth itself abroad in the hearts of the children of men; wherefore, it is the most desirable above all things.’

And he spake unto me, saying: ‘Yea, and the most joyous to the soul’” (1 Ne. 11.²¹⁻²³).

“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things. Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time,

and in his own way, and according to his own will. Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you; cast away your idle thoughts....” (DC 88.⁶⁷⁻⁶⁹)

3. The Psalmist’s final words express his supreme confidence in God.

“Completely at peace, I will lie down and fall fast asleep;
for only you, YHWH, allow me to rest securely”

The Psalmist’s declaration might remind you of Moroni’s testimony that in administering to members of the church he teaches them to rely “alone upon the merits of Christ, who was the author and the finisher of their faith” (Moro. 6.⁴). It might also be related to another of the Psalmist’s testimonies: “his [Yahweh’s] name alone is excellent” (Ps. 148.¹³).

- ? Have you found yourself thinking and feeling similar to what the Psalmist expresses in today’s reading?
- ? Why is it, do you think, that the Psalmist feels safe and secure *only* through the Lord?
- ? What, in your mind, is the importance of that word, “only”?

Compare this notice from Moroni 6.⁴.

“And after they had been received unto baptism, and were wrought upon and cleansed by the power of the Holy Ghost, they were numbered among the people of the church of Christ; and their names were taken, that they might be remembered and nourished by the good word of God, to keep them in the right way, to keep them continually watchful unto prayer, *relying alone upon the merits of Christ*, who was the author and the finisher of their faith.”

- ? How does this relate and comport with the Psalmist’s feelings?

Psalm 5.¹⁻³

¹O give ear, YHWH, to my words.

Give heed to my groanings.

²Give close attention to my call for help, my King and God,
for it is to You that I present my plea!

³YHWH, You'll hear my voice in the morning.

At first light, I'll present myself to You and await Your response... (author's translation).

Questionary

Today's is our 5th reading for Lent 2024.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹Give ear to my words, O LORD,
consider my meditation.

²Hearken unto the voice of my cry,
my King, and my God:
for unto thee will I pray.

³My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD;
in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

1. Another purpose of Lent is to deepen the quality of one's prayer life. As part of his prayer, the Psalmist says,

“YHWH, You'll hear my voice in the morning.

At first light, I'll present myself to You and await Your response...”

The Psalmist's “You'll hear my voice in the morning,” could indicate his confidence that God will hear him. On the other hand, it could indicate the Psalmist's commitment to prayer.

- ? Do you hear one or the other? Both? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? How important is prayer to you as a way of beginning the day?
 - ? How would you judge your regular prayer life?
 - ? What do you do to avoid rote kinds of prayers?
 - ? What do you do to strive for more communicative prayers?
 - ? How much of your “prayer time” is dedicated to being the speaker as opposed to being the listener?
 - ? How could you become a better listener in prayer?
 - ? How much of your prayer time is devoted to making requests as opposed to sharing thoughts, impressions, activities with God?
 - ? How, do you imagine, God feels about your balance of the two?
 - ? How much of your prayer time is dedicated to worshipping God—talking to Him about Him, about his character, sharing your feelings for Him, and maybe even asking Him questions about Himself?
2. The Psalmist commits himself to morning prayer.
 - ? How important is prayer to you as a way of beginning the day?
 3. The Psalmist asks three times that God hear his plea for help.
 - ? What does this suggest about the nature of the Psalmist's challenges to which he will later refer (verses 9-10) and the intense need for help that he feels?
 - ? In what circumstances have you felt the most intense need for help and thus engaged in your most intense prayers? How did it turn out?
 - ? For those who have been through an LDS endowment session... any additional thoughts about the thrice repeated appeal to God?

4. The Psalmist says that he will “present” himself to God. The Hebrew word means to “lay out, or order.”
 - ? What do you think and feel when consider presenting or laying yourself out to God?
 - ? How are your prayers a “presentation” of yourself to God?
 - ? How comfortable are you laying yourself out for God’s observation?
5. The Psalmist says that he will “await” God’s response.
 - ? How confident are you as you approach God in prayer that you will get a response?
 - ? What makes you more or less confident of God’s response?

Psalm 5.⁴⁻⁷

⁴knowing that You are not a God who takes pleasure in willful wrongdoing;
that cruelty cannot find safety in You;

⁵that those who intend harm cannot stand in Your presence;
that You reject all who act abusively.

⁶that You bring an end to those who utter falsehood;
that YHWH abhors the violent and deceptive individual.

⁷But, as for me, because of the immensity of Your unwavering devotion to me,
I can enter Your house.

I can bow down in Your sacred temple precincts;
bow in reverence to You (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁴For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness:
neither shall evil dwell with thee.

⁵The foolish shall not stand in thy sight:
thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

⁶Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing:
the LORD will abhor
the bloody and deceitful man.

⁷But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy:
and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

In verses 1-3, the Psalmist pleads to God for help. He confesses his commitment to prayer, promising that the morning would find him on his knees in prayer and confident that God would respond.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist reveals the reasons for his confidence that God will hear and respond to his pleas.
? What reasons for the Psalmist's confidence do you find in verses 4-7?
2. The Psalmist lists individuals and behaviors in which God does not take pleasure, will not protect, and will not grant access to Him. More actively, the Psalmist lists individuals and behaviors that God rejects, abhors, and will bring to an end.
? What is the character and behavior of such individuals?
? What do those who do harm (vs. 5) and abuse (vs. 5) others, lie (vs. 6), act violently toward others all have in common?
? How do you feel about God's rejection of such individuals?
3. The Psalmist's confidence in God flows, in part, from his knowledge that he is innocent of the wicked character traits and behaviors found in verses 4-6. In addition, his confidence in God is based on God's own "unwavering devotion" to him.
? What does "unwavering devotion" mean to you?
? What do you think and feel when you consider that God possesses "unwavering devotion"?

Psalm 5.⁸⁻¹⁰

⁸YHWH, bring me acquittal
in response to my accusers.

Grant me access to You.

⁹Because nothing coming out of their mouth has been proven;
because ruinous intent resides deep inside them;
because their throat is an open grave;
because their tongue is a slippery slope

¹⁰O ^εlōhīm, pronounce them guilty.

Let them fall prey to their own malicious intentions.

Banish them because of the enormity of their legal overstep,
since their defiance is really directed against You (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁸Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness
because of mine enemies;
make thy way straight before my face.

⁹For there is no faithfulness in their mouth;
their inward part is very wickedness;
their throat is an open sepulchre;
they flatter with their tongue.

¹⁰Destroy thou them, O God;
let them fall by their own counsels;
cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions;
for they have rebelled against thee.

In verses 1-3, the Psalmist pled to God for help. He confessed his commitment to prayer, promising that the morning would find him on his knees in prayer and confident that God would respond. In verses 4-7, the Psalmist reveals the reasons for his confidence that God will hear and respond to his pleas. His confidence stems from two facts. First, he is innocent of the charges brought against him. Second, he knows that it is in God's character to be devoted to those who trust in Him.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist adds a third reason for his confidence that God will come to his aid against his accusers.

? What is that third reason?

The Psalmist knows that his accusers are factually wrong about him. But he also knows their intentions and, indeed, their very dispositions.

? What are the Psalmist's accusers' intentions and dispositions? What do you find in the text to justify your answer?

? How do you feel about the accusers?

? To what extent do we find people in our society who are willing to bend the truth in order to rain down harm on others? Why do you answer as you do?

2. Because of his enemies' lies and harmful intentions, the Psalmist asks,

“Let them fall prey to their own malicious intentions.

Banish them because of the enormity of their legal overstep...”

? How do you feel about the Psalmist desire that his enemies fail in their intentions and, indeed, suffer the very evil that they tried to bring upon others?

? When is it appropriate to hope and pray that those with evil intentions fail in their intentions? Why do you answer as you do?

3. The Psalmist maintains that in attacking the him, his enemies' "defiance is really directed against" God.
 - ? How do you explain the Psalmist's assertion other than by thinking of him as a self-righteous, self-possessed, and arrogant narcissist?
 - ? How does the following passage relate to the Psalmist's assertion?

"Then shall he answer them, saying, 'Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me'" (Matt. 25.⁴⁵; see 31-46 for entire parable).

Psalm 6.¹⁻⁵

¹YHWH! Please don't correct me in anger!

Don't discipline me while inflamed.

²Have pity on me, YHWH, for I am incapacitated.

Restore me, YHWH, for I am shaken to the core.

³I am filled with great terror.

And I ask you, YHWH,

"How long will this go on?"

⁴Come back, YHWH! Deliver me!

Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion,

⁵for in death there is no thought of you.

Who praises you in š'ôl? (author's translation)

Questionary

Today's is the first of two readings that come from the first of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These psalms have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent "afflicts their soul" and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV

¹O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger,

neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

²Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:

O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

³My soul is also sore vexed:

but thou, O LORD, how long?

⁴Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:

oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

⁵For in death there is no remembrance of thee:

in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

1. The Psalmist speaks of God's "anger" and of God bring "inflamed." Some question whether God really experiences in his own being "anger." Some who feel that he does experience anger, emphasize that what is called "anger" in God is something very different than the anger experienced by humans—whereas anger in humans manifests, among other things, a lack of self-control (increase in heart-rate increases, for example, which cannot be controlled, etc), God is always in control.
 - ? What do you do with statements about God's anger?
 - ? In the midst of the penitent's disappointment, guilt, and, sometimes, despair over sin, does it really matter to the penitent whether God's anger is something different than or similar to human anger?
 - ? Given the penitent's intense feelings concerning their sins, does it even make a difference to the penitent's mental and emotional state whether God is indeed angry, in whatever manner, or whether that sense of divine anger is only imagined?
2. In today's short reading, the Psalmist pleads for God's "pity" and speaks of God's "unwavering devotion."
 - ? In general, under what circumstances is "pity" needed and under what circumstances is "pity" offered?
 - ? "Pity" is nearly always associated with human difficulty, trouble, anguish, and pain that is

- overwhelming. How does God show “pity” in human trial?
- ? Are you in need of God’s pity—that is to say, do you need assistance in relation to any trials?
 - ? How much “control” do you really have over whether God has pity on you or not?
3. The Psalmist’s speaks of being “incapacitated,” of being “shaken to the core,” and of being “filled with great terror.”
- ? What do you think and feel when you read such intense language?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you hear the Psalmist boldly ask, “How long will this go on?” and when you hear the desperate plea, “Come back!”?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Psalmist’s intermittent feelings that God has abandoned him?
 - ? Have you ever felt that God had abandoned you? How might this Psalm help in such moments and times?
4. In the KJV, the Psalmist ask that God “save me for thy mercies’ sake respond to his need “for thy mercies’ sake.”
- ? What does that phrase, “for thy mercies’ sake” mean to you?
- My translation reads, “Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion.”
- ? How does my “commensurate with...” clarify the KJV, “for thy mercies’ sake”?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that “pity” for those in need and an “unwavering devotion” to them is part of God’s character that can be counted on?
5. This reading ends with this heavy complaint.
- “For in death there is no thought of you.
Who praises you in še’ól?”
- ? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the Psalmist’s trial?

Psalm 6.²⁻⁷

²Have pity on me, YHWH, for I am incapacitated.
Restore me, YHWH, for I am shaken to the core.
³I am filled with great terror.
And I ask you, YHWH,
“How long will this go on?”
⁴Come back, YHWH! Deliver me!
Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion,
⁵for in death there is no awareness of you.
Who praises you in š’ôl?
⁶I am worn out from mourning.
All night long I inundate my bed with tears.
I flood my bedchamber.
⁷My sight blurs because of my anguish.
It dims because of my all-embracing distress.

Today’s is the 9th reading for Lent 2024.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

²Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak:
O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.
³My soul is also sore vexed:
but thou, O LORD, how long?
⁴Return, O LORD, deliver my soul:
oh save me for thy mercies’ sake.
⁵For in death there is no remembrance of thee:
in the grave who shall give thee thanks?
⁶I am weary with my groaning;
all the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
⁷Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

For today’s Lent reading, we return to the Penitential Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). These psalms have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent “afflicts their soul” and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

1. The Psalmist speaks of God’s “anger” and of God bring “inflamed.” Some question whether God really experiences in his own being “anger.” Some who feel that he does experience anger, emphasize that what is called “anger” in God is something very different than the anger experienced by humans—whereas anger in humans manifests, among other things, a lack of self-control (increase in heart-rate increases, for example, which cannot be controlled, etc), God is always in control.
 - ? What do you do with statements about God’s anger?
 - ? In the midst of the penitent’s disappointment, guilt, and, sometimes, despair over sin, does it really matter to the penitent whether God’s anger is something different than or similar to human anger?
 - ? Given the penitent’s intense feelings concerning their sins, does it even make a difference to the penitent’s mental and emotional state whether God is indeed angry, in whatever manner, or whether that sense of divine anger is only imagined?

2. In today's short reading, the Psalmist pleads for God's "pity" and speaks of God's "unwavering devotion."
 - ? In general, under what circumstances is "pity" needed and under what circumstances is "pity" offered?
 - ? "Pity" is nearly always associated with human difficulty, trouble, anguish, and pain that is overwhelming. How does God show "pity" in human trial?
 - ? Are you in need of God's pity—that is to say, do you need assistance in relation to any trials?
 - ? How much "control" do you really have over whether God has pity on you or not?

3. The Psalmist's speaks of being "incapacitated," of being "shaken to the core," and of being "filled with great terror."
 - ? What do you think and feel when you read such intense language?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you hear the Psalmist boldly ask, "How long will this go on?" and when you hear the desperate plea, "Come back!"?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Psalmist's intermittent feelings that God has abandoned him?
 - ? Have you ever felt that God had abandoned you? How might this Psalm help in such moments and times?

4. In the KJV, the Psalmist ask that God "save me for thy mercies' sake respond to his need "for thy mercies' sake."
 - ? What does that phrase, "for thy mercies' sake" mean to you?

My translation reads, "Rescue me commensurate with your unwavering devotion."

 - ? How does my "commensurate with..." clarify the KJV, "for thy mercies' sake"?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that "pity" for those in need and an "unwavering devotion" to them is part of God's character that can be counted on?

5. In verse 5, the Psalmist complains.

"For in death there is no thought of you.
Who praises you in š'e'ôl?"

 - ? What does this tell you about the seriousness of the Psalmist's trial?
 - ? How will you utilize today's reading as you seek forgiveness and the willing and happy presence of God in your life?

Psalm 6.⁶⁻¹⁰

- ⁶I am worn out from mourning.
All night long I inundate my bed with tears.
I flood my bedchamber.
- ⁷My sight blurs because of my anguish.
It dims because of my all-embracing distress.
- ⁸Leave me alone, all you, who would do me harm,
or YHWH has heard my weeping.
- ⁹YHWH has heard my cry for help.
YHWH has accepted my prayer.
- ¹⁰All my enemies will be disappointed and greatly dismayed.
They retreat. They are thwarted, in the blink of an eye.

Questionary

Today's reading is the second of two that come from the first of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent, when the penitent "afflicts their soul" and hopes for a renewal and/or deepening of engagement and lively relationship with God.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ⁶I am weary with my groaning;
all the night make I my bed to swim;
I water my couch with my tears.
- ⁷Mine eye is consumed because of grief;
it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.
- ⁸Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity;
for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.
- ⁹The LORD hath heard my supplication;
the LORD will receive my prayer.
- ¹⁰Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed:
let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

- ? What language in today's reading indicates that the Psalmist "afflicts his soul" as he seeks forgiveness and atonement.
 - ? What helps does Psalm 6 offer in your life of repentance and search for forgiveness?
1. It might seem odd that in his distress concerning his sins, the Psalmist also vents concerning his "enemies" (this is a common feature of the Psalms).
 - ? What do you make of the presence of enemies in this setting?
 - ? Many interpret these enemies as accusers, who look for and charge the Psalmist with error. If we understand the enemy in this light, how do you feel about their accusations in light of the Psalmist's already severe self-affliction; for he does not, after all, deny his guilt?
 - ? How does the Psalmist respond to this accusation?
 - ? When aware of our sins, might we be attacked and "prosecuted" by an accuser?
 3. As to an accuser, consider the following passage.

"Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night" (Revelation 12.¹⁰).

- ? Who is being spoken of here as “the accuser of our brethren”?
- ? Satan not only “tempts,” he also “accuses.” In moments when you are aware of and acknowledge sin, what can you do and think to resist the accuser’s attempts to prosecute and discourage you?
- ? Does the Psalmist provide any helps in dealing with this common phenomenon of “accusation” and discouragement over sin?

Psalm 7.¹⁻⁵

¹YHWH, my God! It is to you that I look for protection.

Help me against all those who pursue me.

Rescue me ²lest he, as a lion, tear me to pieces;
mutilate me with no chance of recovery.

³YHWH, if I have done this,
if I bear responsibility for this wrong—

⁴that is, if I have done intentional harm to one who befriended me,
or if I have deemed one an enemy without cause—

⁵let the enemy pursue me,
catch me, and stomp my life into the underworld;
establish my abode in death (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust:
save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

²Lest he tear my soul like a lion,
rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

³O LORD my God, if I have done this;
if there be iniquity in my hands;

⁴If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me;
(yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)

⁵Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it;
yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth,
and lay mine honour in the dust.

1. In speaking of his enemy, the Psalmist uses this graphic imagery.

“Rescue me lest he, as a lion, tear me to pieces;
mutilate me with no chance of recovery.”

? What do you see when you envision this imagery?

? What does it tell you about the Psalmist's enemy?

? While it is metaphor, could the Psalmist also be reminding us that humans sometimes give in to an animalistic nature and act like animals? Why do you answer as you do?

2. We read Psalms 3-7 almost as if they apply to the same or a similar circumstance in which the Psalmist's character is under attack as he is accused of wrongdoing, although the nature of the wrongdoing as so far gone unspecified. In verses 3-5, the Psalmist confesses his innocence.

? What does he say that confesses innocence?

? What is the nature of the wrongdoing of which the Psalmist is accused?

? How confident does the Psalmist seem of his innocence? Why do you answer as you do?

Psalm 7.⁶⁻¹¹

⁶Arise, YHWH, vigorously.

Rise up in response to my enemy's fury.

Rouse Yourself and demand that I be given a fair hearing.

⁷With the assembly gathered round You,
sit, presiding over it.

⁸It is YHWH who judges people.

Judge me, YHWH, as befits my total innocence.

⁹Please undermine the malice of the unjust,
while supporting the innocent,

by examining character and conscience, O just 'Elohîm.

¹⁰My defense rests with 'Elohîm,

Deliverer of the sincerely upright.

¹¹It is 'Elohîm who arbitrates for the innocent,

whom He never condemns (author's translation).

Questionary

This is the second reading from Psalm 7. For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁶Arise, O LORD, in thine anger,

lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies:

and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

⁷So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about:

for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

⁸The LORD shall judge the people:

judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness,

and according to mine integrity that is in me.

⁹Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end;

but establish the just:

for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

¹⁰My defence is of God,

which saveth the upright in heart.

¹¹God judgeth the righteous,

and God is angry with the wicked every day.

1. Having confessed his innocence of the charges brought against him, the Psalmist ask that God fulfil his role as defender, prosecutor, and judge in his trial.

? What comes to your mind when you think of God as "judge"?

? What comes to your mind when you think of God as "defender"?

? How do you feel about God acting as "prosecutor" to those with malice and injustice in their heart?

? What evidence do or have you seen that God "undermines" those who act with malice and injustice toward others?

Psalm 8.¹

O LORD our Lord,
how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
who hast set thy glory
above the heavens.

Questionary

- ? How much does your soul resonate with the Psalmist's expressions of praise and adoration for God?

One of the common "complaints" about the Psalms that I hear from my fellow LDS members is that the Psalms are "too repetitive."

- ? How do you feel about the Psalmist's return, over and over again, to his awe and adoration for God?
- ? How often do you express to God your thoughts about his unparalleled character in a detailed way?

Psalm 9.¹⁻⁴

- ¹I will praise You, YHWH, with my entire being.
I intend to recount Your unparalleled wonders,
²joyously shout about and boast in You,
and sing of Your renown, ‘elyôn
³when my enemies fall back in retreat,
stagger and flee from You
⁴because You took up my case and my defense;
because You sat on Your throne, a just judge (author’s translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ¹I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart;
I will shew forth all thy marvellous works.
²I will be glad and rejoice in thee:
I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.
³When mine enemies are turned back,
they shall fall and perish at thy presence.
⁴For thou hast maintained my right and my cause;
thou satest in the throne judging right.

Psalms 9 and 10 were once a single psalm that, for whatever reason were broken apart. As the broken acrostic pattern demonstrates, the text has been corrupted in a number of ways and locations with a central portion seemingly missing.

In these psalms, the Psalmist complains of the harm that malevolently immoral and anti-social individuals are having on both himself and society. He wonders why God is doing nothing to stop their rampage. In hopes of moving God to action against the immoral, unethical, and anti-social in the present, the Psalmist reminds God of instances when He acted to save and liberate in the past.

1. In anticipation of God’s actions to liberate him and society from the ungodly and the harmful effects they have on society, the Psalmist speaks of “praising” God, of “recounting” God’s “unparalleled wonders,” of “joyously shouting” and “boasting” of God, and of “singing” about God’s character.
 - ? How do you feel when you read of the Psalmist’s hopes?
 - ? How akin are your feelings to those of the Psalmist?
2. The Psalmist contemplates his ultimate victory over his enemies, the ungodly.
 - ? On what basis does he see his deliverance resting?
 - ? Are you as sure of God’s defense of and aid to those who trust in him?
 - ? As the Psalmist’s central concern, in Psalms 9 and 10 is the harm that ungodly individuals are doing to him and to society, how certain are you that God is, today, seeking to protect you and your society from the harm of ungodly, unethical, and anti-social individuals?
3. The Psalmist expresses his confidence that God “judges rightly.”
 - ? To what evidence would you point that God is just and right in the decisions he makes and the judgements he passes?
 - ? As the Psalmist’s central concern, in Psalms 9 and 10 is the harm that ungodly individuals are doing to him and to society, to what evidence would you point that God is “judging rightly” ungodly, unethical, and anti-social individuals who are doing harm to society today?

Psalm 9.⁵⁻⁶

⁵You rebuked entire nations. You brought an end to those guilty of hostility.
You wiped them from existence, always and forever.

⁶The enemy still lies in complete and perpetual ruin.
You tore down their cities,
Their influence obliterated (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁵Thou hast rebuked the heathen,
thou hast destroyed the wicked,
thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.

⁶O thou enemy,
destructions are come to a perpetual end:
and thou hast destroyed cities;
their memorial is perished with them.

Psalms 9 and 10 were once a single psalm that, for whatever reason were broken apart. As the broken acrostic pattern demonstrates, the text has been corrupted in a number of ways and locations with a central portion seemingly missing.

In verses 1-4, the Psalmist expressed his commitment to praise and honor God because he anticipated God's help against those who were presently attacking him.

1. One way to understand verses 5-6, is to see in them another reason for the Psalmist's confident expectation of God's help—see Psalms 3-7, where the Psalmist provides several other explanations for his confidence in God.
 - ? What is the nature of the Psalmist's present confidence in God as found in these two verses, 5-6?
 - ? How does the remembrance and recall of God's past acts of merciful assistance in individuals' lives and nations' history increase your faith that God will act in your life?
 - ? What is the basis of believing that if God helped troubled and afflicted individuals in the past, He will help troubled and afflicted individuals, including you, today?
2. Consider the following passage.

“Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost” (Moroni 10.³⁻⁴).

 - ? How does this passage relate to Psalm 9.⁵⁻⁶?
 - ? If one is to pray about anything with confident expectations of a positive response, how does it help to look back at the historical records found in scripture and their testimony of God's merciful intervention in response to prayerful requests?
 - ? What examples of God's merciful response to prayerful requests for help have meant most to you and most increased your faith in approaching God concerning your own challenges?
3. Consider the following quote.

“There are very many who so conceive God’s mercy that they receive almost no consolation from it. They are constrained with miserable anxiety at the same time as they are in doubt whether he will be merciful to them because they confine that very kindness of which they seem utterly persuaded within too narrow limits. For among themselves they ponder that it is indeed great and abundant, shed upon many, available and ready for all; but that it is uncertain whether it will even come to them.... This reasoning, when it stops in mid-course, is only half. Therefore, it does not so much strengthen the spirit in secure tranquility as trouble it with uneasy doubting. But there is a far different feeling of full assurance that in the Scriptures is always attributed to faith....

“There is no right faith except when we dare with tranquil hearts to stand in God’s sight. This boldness arises only out of a sure confidence in divine benevolence and salvation.

“Here, indeed, is the chief hinge on which faith turns: that we do not regard the promises of mercy that God offers as true only outside ourselves, but not at all in us; rather that we make them ours by inwardly embracing them. Hence, at last is born that confidence which Paul elsewhere calls ‘peace’... Now it is an assurance that renders the conscience calm and peaceful before God’s judgment. Without it the conscience must be harried by disturbed alarm, and almost torn to pieces” (Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Vol. I, Book III, p. 561).

- ? How does this quote relate to today’s reading and the idea of finding confidence in God in our own lives through the acts he has performed in the lives of others before us?
- ? What other thoughts do you have about Calvin’s insights found in this quotation?

Psalm 9.^{7-12, 18}— just scripture

- ⁷But the LORD shall endure for ever:
he hath prepared his throne for judgment.
- ⁸And he shall judge the world in righteousness,
he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.
- ⁹The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed,
a refuge in times of trouble.
- ¹⁰And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:
for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
- ¹¹Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion:
declare among the people his doings.
- ¹²When he maketh inquisition for blood,
he remembereth them:
he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.
- ¹⁸For the needy shall not alway be forgotten:
the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

Questionary

1. Verses 7-8 speak of God's role as judge. Verses 9, 12, and 18 provide the context for understanding the emphasis on God's righteous and upright judgment.
? What aspect of God's judgment is the emphasis of these verses?
2. Today's reading testifies that God's judgment is focused on
Providing "refuge for the oppressed"
Meeting the needs of the "humiliated"
Helping the poor realize their hopes for a better life.
? How do you feel about this emphasis on God's judgment?
? How does the emphasis on God's "judgment" go beyond the courtroom, to include "economics"?
3. At the center of today's reading (verse 11) is the feeling that the divine "righteous" and "upright" judgment in behalf of the "oppressed," "Humiliated," and "poor" invokes in the Psalmist.
? What is the Psalmist's feelings about God's judgment in behalf of these vulnerable populations?
? Have you seen evidence of this same judgment in behalf of the vulnerable in your own local community? Extended community? Nation?
? Do you feel about God as the Psalmist does, when you see evidences of God "judging" or "advocating" for the needs of oppressed, humiliated, and poor people?
? What can you do to partner with God in this judging or advocacy for vulnerable individuals?
? What can you do to encourage your community to partner with God in this endeavor?
4. The Psalmist suggests that in this world the "needy" have been "forgotten" or "ignored" and that their "expectations" or "hopes" have "perished" or been "thwarted."
? What evidence do you see that confirms the Psalmist's witness?
? What do you do to assure that you are not contributing to the poor being ignored and their hope for a better life being shattered?

Psalm 9.¹⁵⁻²⁰— just scripture

¹⁵Nations sink in the pit they themselves dig.

Their feet are ensnared in the trap that they themselves hide.

¹⁶YHWH is known for the appropriate way he governs—

in the wicked being ensnared by what their own hands create.

¹⁷The wicked go to Še'ôl—

even every nation that disregards 'ēlōhîm—

¹⁸For the poor are not to always be ignored,

or the hope of the oppressed always dashed.

¹⁹Arise YHWH.

Don't let mere mortals prevail.

²⁰Govern the nations that exist before you.

Give, O YHWH, insecurities to them

so nations understand that they are deficient (Author's translation).

Questionary

- ? How do you feel about Še'ôl, hell, being prepared for those who “ignore” the poor and remain unsympathetic when the hopes of the poor are “dashed”?
- ? Why is it just for God to allow nations to suffer the same evils that they perpetrate upon individuals and other nations?

Psalm 10.¹

Why, Yahweh, are you now so standoffish?

Why do you remain absent during these distressing times? (author's translation)

Questionary

1. This reading is the first of six taken from Psalm 10. In it, the Psalmist makes complaint to God for what the Psalmist feels is negligence on the part of God.
 - ? How do you feel about the Psalmist's complaining about what feels to him like negligence?
 - ? How is the Psalmist's honesty—sometimes brutally so—an act of trust and faith in God?
 - ? How comfortable are you being totally honest and saying things in prayer that you think “God might like to hear”?
 - ? Is there a difference between thinking and feeling something and not saying it in prayer and thinking and feeling something and giving it expression in prayer? Why do you answer as you do?

Psalm 10.²⁻³— just scripture

²In self-importance, the malevolently immoral vigorously pursues the disadvantaged.

The disadvantaged are ensnared by the plans they conceive.

³For the malevolently immoral finds fulfillment only in satisfying their lustful appetites, and laud one accumulating unjust profits—he who shows disdain for YHWH!

Questionary

Today's is the second of six readings from Psalm 10. In this psalm, the Psalmist meditates upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power. But, more than this, the psalm's meditation on the wicked is as good a description of the very nature of wickedness as any found in scripture.

For those who would like, here is the KJV's translation.

²The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor:

let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

³For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire,

and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.

In complaining that the wicked oppress the poor, the Psalmist may be complaining of the oppression that he himself experiences at the hand of the wicked. The Psalmist's "poorness," or "oppression" may refer not to his economic state, but reputation. His reputation may be under assault.

The Psalmist's "poverty" should probably be understood as "vulnerability." The economically poor, in addition to their lack of material resources, often see their character maligned and assassinated, as can be seen in current American and even Christian thought and culture.

1. In today's passage, the Psalmist identifies several attitudes and behaviors that characterize "the wicked.

? What are those attitudes and behaviors?

? How would you characterize, and what do you see when you contemplate the following wicked indicators?

Prideful oppression of the poor

Putting what one wants above all other considerations

Thinking well of, and considering blessed by God, the covetous

? How are these related?

? How does each feed the others?

2. "The wicked," says the Psalmist, "in his pride doth persecute the poor." It seems unlikely that "the wicked" is another *poor* man. "In saying that "the wicked... blesseth the covetous" it seems, again, unlikely that "the wicked" are the poor (why would the poor "blesseth" someone who is gobbling up resources?) Rather, "the wicked" seems to indicate the wealthy and powerful.

"The poor" certainly can think and feel and act wickedly. But for the Psalmist's purposes and focus in this psalm, he classifies and contrasts individuals as "wicked" or "poor." The powerful and wealthy are, then, thought of as "wicked."

? How do you feel about this dichotomy... "wicked" verses "poor"?

While conceding that it is possible for the wealthy and powerful to avoid wickedness of the sort that the Psalmist names here, we would contend—with the Psalmist and all other scripture—that it is generally true that the wealthy and powerful act most often and as a rule, wickedly. This is especially true of "social behavior." We could speak of the wealthy as being "anti-social."

? How do you feel about such assertions?

3. The Psalmist speaks of “the covetous, whom the LORD abhorreth.”
 - ? What does it mean to be “covetous”?
 - ? How does the following passage enhance your understanding of covetousness?

4. “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Colossians 3.⁵).
 - ? What does it suggest to you, and how do you feel about the fact that “covetousness” is lumped together with some so commonly acknowledges as vile sin as “fornication”?
 - ? What does the Psalmist mean when he says that God “abhorreth” the covetous?
 - ? What does it suggest about God and his own divine character that “covetousness” is so contrary to his own desires?
 - ? What role (and how strongly) does “covetousness” and “insatiability” play in your own life?
 - ? What role (and how strongly) does “covetousness” and “insatiability” play in your own society?
 - ? What can you do to check such personal and societal covetousness?

Psalm 10.⁴⁻⁷— just scripture

⁴The wicked, consistent with his stubborn arrogance, is unreflective.

All his plans are made with no thought of 'ēlōhîm.

⁵The wicked are distressed by God's ways.

The loftiness of God's judgements confront him.

Anything that would restraint him he blows off.

⁶He says to himself, "I cannot be toppled.

My future holds no misfortune."

⁷This, while his mouth is full of injurious lies;

while misery and abuse flow from his tongue (author's translation).

Questionary

Today's is the third of six readings from Psalm 10. In this psalm, the Psalmist meditates upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power. For those who would like, here is the KJV's translation.

⁴The wicked, through the pride of his countenance,
will not seek after God:

God is not in all his thoughts.

⁵His ways are always grievous;
thy judgments are far above out of his sight:
as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

⁶He hath said in his heart, "I shall not be moved:
for I shall never be in adversity."

⁷His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud:
under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist seeks to explain how the wicked wealthy and powerful can oppress the vulnerable with such impunity and deem those who profit from such oppression as exemplary.
? What explanations for these wicked attitudes and behaviors do you find in this reading?
2. The Psalmist charges that the wicked wealthy and powerful behave as if God is of no account.
? Which is more likely in this ancient society?
 - The wicked wealthy and powerful are athiests who do not believe in God.
 - The wicked wealthy and powerful believe in God but simply rebel against him.
 - The wicked wealthy and power believe in God but do not believe he is involved in human affairs in either providing moral guidance or holding trespassers to account, i.e., they have "redefined" God, limiting him to the "sacred" sphere, but denying him place in the "profane" or temporal sphere?
 - Other.

? Why do you answer as you do?
? Which would be more likely in today's world?
? How does your society redefine God and his laws in such a way as to exempt itself from God's direction in profane matters—for example, how it conducts itself in everyday economic matters and how it treats the poor—and what it believes about the reality of consequences for such conduct?
3. The Psalmist says that godly principles "distress" the wicked wealthy and powerful, that the wicked feel confronted and constrained by godly principles, and that the wicked wealthy and powerful are contemptuous and dismissive of anything that would constraint them from accomplishing in their wicked desires.

- ? What do you think and feel when you consider this aspect of wickedness?
 - ? What signs do you see in your society that these attitudes are alive and well today?
 - ? What scripture passages come to mind when you consider the guidance that God has given concerning the treatment of the poor and vulnerable?
 - ? How well does your society observe them?
 - ? How does it ignore them through what it says and teaches about economic matters?
4. The Psalmist charges the wicked wealthy and powerful with believing that they will not suffer negative consequences for their wickedness (vs. 6), in particular in the matter central to this psalm's focus: their mistreatment of the poor and vulnerable.
 - ? How and where do you see these beliefs manifest in society today—again, especially in matters related to economic injustice toward the poor?
 5. The Psalmist associates the wealthy and powerful wicked—their thoughts, words, and deeds—with “cursing” “deceit,” “fraud,” “mischief,” “vanity,” “lies,” “abuse,” “misery,” and violence.
 - ? What do you think of as you consider each of these wicked characteristics?
 - ? How do these attributes, thoughts, words, and deeds of the wicked relate to and impact the “poor,” against whom they conspire?
 - ? If you think of “cursing” as something other than using foul language, what is the wealthy and wicked powerful thinking, speaking, and doing when he “curses”?
 6. Finally, in verse 7 the Psalmist marvels at the irrationality of the wicked wealthy and powerful.
 - ? What is the nature of his wonder?
 - ? How could they perpetuate injustice against the poor and think there will be no consequences?
 - ? How do the words we speak and the thoughts we think shape our behavior?
 - ? How does lying enhance the ability of the wicked wealthy and powerful to carry out the wickedness that they plan against the poor and vulnerable?
 - ? What do such lies seem to play so well with so many members of society?

Psalm 10.⁸⁻¹¹ – just scripture

- ⁸He sits in ambush outside villages.
From concealed places he slays the unsuspecting innocent;
his eyes peer out at his unfortunate victim.
- ⁹Like a lion, he lies in wait from a concealed place in the brush.
He lies in ambush to seize the poor—
He seizes the poor, dragging him into his lair.
- ¹⁰He crouches low, he hunches down
and falls upon the bones of the vulnerable.
- ¹¹He says to himself, “God is oblivious.
He’s absent. He sees nothing, ever” (author’s translation).

Questionary

Today’s is the fourth of six readings from Psalm 10. In this psalm, the Psalmist meditates upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power. But, more than this, the psalmist’s meditation on the wicked is as good a description of the very nature of wickedness as any found in scripture.

For those who would like, here is the KJV’s translation.

- ⁷His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud:
under his tongue is mischief and vanity.
- ⁸He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages:
in the secret places doth he murder the innocent:
his eyes are privily set against the poor.
- ⁹He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den:
he lieth in wait to catch the poor:
he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.
- ¹⁰He croucheth, and humbleth himself,
that the poor may fall by his strong ones.
- ¹¹He hath said in his heart, “God hath forgotten:
he hideth his face; he will never see it.”

1. The Psalmist began a meditation upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power in verses 2-3. Here, the Psalmist describes the wicked of wealth and power as being so unwilling to check their own appetites that they willfully abuse the already vulnerable in order to feed those appetites. In verses 4-6, the Psalmist attributes the wicked’s unchecked appetite and willingness to abuse with their dismissal of God’s right to engage in “profane” matters, their rejection of his lofty values which stand opposed to theirs, and their rejection of all notions of accountability. In this reading, the Psalmist continues his meditation on the nature of the wicked individuals of wealth and power.
 - ? What more do you learn from this reading about the wicked and about the very nature of wickedness?
2. In today’s reading the Psalmist mentions “the poor” four times, each time as targets of “the wicked.”
 - ? How does this support our repeated assertion that the “wicked” are those of “wealth and power.”
 - ? Does it make sense to think of the “poor” as “wicked” within the context of this psalm?
 - ? Why do you think the Psalmist’s focus on “wickedness” is as it is in this psalm?
3. In two parallel lines, the Psalmist speaks of “the poor” and of “the innocent.”
 - ? Why does the Psalmist associate the poor with innocence?

- ? How do you feel about this?
 - ? How does this compare with society's—and often modern day "Christians'"—view of the poor?
 - ? If there is a dichotomy, what do you feel explains it?
4. In describing the contempt, aggression, and violence the wealthy and powerful wicked have for and practice against the vulnerable, the Psalmist resorts to imagery.
 - ? What is that imagery?
 - ? Close your eyes and recall those "nature shows" in which the camera captures a lion as it hunts its prey and then eats it. What do you see?
 - ? How do you feel about the Psalmist's likening of the wicked wealthy and power to a ravenous lion as it hunts and eats its prey?
 - ? How do you feel about the wicked wealthy and powerful? What do you feel for the poor who are their prey?
 5. The Psalmist compares the violence of the wicked wealthy and powerful to an "ambush."
 - ? What comes to your mind when you think of ambushes?
 - ? What does the wicked's ambushing of the poor tell you about 1) the wicked and 2) the poor?
 6. In "hunting" the poor, the wealthy and powerful wicked conclude that "God hath forgotten," that "he hideth his face," and that God "will never see it."
 - ? How is it that the wealthy and powerful conclude that God is so dismissive of the poor and their plight that they, the powerful, will not be held accountable for the evil they do to the vulnerable?
 - ? Where is society today in regard to its belief concerning the relationship between God and the poor?
 - ? In what ways does modern society, often including Christian thought and practice, attack the reputation of the poor?
 - ? How are the poor oppressed economically and legally?

Psalm 10.¹²⁻¹⁵— just scripture

¹²Rise up, YHWH, my God!

Strike out with your hand.

Do not abandon the poor,

¹³on which basis the wicked could hold 'ēlōhîm in contempt,
saying to himself, “God doesn’t care.”

¹⁴But, you do see.

You do acknowledge misfortune and vexation
to take it in hand.

The helpless abandon themselves to you.

It is you that is a protector of the orphaned.

¹⁵Break the power of the wicked and evil.

Expose his wickedness that goes always unacknowledged (author’s translation).

Questionary

For those who would like, here is the KJV’s translation.

¹²Arise, O LORD;

O God, lift up thine hand:

forget not the humble.

¹³Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God?

he hath said in his heart,

“Thou wilt not require it.”

¹⁴Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite,

to requite it with thy hand:

the poor committeth himself unto thee;

thou art the helper of the fatherless.

¹⁵Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man:

seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

1. Today’s is the fifth of six readings from Psalm 10. In this psalm, the Psalmists meditates upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power. But, more than this, the psalms’ meditation on the wicked is as good a description of the very nature of wickedness as any found in scripture.
 - ? With what additional proud and evil characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors does today’s reading credit the wealthy and powerful wicked?
2. Previously in psalm 10, society’s wicked and prideful wealthy and powerful have maintained that they would “not be moved” and that they would “never be in adversity.” In addition, they have asserted that “God hath forgotten” and that “he hideth his face; he will never see it.” In today’s reading, they continue to maintain that they are not accountable to anyone for their wicked assaults upon society’s vulnerable.
 - ? How do they express this unaccountability in today’s reading?
 - ? What experiences do the wealthy and powerful have in the course of their lives that leads them to feel unaccountable for their wicked treatment of society’s vulnerable populations and classes?
 - ? How accountable does our society hold the powerful wealthy for the way in which they treat vulnerable populations of society?
3. The vulnerable poor makes some requests of God in today’s reading.
 - ? What are those requests?
 - ? How do you feel about them?

- ? Given what you have learned about the wicked and proud wealthy and powerful, are such requests “just”?
- ? What suggestions does the vulnerable offer God as justifications for his, God’s intervention in his behalf?
- ? How do you feel about the vulnerable’s suggestion that the wicked would hold God in further contempt, considering him weak if he did not come to the vulnerable’s aid?

Psalm 10.¹⁶⁻¹⁸— just scripture

- ¹⁶YHWH is king forever and always,
While nations disappear from existence.
- ¹⁷The desires of the poor, you do indeed hear, YHWH.
You strengthen their resolve by your attentiveness.
- ¹⁸In your defending orphan and oppressed
never again will mere mortals seem intimidating.

Questionary

For those who would like, here is the KJV's translation.

- ¹⁶The LORD is King for ever and ever:
the heathen are perished out of his land.
- ¹⁷LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble:
thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
- ¹⁸To judge the fatherless and the oppressed,
that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

Today's is the sixth of six readings from Psalm 10. In this psalm, the Psalmist meditates upon the nature of wicked and prideful individuals of wealth and power, especially their inclination to oppress vulnerable members of their society without a sense of accountability or the experience of being held to account for their wickedness. This psalm's meditation on the wicked is as good a description of the very nature of wickedness as any found anywhere in scripture.

- ? How would you characterize today's finale to the Psalmist's meditations and prayer concerning society's wicked and prideful citizens of wealthy and power?
 - ? What is the finale's tone and mood?
1. Verse 17 speaks of God's hearing the "desire of the poor" or, in the KJV, "the desire of the humble."
 - ? What is the relationship between the "poor" and "humility"?
 - ? We have often suggested that humility should be connected to "humiliation." How do you feel about this suggestion?
 - ? What has been the nature of humiliation in this Psalm? Who has done the humiliating and who has been the target of the humiliating?
 - ? How do orphans and the "oppressed" experience humiliation?
 - ? How do you feel about thinking of "humility" to indicate the humiliation pressed against their will upon the oppressed rather than some type of self-willed and acquired virtue?
 - ? How does it impact your life and the way you treat others to know that God is the kind of king who is especially concerned about and anxious to serve those who are oppressed?
 2. The Psalmist speaks of Yahweh as "King for ever and ever:"
 - ? Given the content and emphasis of this psalm, what kind of king is Yahweh vis-a-vis the vulnerable?
 - ? What kind of king is he vis-a-vis the wicked and proud citizens of wealth and power?
 - ? After having your mind focused on the wealthy and powerful's oppression of the vulnerable throughout this psalm, how do you feel about Yahweh, his kingship, and his championing the cause of vulnerable individuals'?

Psalm 12.¹⁻⁴— just scripture

- ¹Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth;
for the faithful fail from among the children of men.
- ²They speak vanity every one with his neighbour:
with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.
- ³The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips,
and the tongue that speaketh proud things:
- ⁴Who have said, “With our tongue will we prevail;
our lips are our own: who is lord over us?”

Questionary

Today’s reading is the first of two relating to Psalm 12.

1. Today’s reading describes a society in which individuals’, and likely even institutions’, words and commitments cannot be trusted. Jeremiah complained of such a society in his day.

“Take ye heed every one of his neighbour,
and trust ye not in any brother:
for every brother will utterly supplant,
and every neighbour will walk with slanders.
And they will deceive every one his neighbour,
and will not speak the truth:
they have taught their tongue to speak lies,
and weary themselves to commit iniquity.
Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit;
through deceit they refuse to know me,
saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9.⁴⁻⁶).

- ? What consequences flow throughout such societies?
 - ? Can you relate to such a society?
 - ? What specific things can you do to not become implicated in such behavior?
 - ? What are the objectives of such individual and societal deceit?
2. The Psalmist quotes the dishonest of society as saying “our lips are our own: who is lord over us?”
- ? Put the attitude reflected in these words in your own words.
 - ? How do these words reflect the feeling that they accept no one’s constraints, that they can do whatever they wish, and that they will not be held responsible for their deceit?

Psalm 12.⁵⁻⁸— just scripture

- ⁵“For the oppression of the poor,
for the sighing of the needy,
now will I arise,” saith the LORD;
“I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him.”
- ⁶The words of the LORD are pure words:
as silver tried in a furnace of earth,
purified seven times.
- ⁷Thou shalt keep them, O LORD,
thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.
- ⁸The wicked walk on every side,
when the vilest men are exalted.”

Questionary

1. In the previous reading from Psalm 12 (verses 1-4), we read of a society in which individuals', and likely even institutions', words and commitments cannot be trusted. Among the ponder questions that we suggested for consideration was this one: “What are the objectives of such individual and societal deceit?” Today's reading from Psalm 12 will answer this question directly.
 - ? What does verse 5 say about the purposes of the deceit?
 - ? How do the deceits of modern day individuals and institutes oppress the poor?
 - ? As one concrete example, how did the to-this-day-unpunished unethical behavior of banks and other mortgage lenders/traders during the 2000's hurt U.S. homeowners toward the end of the decade?
 - ? How do you feel about reading such verses as these in relation to the decade-long financial lies and dishonesty that ended up “oppressing” the poor, causing many to lose their homes?
 2. Verse 6 speaks of the dependability of the word of God.
 - ? What language and imagery does it utilize to do this?
 - ? What do you see when you read this imagery used to describe how radically dependable God's word is?
 - ? We could generalize and understand verse 6 to teach about the dependability of the word of God as found in scripture. What experiences have you had with scripture that confirm its dependability?
 3. The Psalmist's testimony concerning the dependability of what God says, however, has a very specific context and application within Psalm 12.
 - ? What is that context and application?
 4. The “word” that is so sure in Psalm 12 is God's promise, found in verses 5 and 7, of looking after the oppressed poor, who have been taken advantage of in many ways by the crafty deception of the ruling and economic classes.
 - ? How do you feel about this specific application of the dependability of the word of God?
 - ? Does God's promise of help for the oppressed poor thrill you? Perplex you? Irritate you?
 5. The final verse claims that the “wicked walk on every side” and that the “vilest men are exalted.”
 - ? How do you feel about this?
 - ? Does the Psalmist seem too pessimistic to you? A complaining malcontent?
 - ? How do you imagine he would feel about the situation of the poor today?
 - ? How do you imagine he would feel about the relationship between the advantaged and disadvantaged?
 - ? In what ways and settings are the “vilest men” being “exalted” in today's society?
- ? How do you feel about the Lord's interest in vulnerable populations and his determination to

deliver them from those who hold them in contempt?

- ? How do you demonstrate your solidarity with vulnerable populations and thus unity with God?

Psalm 13.⁵⁻⁶

⁵But I have trusted in thy mercy;
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

⁶I will sing unto the LORD,
because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Questionary

- ? What does it mean to you to “trust in [the] mercy” of the Lord?
- ? How do you do this and manifest such trust in your own life?

Psalm 14.²⁻³

²The LORD looked down from heaven
upon the children of men,
to see if there were any that did understand,
and seek God.

³They are all gone aside,
they are all together become filthy:
there is none that doeth good,
no, not one.

Questionary

- ? How do you react to the Psalmist's very negative view of mankind?
- ? Why is it a such a common reaction to resist the Psalmist's evaluation?
- ? Why is it so important to accept the message—and personalize it?

Psalm 16.⁸

I have set the LORD always before me:
because he is at my right hand,
I shall not be moved.

Questionary

- ? In your mind, what is the difference between saying “the LORD is always before me” and “I have set the LORD always before me”?

Psalm 16.⁸⁻¹¹

- ⁸I have set the LORD always before me:
because he is at my right hand,
I shall not be moved.
- ⁹Therefore my heart is glad,
and my glory rejoiceth:
my flesh also shall rest in hope.
- ¹⁰For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell;
neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
- ¹¹Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Questionary

1. The Psalmist confesses, "I have set the LORD always before me."
? What do you think he means by this?
? What would you think, feel, and do to imitate him?
2. The Psalmist rejoices because God "wilt not leave my soul in hell." Compare this testimony with that of Lehi and Nephi, respectively.

"But behold, the Lord hath redeemed my soul from hell; I have beheld his glory, and I am encircled about eternally in the arms of his love" (2 Nephi 1.¹⁵).

"I glory in plainness; I glory in truth; I glory in my Jesus, for he hath redeemed my soul from hell" (2 Nephi 33.⁶).

Lehi and Nephi, like the Psalmist, seem to consider the threat of "hell" as a very real possibility and are genuinely thankful for being "redeemed" from it.

? What do you think each of these individuals mean by "hell"?
? How do you feel about the threat of "hell" being so real to the two "righteous" Book of Mormon men?
? Does it make sense to you that they would feel so?
? Have you been or are you now in danger of "hell"?
3. In Acts 2.³¹, Peter quotes verse 10 in reference to Jesus.
? In what way/s does Jesus experience "hell," from which he is ultimately redeemed?
4. We should probably understand verse 11 as a direct contrast with or an opposite of verse 10.

Thou wilt shew me the path of life:
in thy presence is fulness of joy;
at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

? If we read verse 10 in this way, how does it shed light on the nature of "hell"?
? What do you think of when you read of "pleasures for evermore"?
? How do these "pleasures" relate to the experience of God's "presence" and abiding at his "right hand"?

Psalm 18.²⁻³

²The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer;
my God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.

³I will call upon the LORD,
who is worthy to be praised...

Questionary

“My,” “my,” “my.” “My rock,” “my fortress,” “my deliverer,” “my strength,” “my buckler,” “my salvation,” “my high tower.”

- ? What comes to your mind and how do you feel when you consider the way in which the Psalmist “takes possession” of the Lord so thoroughly?
- ? In what ways and how securely and hopefully do you “possess” the Lord?

Psalm 18.^{5-6, 13-19}

⁵The sorrows of hell compassed me about:
the snares of death prevented me.

⁶In my distress I called upon the LORD,
and cried unto my God:
he heard my voice out of his temple,
and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

¹³The LORD also thundered in the heavens,
and the Highest gave his voice;
hail stones and coals of fire.

¹⁴Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them;
and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.

¹⁵Then the channels of waters were seen,
and the foundations of the world were discovered
at thy rebuke, O LORD,
at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

¹⁶He sent from above, he took me,
he drew me out of many waters.

¹⁷He delivered me from my strong enemy,
and from them which hated me:
for they were too strong for me.

¹⁸They prevented me in the day of my calamity:
but the LORD was my stay.

¹⁹He brought me forth also into a large place;
he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

Questionary

-
- ? What imagery in today's reading can you apply to the Savior, his death, and resurrection?
 - ? What do you learn about the Savior's death and resurrection from this psalm's imagery?

Psalm 20.⁷⁻⁸— just scripture

⁷Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:
but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

⁸They are brought down and fallen:
but we are risen, and stand upright.

Questionary

1. Verse 7 is made up of two lines of poetry. The two lines are contrastive.
 - ? How is the trust in chariots and horses opposed to remembering God?
 - ? Chariots and horses can be seen as a metaphor in our society. What is the modern equivalent of chariots and horses?
 - ? What does it look like to trust in a military and other national security agencies rather than God?
2. Consider Yahweh's criticism of Israel as found in Isaiah 2.⁷⁻⁸ and 31.¹.

“Their land also is full of silver and gold,
neither is there any end of their treasures;
their land is also full of horses,
neither is there any end of their chariots:
Their land also is full of idols;
they worship the work of their own hands,
that which their own fingers have made...”

“Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help;
and stay on horses,
and trust in chariots, because they are many;
and in horsemen, because they are very strong;
but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel,
neither seek the LORD!”

 - ? How do you feel about Isaiah's describing trust in military security as a form of idolatry?
3. The Psalmist warns that “they are brought down and fallen.”
 - ? Who is the “they”?
 - ? How do you imagine it working out that those who look for security in their national military are most likely to be “brought down and fall”?
 - ? How does an individual and a nation avoid falling into this trap of false security, abandonment of God, and the practice of idolatry?

Psalm 22.¹⁻³

¹My God, my God, why have You abandoned me?
Why are You so far from helping me?

Why are You so far from my vigorous complaint?

²My God, I call out during the day, but You don't respond.
And during the night, even then I have no respite.

³But You, Incomparable One,
just sit there, object of Yiśrā'ēl's praises" (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
why art thou so far from helping me,
and from the words of my roaring?

²O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.

³But thou art holy,
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

1. In these verses, the Psalmist complains that God has abandoned him.
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Psalmist's complaint?
 - ? Have you ever felt abandoned by God? Did you express such feelings of abandonment? Why or why not?
2. The Gospel writers Matthew and Mark report that Jesus uttered the words of this psalm's first line from the cross.
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider that Jesus felt that God had abandoned or forsaken him as he suffered on the cross?
 - ? What does it tell you about Jesus that in expressing his deepest feelings and one of the most intense moments of his life, he resorted to scripture to express those feelings?
 - ? How "internalized" have you made scripture in your life?
3. My translation diverges significantly from that of the KJV in verse three.
 - ? How would you characterize the difference?

In verse 3 of the KJV, the Psalmist seems to offer an expression of worship whereas in my translation, the psalmist offers continued complaint about God's indifference toward him.

- ? What message do the quotation marks in my translation of verse 3 send?
- ? How do you feel about the Psalmist questioning God so honestly?
- ? Have you spoken to God with such honesty? Why or why not?

4. In the KJV, the Psalmist refers to God as "holy," whereas in mine he refers to Him as "incomparable."
 - ? What do you think of when you think of "holiness"? What do you think of when you think of being "incomparable"?

Psalm 22.⁴⁻⁸

⁴Our fathers trusted You.

They trusted and You delivered them.

⁵They cried out to You, and they were delivered

They trusted You, and were not disappointed.

⁶But I am a nonentity, and less than human;

a human disgrace, whom many find repulsive.

⁷Everyone who sees me hisses at me.

They bare their teeth. They wag the head.

⁸“He has anticipated that YHWH would deliver him.

He should deliver him, then, seeing that He takes such pleasure in him” (author’s translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁴Our fathers trusted in thee:

they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

⁵They cried unto thee, and were delivered:

they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

⁶But I am a worm, and no man;

a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

⁷All they that see me laugh me to scorn:

they shoot out the lip,

they shake the head, saying,

⁸“He trusted on the LORD

that he would deliver him:

let him deliver him,

seeing he delighted in him.”

In the first three verses of this psalm, the Psalmist complained of God’s inaction in the face of the Psalmist’s troubles at the hands of his persecutors.

1. In verse 4, the Psalmist contrasts God’s present inaction in the Psalmist’s life with His past activities exercised in Israel’s deliverance.
? What “tone” and “purpose” do you hear in this contrast? Are there other “tones” and purposes possible? What are they?
2. Though the suggestion comes from the mouths of his enemies, we should understand and believe that the Psalmist anticipated God’s help because of what he knew of God’s previous history in assisting the oppressed.
? What do you think and feel when you consider and contrast the Psalmist’s hopeful expectations of God with the disappointing reality of God’s inaction?
? Have you experienced a contradiction between what you anticipated God would do in your life during trials and what actually happened? How did you respond to this contradiction?
? How do you feel about the bold and direct challenge that the Psalmist issued to God concerning His inaction?
3. The Psalmist’s enemies ridicule him and, essentially, challenge God with their, “He [God] should deliver him, then, seeing that He [God] takes such pleasure in him [the Psalmist].”
? What does this tell you about the Psalmist’s enemies, their certainty of their correctness, and their feelings and beliefs about God and his involvement in human affairs?
4. My translation of verse six’s first line is, obviously, different than that of the KJV—But I am a worm, and no man.”

? What do you hear the Psalmist saying and feeling when he speaks of being “a worm”?

Psalm 22.⁹⁻¹⁰

⁹But You drew me from the womb.

You laid me on my mother's breast.

¹⁰I was given into Your care before birth.

From my mother's womb, You were my God.

Q

uestionary

For those who wish to compare translations, follow is the KJV.

⁹But thou art he that took me out of the womb:

thou didst make me hope

when I was upon my mother's breasts.

¹⁰I was cast upon thee from the womb:

thou art my God from my mother's belly.

In the first three verses of this psalm, the Psalmist complained of God's inaction in the face of the Psalmist's troubles at the hands of his persecutors. Then, in verses 4-8, the Psalmist expressed how his confusion over God's inaction is increased when he considers, first, how active and helpful God has been in Israel's past when it was faced with challenges, and, second, when he considers the abject hatred, the dehumanization to which his enemies subject him.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist offers yet another thing that adds to his confusion over God's current inaction in regard to the Psalmist's trials.
 - ? What do you find in these verses that adds to the Psalmist's confusion over God's present inaction in the Psalmist's behalf?
 - ? How do you feel when you hear the Psalmist recount how God has acted in his behalf in the past—God watched over the Psalmist's development in the womb; looked after him at the time of birth, guaranteeing a safe birth; put him in the care of a loving and nurturing mother; and acted the part of a present and active God in his life up to the present?
 - ? How do God's past benefits increase the Psalmist's suffering in the present absence of God?

Psalm 22.¹¹⁻²¹

- ¹¹Don't distance Yourself from me,
for the enemy is near, but there is no one to help.
- ¹²Intimidating bulls surround me.
Powerful bulls from Bāšān encircle me.
- ¹³They open their mouths against me,
lions, rending and roaring.
- ¹⁴Like water, my blood flows,
and all my bones are broken.
My heart becomes wax,
melted inside me.
- ¹⁵My strength is sapped dry, like fired pottery.
My tongue sticks to the top of my mouth.
and You have brought me to the brink of death.
- ¹⁶Wild dog's surround me.
A vicious pack encircles me.
They pierce my hands and feet.
- ¹⁷I can count all my bones.
They look, they stare back at me.
- ¹⁸They divvy up my clothes amongst themselves,
and throw lots for my clothing.
- ¹⁹But You, YHWH, don't be distant.
My Helper, rush to my assistance.
- ²⁰Rescue me from the sword.
Rescue me from the dog's power, solitary as I am.
- ²¹Deliver me from the lion's mouth.
Deliver me from the wild ox's horns, attacked as I am.

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ¹¹Be not far from me;
for trouble is near;
for there is none to help.
- ¹²Many bulls have compassed me:
strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
- ¹³They gaped upon me with their mouths,
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
- ¹⁴I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax;
it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- ¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- ¹⁶For dogs have compassed me:
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:
they pierced my hands and my feet.
- ¹⁷I may tell all my bones:
they look and stare upon me.

¹⁸They part my garments among them,
and cast lots upon my vesture.

¹⁹But be not thou far from me, O LORD:
O my strength, haste thee to help me.

²⁰Deliver my soul from the sword;
my darling from the power of the dog.

²¹Save me from the lion's mouth:
for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

In the first three verses of this psalm, the Psalmist complained of God's inaction in the face of the Psalmist's troubles at the hands of his persecutors. Then, in verses 4-8, the Psalmist expressed how his confusion over God's inaction is increased when he considers, first, how active and helpful God has been in Israel's past when it was faced with challenges, and, second, when he considers the abject hatred, the dehumanization to which his enemies subject him. In verses 9-10, he recalled how the Lord has always supported him in the past—even including while in utero.

1. Other than God, Himself, no subject occupies the Psalmist's attention more than his enemies. He knows no limit to the variety of ways to describe them and their wickedness. But, few Psalms, if any, utilize more intense and disturbing language and imagery than this one.
 - ? What words, phrases, and images stand out to you as you read today's reading?
2. The Psalmist uses imagery of a herd of bulls, a pride of lions, and a pack of wild dogs, and a wild ox to portray his enemies and the dangers they pose to him.
 - ? What attributes do each of these groups of animals possess that make them appropriate images for the Psalmist's enemies?
 - ? What does it suggest to you about the Psalmist's feelings that he did not utilize only one image for his enemies, but mixed and matched three of them?
 - ? How do individuals and groups who find identity only in opposing and attacking others rather than standing for something themselves take on an almost animalistic character?
3. In likening his enemies to lions, the Psalmist presents us with an image of their rending his body, causing his blood to gush, and chomping down on his bones. In likening his enemies to a pack of wild dogs, he presents us with the image of them repeatedly piercing his flesh as they bite him.
 - ? What do you see in your mind when you contemplate this imagery?
 - ? How do you feel as you contemplate it?
 - ? Why would the Psalmist write in such a way as to make God and then you, the reader, visualize and feel such distressful things?
4. The Psalmist says that he can "count all [his] bones" and that his bones "stare back at [him]."
 - ? What do you see? What is the Psalmist describing?
 - ? What do you think and feel if we suggest that the Psalmist is alluding to the fact that the dogs bites have exposed bone which he can see? What if we suggested that the Psalmist is describing an emaciated body with protruding bones?
5. Obviously, just as the New Testament Gospel writers report Jesus praying the Psalmist's words as found in verse while he was on the cross, they also utilize parts of this reading to describe the actions of those who stood around the cross and those who conducted the actual crucifixion.
 - ? How did those who demanded his crucifixion and those who carried it out fulfil this passage and meet the depth of depravity that is suggested by it?
 - ? How did those who demanded and carried out Jesus' crucifixion reduce themselves to animalistic behavior?
 - ? After reading today's reading, what do you see as you close your eyes and look upon Jesus' body—or, in the language of the Book of Mormon writer, Jacob, "view his death"?
 - ? For all Jesus' temporal suffering and pain, his spiritual suffering was just as intense. What do you learn about Jesus' spiritual suffering from today's reading?

- ? In reading these verses, some Biblical scholars have sensed a demonic element to the Psalmist's enemies. How do you feel about this? How might it relate and apply to Jesus' enemies and his suffering?

Psalm 22.¹⁻¹⁸— **Atonement**

- ¹My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
Why art thou so far from helping me,
and from the words of my roaring?
- ²O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not;
and in the night season, and am not silent.
- ³But thou art holy,
O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.
- ⁴Our fathers trusted in thee:
they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.
- ⁵They cried unto thee, and were delivered:
they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.
- ⁶But I am a worm, and no man;
a reproach of men, and despised of the people.
- ⁷All they that see me laugh me to scorn:
they shoot out the lip,
they shake the head, saying,
- ⁸“He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him:
let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”
- ⁹But thou art he that took me out of the womb:
thou didst make me hope
when I was upon my mother’s breasts.
- ¹⁰I was cast upon thee from the womb:
thou art my God from my mother’s belly.
- ¹¹Be not far from me;
for trouble is near;
for there is none to help.
- ¹²Many bulls have compassed me:
strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.
- ¹³They gaped upon me with their mouths,
as a ravening and a roaring lion.
- ¹⁴I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint:
my heart is like wax;
it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
- ¹⁵My strength is dried up like a potsherd;
and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws;
and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
- ¹⁶For dogs have compassed me:
the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:
they pierced my hands and my feet.
- ¹⁷I may tell all my bones:
they look and stare upon me.
- ¹⁸They part my garments among them,
and cast lots upon my vesture.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us.” *

Psalm 22 is often referred to as a “Messianic Psalm.” Some see its use by Jesus himself (he utters the words found in Psalm 22.¹ while suffering on the cross), and by the Gospel writers (Matthew quotes Psalm 22.¹⁸) as evidence of prophecy; evidence that Jesus’ “passion” was seen in vision many years before the actual event. Others see such use and quotation as indicating that the feelings and experiences of the ancient Psalter/s were similar to those of Jesus. Whichever tact one takes, it seems that a number of Psalms can inform our reading of the “passion narrative.”

In speaking of a “passion narrative,” we make reference to Acts 1.³. There, in referring particularly to Jesus’ final days, including his suffering experiences in Gethsemane and Calvary, the writer speaks of Jesus’ “passion.”

Psalm 22 speaks of “passions,” or feelings associated with suffering. They can profitably be likened to those experienced by the Savior.

1. In reading Psalm 22, the reader may want to re-read one of the Gospel accounts of the Savior’s crucifixion.
 - ? What parallels do you find between this psalm and the passion narratives found in the Gospels?
 - ? What new insights might Psalm 22 provide into the Savior’s “passion.”
2. Think about the imagery behind the following descriptive phrases—remember, this is poetry.
 - ? For example, when the speaker says “I am a worm,” what do you think he is feeling?
 - ? When the speaker complains that his “bones are out of joint,” what is he experiencing and feeling?
 - ? How would this apply to the Savior’s experience of crucifixion?
 - ? What do the following descriptive phrases suggest to you about the Savior’s experiences and feelings?

“Trouble is near.”

“There is none to help.”

“Many bulls have compassed me.”

“I am poured out like water.”

“My heart is like wax... melted in the midst of my bowls.”

“My strength is dried up like a postsherd.”

“My tongue cleaveth to my jaws.”

“Dogs have compassed me.”

“The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me.”

“They pierced my hands and my feet.”

“I may tell [count] all my bones.”

- ? How do these images alter and enhance your understanding of what the Savior went through in order to save us?
3. Jesus found the Psalmist’s complaint—“My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me”—appropriate to his feelings and experiences at Calvary.
 - ? What does this suggest to you about Jesus’ attention to and appreciation of the Psalmist?
 - ? What attention do you give to the Psalmist and how appreciative of him are you?

There are many Psalms that point our minds to the Savior and his “passion.” Today, or over the next days, read around in the Psalms and see if you can identify others that testify of Christ and his Atoning “passion.”

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus’ life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalm 22.²²⁻²⁵— atonement

- ²²I will expound upon Your renown to my peers.
I will praise You in the assembly.
- ²³You who reverence YHWH, praise Him.
Every descendant of Ya‘aqōb, glorify Him.
Every descendant of Yīsrā’ēl, show deference to Him.
- ²⁴Because He did not disparage and was not repulsed by
the humiliation of the tyrannized.
He did not ignore him,
but heard him when he called for help.
- ²⁵With You nearby, I will offer praise in the august assembly.
I will fulfill my promises before those who reverence him.

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV

- ²²I will declare thy name unto my brethren:
in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.
- ²³Ye that fear the LORD, praise him;
all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him;
and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.
- ²⁴For he hath not despised nor abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted;
neither hath he hid his face from him;
but when he cried unto him, he heard.
- ²⁵My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation:
I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement.”*

In the first three verses of this psalm, the Psalmist complained of God’s inaction in the face of the Psalmist’s troubles at the hands of his persecutors. Then, in verses 4-8, the Psalmist expressed how his confusion over God’s inaction is increased when he considers, first, how active and helpful God has been in Israel’s past when it was faced with challenges, and, second, when he considers the abject hatred, the dehumanization to which his enemies subject him. In verses 9-10, he recalled how the Lord had always supported him in the past—even including while in utero. In verses 11-21, the Psalmists described the inhuman nature of his enemies—likening them to bulls, lions, wild dogs, and wild oxen—and the effect their attacks have had on him.

Though this psalm does not describe the nature of God’s rescue as does, say, Psalm 18, in verses 22-25 the Psalmist commits himself to praising God and evangelizing the world over, presumably because of God’s deliverance.

1. As LDS people, we sing hymns that speak of and actually do “praise” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We even “praise” them in talks and testimonies. But we do not use the word, “praise.” One does not hear, for example, someone who bears their testimony say, “I would like to praise God for...”
 - ? What, do you think, accounts for the culture’s hesitation to use the word, “praise”?
 - ? Does it matter?
 - ? What are the advantages or disadvantages in our reluctance to use such language?
2. The Psalmist makes a commitment that he “will expound upon Your renown to my peers.”

- ? How did Jesus reveal the greatness of his Father's character during his earthly ministry?
- 3. The Psalmist assures us that God did "not disparage and was not repulsed by the humiliation of the tyrannized.
 - ? What experiences has the Psalmist shared in this psalm that form his being humiliated and tyrannized?
 - ? What things have humiliated and tyrannized you?
 - ? In moments when you felt the humiliation of weakness and sin, have you experienced God as one who does not ignore and is not put off by the humiliation of weakness and sin?
- 4. Rather than ignoring and being repulsed by human humiliation, God reveals his face to the humiliated.
 - ? What does this say about his character?
 - ? How do you feel about this divine character trait?
 - ? Have you found God revealing, rather than hiding himself, in your moments of humiliation? What were the circumstances?
 - ? How have you praised God "in the great congregation" in response to his mercy?
- * The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:
 - "Fall: Our Need of Atonement"
 - "Grace: The Savior's Generous and Earnest Invitation"
 - "At-one-ment: The Savior's unity and connectedness with us"
 - "Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us"
 - "Glorification: The Savior's Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement"
 - "Justification: How We Repent and Change"
 - "Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement"
 - "Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement"
 - "Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement"
 - "Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me"

Psalm 22.²⁶⁻³¹

- ²⁶The poor will eat and be full.
Those who search after YHWH will praise Him.
They are always enlivened.
- ²⁷The world over will acknowledge and come to YHWH.
People from every nation will bow down before you.
- ²⁸For kingship belongs to YHWH,
even rule over nations.
- ²⁹All the earth's robust will eat and worship him.
All who are descending into the grave will bow before him,
and he whose life is not preserved.
- ³⁰Descendants will serve Him.
My Lord will be spoken of for generations.
- ³¹They will come and declare His triumph
to a people yet to be born;
that it is he who acts.

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For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ²⁶The meek shall eat and be satisfied:
they shall praise the LORD that seek him:
your heart shall live for ever.
- ²⁷All the ends of the world
shall remember and turn unto the LORD:
and all the kindreds of the nations
shall worship before thee.
- ²⁸For the kingdom is the LORD's:
and he is the governor among the nations.
- ²⁹All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship:
all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him:
and none can keep alive his own soul.
- ³⁰A seed shall serve him;
it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.
- ³¹They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness
unto a people that shall be born,
that he hath done this.

In the first three verses of this psalm, the Psalmist complained of God's inaction in the face of the Psalmist's troubles at the hands of his persecutors. Then, in verses 4-8, the Psalmist expressed how his confusion over God's inaction is increased when he considers, first, how active and helpful God has been in Israel's past when it was faced with challenges, and, second, when he considers the abject hatred, the dehumanization to which his enemies subject him. In verses 9-10, he recalled how the Lord had always supported him in the past—even including while in utero. In verses 11-21, the Psalmists described the inhuman nature of his enemies—likening them to bulls, lions, wild dogs, and wild oxen—and the effect their attacks have had on him. Though this psalm does not describe the nature of God's rescue as does, say, Psalm 18, in verses 22-25 the Psalmist committed himself to praising God and evangelizing the world over, presumably because God has delivered him from his trials.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist describes the impact that he hopes his deliverance and his evangelization will have on the world.

- ? What is that impact?
 - ? How might these words apply to Jesus of Nazareth, whom God delivered and who sought to reveal his Father?
 - ? To what extent has the hope expressed in these verses already been realized?
 - ? To what extent will the hope expressed in these verses finally be realized in the end?
 - ? How do these verses express the hope that the living, the dying, and the dead, past, present and future will praise God?
2. The relationship between the following two lines might not be readily apparent. What do you think is their relationship?
- The poor will eat and be full.
Those who search after YHWH will praise Him.
- ? What do you think and feel when you consider that just as people eat and are fully satisfied, those who seek after God will not be disappointed?
 - ? After studying this psalm, how well does all of it rather than just snippets of it fit with Jesus' life and ambitions?

Psalm 24.⁷⁻¹⁰

⁷Lift up your head, O ye gates;
and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

⁸Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.

⁹Lift up your heads, O ye gates;
even lift them up, ye everlasting doors;
and the King of glory shall come in.

¹⁰Who is this King of glory?
The LORD of hosts,
he is the King of glory.

Questionary

1. Today's reading represents an invitation to the temple doors to open and receive the presence of the Lord. In ancient days, the doors of Israel's temple were opened to receive the Ark of the Covenant, symbol of God's holy presence. It appears that this ritual was periodically reenacted.
 - ? What can you do to "open the doors" and open yourself more fully to the Lord and receive more intimately his presence in your life?
2. Think about how the Lord is described in this reading. He is the "King of glory."
 - ? What is "glory"?
 - ? When do you best feel the presence of "glory" in your life?
 - ? What does it feel like?
 - ? What impact might this experience have on your daily life?

Psalm 25.⁶

Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies
and thy loving kindnesses;
for they have been ever of old.

Questionary

- ? What do you think and feel when you read that the Lord's "tender mercies" and "loving kindnesses" "have been *ever of old*"?

Psalm 27.^{4, 7-8, 13-14}— Atonement

⁴One thing have I desired of the LORD,
that will I seek after;
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to enquire in his temple.

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice:
have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

⁸When thou saidst, “Seek ye my face;”
my heart said unto thee, “Thy face, LORD, will I seek.”

¹³I had fainted,
unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.

¹⁴Wait on the LORD:
be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart:
wait, I say, on the LORD.

Questionary

This reading is the 4th in a series of Advent readings and post-Advent readings. It also represents the 12th and final instalment in our atonement series of readings entitled, “Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation.”

? What invitation do you find in this reading?

? How do you apply the invitation found here with the Savior’s invitation to come unto him?

1. It is appropriate, of course, to go to the temple to “work.” There is important work to be done there. We can and should also go to the temple with the intent to “worship.” Psalm 27 mentions several blessings that come to us as we go to the “house of the LORD” to find and worship God, Himself.

? What are those blessings?

2. While the Psalmist certainly has the physical structural temple in mind, Paul reminds us the we, each of us, are “temples of God.”

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”
(1 Cor. 3.¹⁶).

? In light of this, how would you apply this reading from Psalm 27 to your daily life?

? What sort of temple are you? How intimate and revelatory is your inquiry after God?

? What can you do to become a temple of greater intimacy with and revelation from God?

3. Think about each of these blessing and how they might be realized in your life.

We can “Behold the beauty of the LORD.”

We can “enquire.”

We can “hide... in his pavilion.”

We can “offer... sacrifices of joy.”

We can “sing praises unto the LORD.”

“We can “seek the face of the LORD.”

? What, do you think, would one “behold” if they were to behold “the beauty of the Lord”?

? What privilege/s, do you think, is the Lord holding out when he extends the invitation: “seek ye my face”?

- ? What have you done to make “seeking the face of God” a priority in your life?
- ? What distractions might you need to remove from your life to accept and act upon the Lord’s invitation?
- ? What would cause the Lord to “hide his face”?
- ? How do the following passages apply to the invitation found in this reading?

“And again, verily I say unto you that it is your privilege, and a promise I give unto you that have been ordained unto this ministry, that inasmuch as you strip yourselves from jealousies and fears, and humble yourselves before me, for ye are not sufficiently humble, the veil shall be rent and you shall see me and know that I am—not with the carnal neither natural mind, but with the spiritual” (DC 67.¹⁰).

“And this greater priesthood administereth the gospel and holdeth the key of the mysteries of the kingdom, even the key of the knowledge of God. Therefore, in the ordinances thereof, the power of godliness is manifest. And without the ordinances thereof, and the authority of the priesthood, the power of godliness is not manifest unto men in the flesh; for without this no man can see the face of God, even the Father, and live. Now this Moses plainly taught to the children of Israel in the wilderness, and sought diligently to sanctify his people that they might behold the face of God...” (DC 84.¹⁹⁻²³).

“And if your eye be single to my glory, your whole bodies shall be filled with light, and there shall be no darkness in you; and that body which is filled with light comprehendeth all things. Therefore, sanctify yourselves that your minds become single to God, and the days will come that you shall see him; for he will unveil his face unto you, and it shall be in his own time, and in his own way, and according to his own will. Remember the great and last promise which I have made unto you...” (DC 88.⁶⁷⁻⁶⁹).

4. The Psalmist confesses, “I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD.”
 - ? What, do you think, does the Psalmist mean by “fainting”?
 - ? To what degree—large or small—do your feelings correspond to those of the Psalmist? Why do you answer as you do?
5. The Psalmist admonishes us to “wait on the LORD.”
 - ? What does he mean by “wait”?
 - ? What would you think and feel if we suggested that the Hebrew word translated as “wait,” has the nuance of “expectation”—“Wait expectantly on/for the LORD”?
 - ? How “expectant” are you that when you “seek the face of the LORD” and seek to “behold the beauty of the LORD” God will respond happily and meaningfully? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? What could you do to increase your sense of “expectation” or “anticipation”?

- * The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

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“Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus’ life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalm 30.⁴⁻⁵

⁴Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his,
and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

⁵For his anger endureth but a moment;
in his favour is life:

weeping may endure for a night,
but joy cometh in the morning.

Questionary

- ? How consistent with the Psalmist's testimony concerning the generous nature of God has your own experience with God been?
- ? If your experience is different from that of the Psalmist, what needs to change in your own life—or do you chalk it up to a misperception of God on the part of the Psalmist?

Psalm 31.⁹⁻¹⁰

⁹Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble:
mine eye is consumed with grief,
yea, my soul and my belly.

¹⁰For my life is spent with grief,
and my years with sighing:
my strength faileth because of mine iniquity,
and my bones are consumed.

Questionary

- ? Have you felt about your sins and weaknesses as the Psalmist expressed here when he considers his sins?
- ? What have you done in such circumstances?
- ? What relief have you found and how did you find it?

Psalm 32.¹⁻²

¹Truly happy is the one whose rebellion is borne away
and whose sin is buried.

²Truly happy is the one whose guilt YHWH does not consider
and there is no intention to obfuscate (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

¹Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

²Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile.

Psalm 32 is the second of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). This is the first of four readings from this Psalm.

1. In this reading, the Psalmist uses imagery to testify to God's ability and willingness to forgive.
 - ? What is the imagery?
 - ? What do you see in your mind when you imagine sinful rebellion being carried away from the sinner's life
 - ? What do you see in your mind when you imagine sinful rebellion being made to disappear through burial.
 - ? What do you think when you imagine God giving no consideration to sinful rebellion?
 - ? What other images does scripture use for the removal or forgiveness of sinful rebellion?
 - ? What other scripture passages come to you mind when you consider the portrayal of forgiveness?
 - ? How does the following passage confirm and amplify the imagery found here?

“As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103.¹²).
 - ? How about this one?

“If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?” (Psalm 130.³)
 - ? What would it mean that God does not “mark” iniquity, sin, error, etc.
 - ? How does the following passage relate to the testimony of forgiveness found in today's reading?

“He hath not dealt with us after our sins;
nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psalm 103.¹⁰).
 - ? How does all of this comport with your own understanding of and experience with God and his ability and willingness to forgive?
 - ? If your understanding of and experience with God and his forgiveness is different, how would you explain the difference?
2. These two verses played a key role in Paul's understanding of “justification through faith.” Here is just a small portion of Romans 4 in which Paul expounds on how one is justified—is right with God, or is forgiven.

“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying,
‘Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,

and whose sins are covered.

Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (vss. 5-8).

- ? What additional insights do you have into today’s passage from Paul’s use of it?
- 3. The final line reads, “and there is no intention to obfuscate,” or, in the KJV, “and in whose spirit there is no guile.”
 - ? What does this final line mean to you?
 - ? How does it relate to what proceeded?
 - ? How does it relate to what follows: the Psalmist’s belated confession that there was a time when he refused to confess his sins.

“Because I remained silent, my frame wasted away
while I raged all day long.”

- ? How does the following passage’s “acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God,” relate to the “guile” or “obfuscation” mentioned in his Psalm.

“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, I know that if ye shall follow the Son, with full purpose of heart, acting no hypocrisy and no deception before God, but with real intent, repenting of your sins, witnessing unto the Father that ye are willing to take upon you the name of Christ, by baptism—yea, by following your Lord and your Savior down into the water, according to his word, behold, then shall ye receive the Holy Ghost; yea, then cometh the baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost; and then can ye speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel” (2 Ne. 31.¹³).
- ? What can you do to move toward the realization of the promise made in today’s reading?

Psalm 32.³⁻⁵

³Because I remained silent, my frame wasted away
while I raged all day long.

⁴Because Your power rested heavily upon me day and night
my moisture turned into summer draught.

⁵I'll confess my sin to You
and no longer hide my guilt from You.

I decided, "I'll confess my rebellion to YHWH,"
and You, You bore away my sinful guilt (author's translation).

Questionary

Today's reading is the 2nd for lent. Psalm 32 is one of seven "penitential" Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143).

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

³When I kept silence, my bones waxed old
through my roaring all the day long.

⁴For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:
my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.

⁵I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
and mine iniquity have I not hid.

I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;"
and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

1. There are any number of English words that can be used for human weakness.
 - ? How many and which ones does the Psalmist use in today's reading?
 - ? What does it suggest to you about the Psalmist's feelings, that he makes use of so many different words in such a short passage to indicate his error and weakness?
 - ? Are you ever overcome and obsessed by feelings of guilt over your sins?
2. The Psalmist speaks of a time when he suffered because he "remained silent."
 - ? Based upon your reading of today's passage, what did the Psalmist keep silent about?
3. In the KJV, after telling of his stubborn silence, the Psalmist speaks of his "roaring all the day long"—and, indeed, the word translated as "roaring" often refers to the roar of a lion.
 - ? How do you square the Psalmist's "silence" in the first line of verse 3 with his "roaring" in the second?
 - ? Consider my translation of "raging" rather than "roaring." How are "raging" and "roaring" related?
 - ? How do we sometimes "rage" over our sins and at the suggestion or command that we must confess them to God?
4. After some stubbornness (see verse 3), the Psalmist finally confessed, or acknowledged his sin. Verse 5 of today's reading describes one thing that we must do in order to be forgiven. We must "confess," or "acknowledge" our sins. This applies to both specific sins and our general sinfulness. We must acknowledge specific sins and ask for help to overcome them. We must also acknowledge the truth that no matter how hard we try, we frequently come short of our expectations and sin.
 - ? Why is it so important to God that we acknowledge our sin?
 - ? Why is it sometimes so difficult to acknowledge our sin?

Consider the Brother of Jared's frank confession:

"... Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that *we are*

unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires” (Ether 3.²).

Consider, too, the confession of the writer of the Lectures on Faith:

“...such is the weakness of man, and such his frailties, that he is *liable to sin continually*”
(Lecture 3:20, questions and answers)

- ? How can we make such faithful confession without feeling demeaned, or engaging in ungodly and unfaithful self-hate?
 - ? Why is it so important to achieve a balance between the state of willing confession and an absence of self-loathing?
5. Upon giving up his stubborn refusal to acknowledge sin, the Psalmist reports that the Lord “bore away my sinful guilt.”
- ? How do you feel about the Lord’s quick response to the Psalmist’s delayed confession?
 - ? How strong is your faith, or your trust in God that he will respond as quickly and faithfully to your confession of sinfulness?
- ? How can you make better use of confession during this lent and Easter Season?

Psalm 32.⁶⁻⁷

⁶For this should every devout individual pray to You
until such time as it is obtained.

Only then will the flood of rising waters, not reach them.

⁷You are my hiding place.

You keep me from distress.

You encompass me with deliverance songs (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁶For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee
in a time when thou mayest be found
surely in the floods of great waters
they shall not come nigh unto him.

⁷Thou art my hiding place;

thou shalt preserve me from trouble;

thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance.

Psalm 32 is one of seven "penitential" Psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). In addition, this reading is the third of four readings in this Psalm.

1. Having given up his stubborn refusal to confess his sins and experienced the joy of God's forgiveness, the Psalmist turns evangelist, recommending that all seek God and his forgiveness

"For this should every devout individual pray to You
until such time as it is obtained.

- ? What other examples of individuals in scripture who experience God incomparable generosity in forgiveness and then begin to recommend God to others?

2. The Psalmist declares that only through confession and forgiveness of sin can one avoid "the flood of rising waters."

- ? What is meant by "the flood of rising waters"?

- ? What do the following two passages say to shape your thoughts about "the flood of rising waters"?

"Save me, O God;
for the waters are come in unto my soul.
I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing:
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying:
my throat is dried:
mine eyes fail while I wait for my God...

O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
and my sins are not hid from thee...

Deliver me out of the mire,
and let me not sink:
let me be delivered from them that hate me,
and out of the deep waters.
Let not the waterflood overflow me,
neither let the deep swallow me up,
and let not the pit shut her mouth upon me" (Ps. 69.^{1-3, 5, 14-15}).

Out of the depths
have I cried unto thee, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice:
let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.
If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities,
O Lord, who shall stand?
But there is forgiveness with thee,
that thou mayest be feared” (Ps. 130.¹⁻⁴).

3. Consider the following imagery?

- God is a “hiding place”
- God surrounds “with songs of deliverance”
- Mercy “surrounds” those who trust Yahweh
- ? From what does one hide in God?
- ? Who is singing the “songs of deliverance”?
- ? What is keep out and away when Yahweh mercifully “surrounds the faithful?

Psalm 32.⁸⁻¹¹

⁸I will give you insight and teach you the principles by which you should live.
I will direct you, my eye on you.

⁹Don't be like a horse or mule, without discernment,
outfitted and controlled with bridle and bit.
Don't let them near you.

¹⁰The ungodly experience many pangs,
but those who trust YHWH, goodness surrounds them.

¹¹Rejoice in YHWH and be joyful, you who are just.
Shout for joy, all you who are truly upright (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

⁸I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go:
I will guide thee with mine eye.

⁹Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule,
which have no understanding:
whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle,
lest they come near unto thee.

¹⁰Many sorrows shall be to the wicked:
but he that trusteth in the LORD,
mercy shall compass him about.

¹¹Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous:
and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

Psalm 32 is the second of seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). This is the last of four readings from this Psalm.

1. While in verse 6-7, we seem to have heard the Psalmist's voice, in this reading we seem to hear another voice admonishing the Psalmist.
 - ? Whose voice do we hear in these verses?
 - ? What is the Psalmist admonished to do or not do?
 - ? What does God promise the Psalmist in these verses?
 - ? What is meant by not being a horse or mule that needs to be controlled by a "bit and bridle"?
 - ? How might this admonishment concerning being controlled by a "bit and bridle" relate to the Psalmist's earlier refusal to confess his sins?
2. The Psalmist encourages believers to "shout for joy."
 - ? What do you imagine this looks like to the Psalmist? What does he expect?
 - ? How does this relate to Nephi's assertion that those who have faith in Christ, repent, and enter into baptismal covenant with God receive the Holy Spirit, and can then "speak with the tongue of angels, and shout praises unto the Holy One of Israel." (2 Nephi 31.¹³)?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you consider the Holy Spirit's role in bringing us the desire and the know-how to praise God?
 - ? Can you relate to this experience? Has the Spirit so moved you? Have you engaged in such praising?

Psalm 32.¹⁻⁵— atonement

- ¹Truly happy is the one whose rebellion is borne away
and whose sin is buried.
- ²Truly happy is the one whose guilt YHWH does not consider
and there is no intention to obfuscate.
- ³Because I remained silent, my frame wasted away
while I raged all day long.
- ⁴Because Your power rested heavily upon me day and night
my moisture turned into summer draught.
- ⁵I'll confess my sin to You
and no longer hide my guilt from You.
I decided, "I'll confess my rebellion to YHWH,"
and You, You bore away my sinful guilt (author's translation).

Questionary

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the KJV.

- ¹Blessed is he
whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
- ²Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no guile [guilt].
- ³When I kept silence,
my bones waxed old
through my roaring all the day long.
- ⁴For day and night
thy hand was heavy upon me:
my moisture is turned
into the drought of summer.
- ⁵I acknowledged my sin unto thee,
and mine iniquity have I not hid.
I said, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD;"
And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, "Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement." *

1. There are any number of English words that can be used for human weakness.
 - ? How many and which ones does the Psalmist use in today's reading?
 - ? What does it suggest to you about the Psalmist's feelings, that he utilizes so many such words in a passage as short as today's reading ("transgression," "sin," "iniquity," and "guilt.")?
 - ? Are you ever overcome and "obsessed" by feelings of guilt over your sins?
2. The Psalmist speaks of a time when he suffered because he "kept silence."
 - ? What did the Psalmist keep silent about?
3. After some stubbornness (see verse 3), the Psalmist finally confessed, or acknowledged his sin. Verse 5 of today's reading describes one thing that we must do in order to be forgiven. We must "confess," or "acknowledge" our sins. This applies to both specific sins and our general sinfulness. We must acknowledge specific sins and ask for help to overcome them. We must also acknowledge the truth that no matter how hard we try, we frequently come short of our expectations.
 - ? Why is it so important to God that we acknowledge our sin?

- ? Why is it sometimes so difficult to acknowledge our sin?
- ? How do you feel about the Lord's quick response to the Psalmist's delayed confession?
- ? Do you believe the Lord will respond as quickly and faithfully to your confession of sinfulness?

4. Consider the Brother of Jared's frank confession:

"... Now behold, O Lord, and do not be angry with thy servant because of his weakness before thee; for we know that thou art holy and dwellest in the heavens, and that *we are unworthy before thee; because of the fall our natures have become evil continually*; nevertheless, O Lord, thou hast given us a commandment that we must call upon thee, that from thee we may receive according to our desires" (Ether 3.²).

Consider, too, the confession of the writer of the Lectures on Faith:

"...such is the weakness of man, and such his frailties, that he is *liable to sin continually*" (Lecture 3:20, questions and answers)

- ? How can we make such faithful confession without feeling demeaned, or engaging in ungodly and unfaithful self-hate?
- ? Why is it so important to do this?

5. A "blessed" person is one who has been forgiven or whose sins are not "imputed" to them.

- ? What does "impute" mean?
- ? Why does the Psalmist not say that the blessed person is one who does not sin?

6. In Romans 4.⁶⁻⁸, the apostle Paul quotes verses 1-2 to explain what he means when he speaks of "justification." When Paul speaks of a man or woman being justified, he is talking about their being forgiven for the sins that they inevitably commit. Paul's "justification" or "forgiveness of sins" is discussed in the Book of Mormon under the rubric of being "Born of God." So...

"Justification," "forgiveness," and being "born of God" are different ways of speaking of the same spiritual experience.

- ? Have you experienced justification, forgiveness, or the new birth?
- ? If not, why do you think you have not felt this powerful encouragement?
- ? Which is most likely? 1) You haven't experienced it because of your own distrust of God, or 2) You have not experienced it because God has not found you to have done what is necessary?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

"Fall: Our Need of Atonement"

"Grace: The Savior's Generous and Earnest Invitation"

"At-one-ment: The Savior's unity and connectedness with us"

"Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us"

"Glorification: The Savior's Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement"

"Justification: How We Repent and Change"

"Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement"

"Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement"

"Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement"

"Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me"

Psalm 33.¹⁶⁻¹⁸— just scripture

¹⁶There is no king saved by the multitude of an host:
a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

¹⁷An horse is a vain thing for safety:
neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

¹⁸Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him,
upon them that hope in his mercy...

Questionary

1. Today's reading mentions two sources upon which nations can place their hope and trust for security.
 - ? What are those sources?
 - ? How can trust in the first—the greatest and latest in military technological innovations—reflect infidelity to the second—God Himself?
 - ? How are modern nations likely to respond to the assertions made in today's reading about the true source of national security?
 - ? How do you respond?
2. During the period when this psalm was composed, horse and chariot were the latest and greatest in military technological innovation.
 - ? What is today's weaponry upon which nations place false hope for peace and security?
3. We recently posted the following quote to the "just quotes" page of this site. "In 2010, at \$687 billion, military spending made up 4.9 percent of the GDP of the United States. In comparison, Russia spent just over fifty billion dollars. But it's bigger than that. You see, the US military budget accounts for approximately 40 percent of total global arms spending and is over six times larger than the military budget of China, and is greater than the next twenty largest military spenders combined" (Michael Swanson, War State, Chapter 1).
 - ? How does today's reading relate to this reality of U.S. military spending?
 - ? Ask yourself, "Does all of this spending really make the planet a safer place?"
 - ? What does this spending suggest about the U.S.'s response to the assertions made in today's reading?
 - ? What does this spending suggest about where we place our trust for national security?

Psalms 34.^{1-4, 6, 8}

¹I will bless the LORD at all times:
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

²My soul shall make her boast in the LORD:
the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

³O magnify the LORD with me,
and let us exalt his name together.

⁴I sought the LORD, and he heard me,
and delivered me from all my fears.

⁶This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him,
and saved him out of all his troubles.

⁸O taste and see that the LORD is good:
blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Questionary

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist extends several invitations to his audience.
? What are those invitations?
2. The Psalmist invites the reader to "magnify the LORD with me."
? What do you think it means to "magnify" God?
? What would you think, feel, say and do to "magnify" God?
3. The Psalmist also invites the reader to "taste and see that the LORD is good."
? What do you think of when you consider the Psalmist's appeal to your sense of "taste" to appreciate the goodness of God?
? What experiences have you had in your life that have convinced you of the Lord's goodness toward you?
? What events surrounding Easter convince you of God's goodness?
? What would your acceptance of these invitations look like? What would you do?
4. The Psalmist is confident that when "the humble" hear his boasts concerning God, indicative of God's goodness, dependability, and helpfulness, they will be "glad."
? What thoughts do you have about the Psalmist's focus on the response of "the humble" rather than the response of other potential audiences?

We have repeatedly pointed out that we often "domesticate" the concept of "humility," turning it into an agreeable and pleasant attribute. As is so often the case, it would be best to translate the Hebrew word as "afflicted," "needy," "oppressed," or "humiliated."

- ? When you consider this understanding of what it means to be "humble," what are your thoughts about the Psalmist's focus on the response of those who feel oppressed to the goodness, dependability, and helpfulness of God?
- ? Why would those who are "humble" in this latter sense of the world be particularly appreciative of the Psalmist's assurances about God's goodness, dependability, and helpfulness?
- ? How often and strongly do you share the sentiments the Psalmist expresses in today's reading?

Psalm 35.⁹⁻¹⁰— just scripture

⁹And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD:
it shall rejoice in his salvation.

¹⁰All my bones shall say,
“LORD, who is like unto thee,
which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him,
yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?”

Q

1. We often think of “salvation” strictly in terms of the afterlife. But, with its meaning of “deliverance” or “rescue, it also has application to life experiences in the here and now.
? In the context of this psalm, who is being “rescued” and from what or whom are they being rescued?
2. The Psalmist speaks of God’s rescue of the poor and needy from the stronger classes of society that are intent on “spoiling” the poor and needy?
? Do you find yourself conscience of the poor and needy’s need for divine rescue?
? How do you feel about God’s interest in the poor and needy, even to the extent of working against the stronger elements of society?
? What would this look like?
3. The Psalmist exalts in God’s rescue and emancipation of the poor and needy with “all his bones.”
? What does this mean to you?
? Do you find God’s rescue of the poor and needy from the wealthy and strong to be one of the reasons you glorify him?
4. It is a, if not the central claim of the Old Testament that God is an emancipator. He helps and rescues those in trouble. And, of course, much, in not most of the trouble humans experience is of their own making, as was ancient Israel’s.
? How do these truths impact the way you feel about and treat the poor and needy, however they got there, and however skillfully they manage their lives in their impoverished circumstances?
? Are your attitudes toward the poor and need consistent with those of God?
? What can you do to assist God in the rescue, the emancipation of the poor and needy, especially from those who are stronger than they and take advantage of them?

Psalm 36.⁵⁻⁹

- ⁵Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens;
and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.
- ⁶Thy righteousness is like the great mountains;
thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD,
thou preservest man and beast.
- ⁷How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!
therefore the children of men put their trust
under the shadow of thy wings.
- ⁸They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house;
and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.
- ⁹For with thee is the fountain of life:
in thy light shall we see light.

Questionary

1. This first line of today's reading, expresses an oft repeated truth concerning God's fundamental attribute of mercy. For example, Psalm 103 declares,

"For as the heaven is high above the earth,
so great is his mercy toward them that fear him."

 - ? This is an expansive amount of mercy. Based upon your own experiences, why do you have reason to believe this claim to be "accurate" rather than mere "poetic hyperbole"?
 - ? Call to mind, consider, and meditate upon your own experiences that confirm the Psalmist's view of God's expansive mercy.
 - ? If you do not feel your experiences with God's mercy are as deep as those expressed by the Psalmist, what might you do to experience such an outpouring of mercy?
2. The second line speaks of the expansiveness of God's "faithfulness." While we can today speak mathematically of the height of clouds, to ancients the height of a cloud was "immeasurably high," "beyond reckoning or understanding."
 - ? What is meant and what is entailed in God's "faithfulness"?
 - ? What comes to you mind if we translate "fidelity" in place of "faithfulness"?
 - ? Is his fidelity and commitment to you really so expansive? So likely to be misunderstood and underestimated?
 - ? Based upon your own experiences, is there reason to believe God to be so expansively faithful to you?
 - ? If you feel that your experiences do not justify this claim, "what lack you yet?"
3. The Psalmist also speaks of the expansiveness of God's "righteousness," "judgement," and "lovingkindness."
 - ? What do you understand each of these attributes to be?
 - ? How does each impact your life?
4. In describing God's impact on your life, the Psalmist speaks of the "fatness of [God's] house," the "rivers of [God's] pleasures," the "fountain of life," and "light."
 - ? Consider each of these images, what they mean to you, and how you might have or might yet experience God so as to understand and relate to the Psalmist's feelings and teachings.
 - ? How does your appreciation for and experience of God's mercy and faithfulness in your life impact the way you respond to and treat others?
 - ? What can you do to possess and act with more mercy and fidelity toward others?

Psalm 37. ^{14-15, 35-36}— just scripture

¹⁴The wicked have drawn out the sword,
and have bent their bow,
to cast down the poor and needy,
and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

¹⁵Their sword shall enter into their own heart,
and their bows shall be broken.

³⁵I have seen the wicked in great power,
and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

³⁶Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not:
yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

Questionary

- ? What does it mean to “cast down” the “poor and needy”?
- ? How does society today “cast down” the “poor and needy”?
- ? What can you do, not only privately and individually, but publicly, as a citizen of a larger whole to right wrongs committed against the “poor and needy”?
- ? The psalmist might have selected any number of evils that the wicked commit. Why did he select this evil—as he most often does—of “casing down the poor and needy?” What does this suggest to you about this evil?
- ? Why is how an individual and society treats the “poor and needy” such a good predictor of the spiritual state of the individual and society?

Psalm 38.¹⁻⁵— atonement

- ¹O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath:
neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.
- ²For thine arrows stick fast in me,
and thy hand presseth me sore.
- ³There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger;
neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.
- ⁴For mine iniquities are gone over mine head:
as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.
- ⁵My wounds stink and are corrupt
because of my foolishness.

Questionary

Psalm 38 is one of the seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent.

This is the first of four readings from Psalm 38 and is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “How We Repent and Change.” *

1. The Psalmist employs a great deal of imagery in his desire to express how he feels about his sins and his relationship with God.
 - ? Take a moment to identify and picture the images that the Psalmist uses.
 - The Psalmist’s sins cause him to feel as if he has been shot full of arrows.
 - The Psalmist’s sins make him feel as if he is sick and feverish.
 - The Psalmist’s feels that he is being buried alive under his sins.
 - The Psalmist’s sins feel like an untreated and open wound that has become infected.
 - ? How do you feel about these images?
 - ? Do you find them effective and informative? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? If you have felt powerful negative emotional reactions to your sins, how would you describe the feelings?
 - ? How did you finally find healing and comfort from such feelings?
2. As we have repeated seen, one of the essential elements of applying the atonement is the confession or acknowledgement of sin.
 - ? How will today’s reading contribute to your acknowledging sin in such a way to create and deepen a healthy relationship with God, free of guilt and doubt about your standing with God?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

- “Fall: Our Need of Atonement”
- “Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”
- “At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”
- “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”
- “Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”
- “Justification: How We Repent and Change”
- “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”
- “Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”
- “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
- “Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalm 38.⁶⁻¹⁰— atonement

- ⁶I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly;
I go mourning all the day long.
- ⁷For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease:
and there is no soundness in my flesh.
- ⁸I am feeble and sore broken:
I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart.
- ⁹Lord, all my desire is before thee;
and my groaning is not hid from thee.
- ¹⁰My heart panteth, my strength faileth me:
as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

Questionary

Psalm 38 is one of the seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent.

This is the second of four readings from Psalm 38 and is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “How We Repent and Change.” *

1. In sharing his feelings about his sins, the Psalmist, as he did in verses 1-5, uses some very intense language.
? What language impresses you?
2. The Psalmist speaks of being “bowed down,” “filled with loathsomeness,” “feeble and sore broken,” and feeling “disquiet in his heart.” He speaks of moaning, roaring, groaning, and panting.
? Does his language seem “over the top” to you, or do you understand why he felt as he does?
? How will today’s reading contribute to your confessing and acknowledging sin in such a way to create and deepen a healthy relationship with God, free of guilt and doubt about your standing with God?
3. As part of his confession, the Psalmist says, “all my desire is before thee.”
? When the Lord looks upon “all [your] desire,” what does he see as your greatest desires and your highest priorities?
? Where is he and your relationship with him in this list of desires and priorities?
? What evidences does he see that your relationship with him is of the highest priority, if, indeed, it is your highest priority?

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- “Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”
- “At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”
- “Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”
- “Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”
- “Justification: How We Repent and Change”
- “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”
- “Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”
- “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”
- “Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalms 38.¹¹⁻¹⁶

- ¹¹My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore;
and my kinsmen stand afar off.
- ¹²They also that seek after my life lay snares for me:
and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things,
and imagine deceits all the day long.
- ¹³But I, as a deaf man, heard not;
and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.
- ¹⁴Thus I was as a man that heareth not,
and in whose mouth are no reproofs.
- ¹⁵For in thee, O LORD, do I hope:
thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.
- ¹⁶For I said, "Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me:
when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me."

Questionary

Psalm 38 is one of the seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent.

This is the third of four readings from Psalm 38.

In the previous two Psalm 38 readings the Psalmist was extraordinarily remorseful over his sinfulness. His language was intense and even, some might say, extreme. If need be, take a moment to read the first ten verses of Psalm 38.

- ? What is the "mood" you hear in the Psalmist's confession of sin?
 - ? Have you experienced similar feelings in your own repentance process?
1. The six verses that constitute today's reading is very different than the previous eleven verses.
- ? How are they different? What is the focus of today's reading?
 - ? In light of the Psalmist's already anguished feelings, how do you feel about the criticism that those around him, including friends and family, aim at him?
 - ? How is their criticism unjust, notwithstanding the Psalmist's self-admitted sinfulness?
 - ? Have you ever felt that others were "piling on" by being critical of you when you were already aware and feeling badly about a mistake or sin?
 - ? Have you ever been guilty of "piling on" by being critical of someone already aware and pained by a mistake or sin?
 - ? Why are friends and family particularly vulnerable to one's criticism?
 - ? How might you be more support than critic in the lives of those around you, admittedly flawed as they may be?
 - ? How might your being less critical of others' sins impact your own repentance process?
 - ? How did the Psalmist respond to the unjust criticism?
 - ? How could you be more constructive in your response to criticism leveled against you?

Psalms 38.¹⁷⁻²²

- ¹⁷For I am ready to halt,
and my sorrow is continually before me.
- ¹⁸For I will declare mine iniquity;
I will be sorry for my sin.
- ¹⁹But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong:
and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.
- ²⁰They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries;
because I follow the thing that good is.
- ²¹Forsake me not, O LORD:
O my God, be not far from me.
- ²²Make haste to help me,
O Lord my salvation.

Questionary

Psalm 38 is one of the seven psalms known as penitential psalms (Ps. 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143). They have, for millennia been a source of inspiration. They have provided motivation to repent, and served as a guide or example on how to engage in repentance with faith in God. Christians have utilized them to deepen their commitment to repentance during Lent.

This is the last of four readings from Psalm 38. In the previous three readings the Psalmist was extraordinarily remorseful over his sinfulness. His language was intense and even, some might say, extreme. In addition, the Psalmist complains of other's unjust criticism of him. If need be, take a moment to read the first sixteen verses of Psalm 38.

1. The Psalmist commits, "I will declare mine iniquity... I will be sorry for my sin." At the same time, he says "I follow the thing that good is."
 - ? How can both of these things be true?
 - ? Are these two things true of you as well?
 - ? How do you understand the Lord balancing these two things as he considers you and how he can and will relate to you?
2. The Psalmist asks, "Forsake me not, O LORD... O my God, be not far from me."
 - ? Are you inclined to feel that God withdraws from you because of sin, or are you inclined to feel that he balances the good you wish and do with the sins you commit and remains present and active in your life?
 - ? How do these two very different feelings impact the way we respond to error and sin?
 - ? How do they impact our willingness and ability to repent and make necessary improvements in our lives?
 - ? How do they impact the way you feel about God?

Psalm 40.¹⁻⁵— Atonement

- ¹I waited patiently for the LORD;
and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.
- ²He brought me up also out of an horrible pit,
out of the miry clay,
and set my feet upon a rock,
and established my goings.
- ³And he hath put a new song in my mouth,
even praise unto our God:
many shall see it, and fear,
and shall trust in the LORD.
- ⁴Blessed is that man
that maketh the LORD his trust,
and respecteth not the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.
- ⁵Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works
which thou hast done,
and thy thoughts which are to us-ward:
they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee:
if I would declare and speak of them,
they are more than can be numbered.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us.” *

1. One of my central understandings of Jesus Christ and his ministry is that he and it represented a witness of God’s feelings of connectedness, attachment, linkage, participation, and unity with humankind. Rather than understanding the basic meaning of at-one-ment to be something like “expiation,” or “propitiation” or “sacrifice,” etc., I understand its basic meaning as “connectedness,” “attachment,” “unity,” “oneness,” etc.
 - ? How does today’s reading speak to the Lord’s feelings of connected, attachment, and unity with us?
2. The Psalmist says that he “waited patiently” upon the Lord.
 - ? What does it mean to “wait”? To wait “patiently”?
 - ? How would the meaning and feeling of the verse change for you if we read that the Psalmist “waited expectantly” or simply “fully expected” the Lord?
 - ? What is the emotional/psychological difference between simply waiting for someone and expecting someone?

“Waiting” might stress the passing of time and may or may not be accompanied by confidence concerning arrival. But “expecting” suggests confidence concerning arrival in which the passing of time is nearly lost. “Expecting” is not a matter of “wondering if” but of “wondering when.”
 - ? When you have been in need of the Lord’s help, was your attitude more one of “waiting” or “expecting”?
 - ? How does the knowledge that we can anticipate the Lord’s response to our needs serve as evidence of his feelings of connectedness, attachment, or unity with us?
3. The Psalmist speaks of “a new song” placed in his mouth.
 - ? What, do you think, is the content of that song?

Consider Alma 5.²⁶.

“And now behold, I say unto you, my brethren, if ye have experienced a change of heart, and if ye have felt to sing the song of redeeming love, I would ask, can ye feel so now?”

- ? How does this song relate to the Psalmist’s song?
 - ? Do you have your own “new song” of “redeeming love”? Take a few minutes to right down some of the words it might include.
4. The Psalmist says that the Lord’s thoughts of us or his plans for us are vast and beyond description.
- ? How often does God think of you? Why do you answer as you do?
 - ? What does God have planned for you?
 - ? Why are you such a focus of His attention?
 - ? How do you feel, knowing that you are always in His thoughts and that He is ever planning for you with purpose?
 - ? How does the Psalmist’s witness concerning the Lord’s constant and continual mindfulness of you and your needs relate to at-one-ment, or God’s feelings of connectedness, attachment, and unity with you?
5. Here are three poetic lines.

“Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust,
And [but] respecteth not the proud,
nor such as turn aside to lies.

- ? What is the relationship between the first and the second line?
- ? What does one do to show “respect” toward the proud?
- ? How would you feel about the contention that “respect” and “trust” are pointing to the same idea: who do you look to for help?
- ? What is the relationship between the second line and the third?
- ? How and why do “the proud” rely on “lies”?

The “proud,” are not to be thought of as simply hyper self-confident. They are not simply boastful or arrogant. In the context of this Psalm, it is clear that the lies that are told are in relation to claims that are made about themselves. They stand in competition with God. They claim to be as trustworthy, reliable, dependable, and capable as God, or nearly so. Their empty boasts are lies that seduce the unwary. Such individuals and institutions become, essentially, idols, who, like Satan, attempt to take God’s place in the hearts and minds of believers.

The Psalmist reminds us that we are happiest and most secure when we rely upon the Lord rather than others, however boastful and sure they may be of their abilities. Consider the following passages:

2 Nephi 4. ³⁴	Alma 26. ¹²
Moroni 6. ⁴	Psalm 62. ⁵⁻⁹
Psalm 147. ¹⁰⁻¹¹	Psalm 148. ¹³

- ? How do these passages relate to the Psalmist’s assertions found in these three lines?
6. The Psalmist reports that he was rescued from a “pit” and the “miry clay,” “quicksand,” if you will.
- ? What do you see in your mind when you consider this imagery?
 - ? What sorts of trials and temptations might be likened to a pit with “quicksand” that threatens to draw us under?
 - ? Have there been, or are there now, trials in your life for which this imagery is appropriate?
 - ? How do you feel about the Lord’s response when the Psalmist was threatened by pit and quicksand?

“[he] set my feet upon a rock [firm ground],
and established my goings.

? How is the Lord’s quick and dependable response to the Psalmist’s danger indicative of atonement, or connectedness, attachment, linkage, and unity with us?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

“Grace: The Savior’s Generous and Earnest Invitation”

“At-one-ment: The Savior’s unity and connectedness with us”

“Sacrifice: What Jesus Suffered for Us”

“Glorification: The Savior’s Resurrection, Ascension, and Enthronement”

“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living Jesus’ life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“The Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalm 40.⁹⁻¹⁰— atonement

⁹I have preached righteousness in the great congregation:
I have not refrained my lips,
O LORD, thou knowest.

¹⁰I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart;
I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation:
I have not concealed thy lovingkindness
and thy truth from the great congregation.

Questionary

This reading is one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement.” *

1. The Psalmist confesses his commitment to preach and praise four things about God.
 - ? What are those four things?
 - ? What does it mean to speak of God’s
 - Righteousness
 - Faithfulness
 - Lovingkindness
 - Truth
 - ? How do each of these divine attributes impact your everyday life?

The Hebrew word translated as “faithfulness” could be translated as “fidelity.”

 - ? What comes to mind when you think of “fidelity”?
 - ? What do you think and feel when you contemplate God’s inalterable fidelity toward you?
2. The Psalmist confesses that he has been most diligent in testifying about God’s incredible character.
 - ? Could you say the same?
 - ? How have you attempted to reveal God’s character to others?
 - ? What more could you do to be a faithful witness to the character of God?
3. This reading comes under the rubric of “In Praise of Atonement.”
 - ? How do the four divine attributes found in today’s reading relate to God’s feelings of “at-one-ment” or connectedness to us?

* The following ten titles are part of our atonement series:

“Fall: Our Need of Atonement”

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“Justification: How We Repent and Change”

“Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement”

“Sanctification: Imitating and living a life of Atonement”

“Thanksgiving: In Praise of Atonement”

“Song of the Righteous: A Song unto Me”

Psalm 40.¹²— just scripture

I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted,
and the right of the poor.

Questionary

- ? How do you feel when you read this type of testimony concerning God's character?
- ? are its implications for America and its current treatment of the vulnerable poor—both domestic, foreign, and refugees?

Psalm 41.¹⁻³— just scripture

¹Blessed is he that considereth the poor:

the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

²The LORD will preserve him, and keep him alive;

and he shall be blessed upon the earth:

and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

³The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing:

thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness.

Questionary

- ? What do you learn about the Lord and his interests that he comes to the assistance of those who assist the poor and vulnerable?
- ? What is the implication for those individuals and nations that do not provide assistance to the poor and vulnerable?

Psalm 42.^{1-2, 5}

¹As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

²My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
when shall I come and appear before God?

⁵Why art thou cast down, O my soul?
and why art thou disquieted in me?

hope thou in God:

for I shall yet praise him

for the help of his countenance.

Q

uestionary

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1. Today's passage expresses a high degree of longing for God on the part of the Psalmist. Some years ago, a friend of mine asked, genuinely puzzled, what I found so inspirational about the Psalms. I enumerated several things that I found inspiring. One of them was the Psalmist's intense longing and search for God and a more intimate communion with him. His response surprised and disappointed me.

"Well," he said almost indignant, "this 'Psalmist' that you think so much of is the adulterous and murderous David. His 'longing' is the result of the distance that his sins put between himself and God. I wouldn't be following his example, if I were you."

There are so many things wrong with this response that one hardly knows where to begin. Here are a few questions I have in response. The reader should take a little time to consider how he or she might answer them.

- ? Is David really the author of so many Psalms, including those that include the moniker, "of David"? Why do you answer as you do?
- ? Why would the distance between a man or a woman and their God that sin creates be the only reason for a longing for God?
- ? What other explanations might there be for the Psalmist's longing, here and elsewhere?
- ? Do the righteous not continually long for a deeper, more intimate communion with God?
- ? And besides, are we not all sinners? So wouldn't the "sinners' longing" for God be appropriate to all of us?

Obviously, there is not time, here, to address all of these questions. For now, in today's reading, I would suggest that the reader do as Nephi suggested and liken the scripture to themselves. Perhaps the following thoughts and questions will assist in that endeavor.

2. Consider the imagery of the thirsty deer in need of water. Create your own story around this imagery. How long has the deer been without water? Where has it been? What will happen if the deer does not find water soon? Etc... Just use your imagination and create the story that comes to your mind.
 - ? How does your longing for God compare with that of the Psalmist?
 - ? What might this passage say about, and how might it shape and improve your priorities?
 - ? How badly do you long to commune with God daily? What do you do to find resolution to your longing?
 - ? What evidences would one see in your scripture study, prayer life, and other spiritual endeavors that you possess an intense and motivated desire to commune with God and have him as a presence in your daily life?
 - ? What might need to change so that your priority for God is evidenced in your daily life?
3. The Psalmist speaks of "the help of his [God's] countenance."
 - ? What, do you think, does the Psalmist mean by "the help of his countenance"?

? How can “his countenance” be of help to you in your life?

Psalm 44.^{3,6-7}— just scripture

³For they got not the land in possession by their own sword,
neither did their own arm save them:
but thy right hand, and thine arm,
and the light of thy countenance,
because thou hadst a favour unto them.

⁶For I will not trust in my bow,
neither shall my sword save me.

⁷But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
and hast put them to shame that hated us.

Questionary

? In what sort of language and actions do we engage that suggest we trust in the strength of our national security apparatuses rather than in God?

Psalm 46.¹⁻³

¹God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.

²Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,
and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

³Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,
though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Questionary

Today's reading is the first of four readers from Psalm 46. The central theme of this psalm is the God's sovereignty—his dependability and power in the world.

1. The Psalmist often likens God to a "refuge."
? What do you see when you imagine a "refuge"?
2. When I read that God is a "very present help" all sorts of imagery comes to my mind.
? What do you think of when you read that God's help is "very present"?
3. In verses 2 and 3, the Psalmist utilizes hyperbole to try and communicate the extent of his trust in Yahweh and Yahweh's caring attention to him and his nation.
? What images does the Psalmist utilize to try and demonstrate God's dependability and power?
? Do you trust Yahweh's willing, happy, and caring attention to you in a fashion comparable to that claimed by the Psalmist?
? If you were going to try your hand at 4 or 5 lines of poetry to try and communicate your trust in God and his caring attention to you, what imagery would you use?
? We have focused on God's dependability and power in the life of the individual. How do they relate to nations?

Psalm 46.⁴⁻⁷

⁴There is a river,
the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

⁵God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, and that right early.

⁶The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Questionary

1. Today's reading is the second of 4 readings from Psalm 46. In the first reading the Psalmist bore witness to God's sovereignty—his dependability and power—in the lives of individuals and nations that trust in him.
? What additional expressions of trust in God do you find in today's reading?
2. The Psalmist speaks of a "river" that "makes glad the city of God."
? What does this symbolism mean to you?
? What feelings does the imagery bring forth?
? What other passages come to your mind as you consider this imagery?
3. The Psalmist charges that "the heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved."
? How does today's reading reflect the global sovereignty of God?
? How do the kingdoms of this world exhibit rebellion against God's sovereignty?
? How would an individual or society demonstrate their acceptance of God's sovereignty?
? What do you do to encourage your nation to yield to God's sovereignty?

Psalm 46.⁸⁻⁹— just scripture

⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD,
what desolations he hath made in the earth.

⁹He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Q

uestionary

Today's reading is the third of four from Psalm 46. In the first two readings (verses 1-7), the Psalmist testified of God's sovereignty—his faithfulness and power—in the lives of individuals and nations that put their trust in him. He also suggested that the nations of the world are habitually in open rebellion against God.

1. The Psalmists speaks of the "works" of God in terms of "desolations."
? What do you think this means and how does it make you feel?
2. It seems that the "desolations" with which God is credited cause "wars to cease" as he undermines the militarism of the nations. There may be several ways to understand this.
? How do you understand the relationship between "desolations," the end of warfare, and his undermining of militarism?
? The end of war and the undermining of militarism seem like good things. So why are they spoken of as a "desolation"?
? What does this suggest about the attitudes of the kingdoms of this world about warfare?
? How do you feel about living in a world, and being a citizen of a country that feels the end of warfare to be a "desolation"?
? What evidence is there that the kingdoms of this world actually value warfare?
- ? How does today's reading contribute to the theme of God's sovereignty on earth that is the focus of this psalm?

As part of their work to "turn the hearts of the children to their fathers, and the hearts of the fathers to the children, the Lord encourages latter-day disciples to "renounce war and proclaim peace" (DC 98.¹⁶).

- ? What does this encouragement suggest about the basic meaning of "the spirit of Elijah"?
- ? What do you do to be true to this charge?

Psalm 46.¹⁰⁻¹¹

- ¹⁰Be still, and know that I am God:
I will be exalted among the heathen,
I will be exalted in the earth.
¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Questionary

Today's reading is the last of four readings taken from Psalm 46. In the first two readings (verses 1-7), the Psalmist testified of God's sovereignty—his faithfulness and power—in the lives of individuals and nations that put their trust in him. He also suggested that the nations of the world are habitually in open rebellion against God. In the third reading, the Psalmist testified of God's "works" in which he would bring an end to militarism and war, though this "blessing" would be viewed by some as a disaster—a desolation.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist recommends attitudes that the faithful can adopt in the face of the world rebellion and God's response to it.
 - ? What are those attitudes?
 - ? What would it look like to follow the Psalmist's admonition: "Be still, and know that I am God."
 - ? What does it mean to you to "be still"?
- ? What might it mean to a nation, and how would it impact its actions in the world to "be still, and know that I am God"?
- ? If we said that the psalm ends as it began, to what would we be referring?

Psalm 49.¹⁻⁴

¹Hear this, all nations.

Lend an ear, all who dwell the world over—

²this includes every human being;

every single individual,

rich and poor alike.

³I will publicly utter what is instructive.

The musings of my mind will focus on understanding.

⁴I will extend a listening ear to instruction.

Accompanied by lyre, I will then unlock a conundrum (Author's translation).

Questionary

Today's reading is the first of four readings from Psalm 49. For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

¹Hear this, all ye people;

give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

²Both low and high,

rich and poor, together.

³My mouth shall speak of wisdom;

and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

⁴I will incline mine ear to a parable:

I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

1. In this psalm's first four lines, the psalmist invites everyone, the world over to listen to the wisdom he has to speak in this 49th psalm. He does it by addressing

All ye people

All inhabitants of the world

Low and high

Rich and poor

There are any number of "categories" into which the Psalmist might have "classified" humanity. The Psalmist might have addressed "male and female, for example, or "Israelite and gentile."

? What do you think of the "classifications" he chose: "low/high," "rich/poor"?

? In what ways are these classes of people as foundational to the human experience as, for example, "male and female"?

2. In the next four lines, the Psalmist uses four words to describe those things that he has to say in the psalm

Wisdom (instruction)

Meditation (understanding)

Parable (instruction)

Dark saying (conundrum)

? What do you think of when you think of these four ways of arriving at, understanding, and uttering basic human truths?

3. When seeking to disclose fundamental, even divine truths, speakers often resort to music and singing or chanting in the Old Testament. Compare the following account of Elisha's manner of prophesying.

"But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him?'

And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, 'Here is Elisha the son of

Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah.’

And Jehoshaphat said, ‘The word of the LORD is with him.’

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

And Elisha said unto the king of Israel... ‘But now bring me a minstrel.’

And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said...” (2 Kings 3.^{11-13, 15-16}).

- ? Why do you think ancient prophets resorted to music, singing their message rather than speaking in their normal voice?
- ? How does this elevate the message and make it seem more significant?
- ? Can you point to a time in your life when important thoughts and feelings were conveyed to you through music?

Psalm 49.⁵⁻⁸— just scripture

- ⁵Why should I be intimidated in evil times,
when the deviant surround me—
⁶those who rely on their own resources
and promote themselves because of their great wealth;
⁷individuals who can by no means deliver anyone,
or provide ⁸’lohîm the ransom price;
⁸for the cost of delivering a life is too expensive,
and is always out of reach (Author’s translation).

Questionary

In the first reading (verses 1-4), the psalmist informed us that he had important wisdom to dispense. It represented wisdom difficult to grasp—perhaps less because it was intellectually challenging, and more because it was emotionally unwelcome. The Psalmist offered this wisdom to all humanity, with the “low and high,” “rich and poor” specifically called out.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

- ⁵Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?
⁶They that trust in their wealth,
and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
⁷None of them can by any means redeem his brother,
nor give to God a ransom for him:
⁸(For the redemption of their soul is precious,
and it ceaseth for ever:)

1. In today’s reading, the Psalmist points to the inadequacy of wealth and even a “multitude of riches.” It also speaks to the foolishness of trusting in wealth or feeling confidence through riches.
 - ? How do the wealthy use their resources to “intimidate”?
 - ? What are the inadequacies of wealth and riches that the Psalmist enumerates?
 - ? What is the relationship between wealth and riches and eternity?
 - ? Why do many seek assurance and self-worth through material wealth?
 - ? How are the Psalmist’s expressions of “wisdom” concerning wealth and riches applicable in your life?
 - ? How are the Psalmist’s expressions of “wisdom” concerning wealth and riches applicable to today’s society?
 - ? How is such wisdom as the Psalmist offers concerning wealth and riches a “dark,” “difficult saying,” or, as I translated a “conundrum”?
2. Consider the following narrative from Matthew 19.¹⁶⁻²⁶.

“And, behold, one came and said unto him, ‘Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?’

And he said unto him, ‘Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.’

He saith unto him, ‘Which?’

Jesus said, ‘Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’

The young man saith unto him, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?’

Jesus said unto him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.'

But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. Then said Jesus unto his disciples, 'Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.'

When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, 'Who then can be saved?'

But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, 'With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible'" (verses 16-26).

- ? How does this account relate to the Psalmist's "wisdom" concerning wealth and riches?
 - ? How does the rich man's reaction reinforce the Psalmist's contention that the wisdom he shares concerning wealth and riches is a "difficult saying"?
 - ? Why are the disciples taken back by Jesus' contention that it is nearly impossible for the rich to enter the kingdom of God?
 - ? How does the disciples' startled and incredulous reaction support the Psalmist's contention that the wisdom he shares concerning wealth and riches is a "difficult saying"?
 - ? Why is it so difficult to believe that the wealthy are unlikely to enter the kingdom of God?
 - ? Why do the disciples seemingly take for granted that the wealthy are likely to enter the kingdom of God?
- ? How does modern society's focus on wealth and its frequent assumption that it is the wealthy who "have done something right" and are therefore "blessed" demonstrate the Psalmist's truth that his wisdom concerning wealth and riches is a "difficult saying," not understood or applied?

Psalm 49.⁹⁻¹⁵— just scripture

- ⁹Do they think they will live forever;
not experience the Pit?
- ¹⁰Surely, one can observe that the astute die;
that they perish right along with the ignorant and stupid,
and leave their wealth to those after them.
- ¹¹In their mind, their houses are enduring;
their abodes, passing from one generation to another.
They even name lands after themselves!
- ¹²But even the most prestigious don't last long;
exactly like senseless animals.
- ¹³This is their way of life, madness owns them,
and those who follow them accept what comes from their mouth!
- ¹⁴Like sheep, they are destined for Še'ôl.
Death shepherds them,
and leads them down daily into flat plains.
Še'ôl consumes their body;
consumes what dignity they possess.
- ¹⁵But 'elohîm will deliver me from Še'ôl's grasp,
for he will take me to himself (Author's translation).

Questionary

Today's reading is the third from psalm 49.

In the first reading (verses 1-4), the psalmist informed us that he had important wisdom to dispense. It represented wisdom difficult to grasp—perhaps less because it was intellectually challenging, and more because it was emotionally unwelcome. The Psalmist offered this wisdom to all humanity, with the “low and high,” “rich and poor” specifically called out.

In the second reading (verses 5-8), the Psalmist pointed to the inadequacy of wealth and even a “multitude of riches.” He also spoke to the foolishness of trusting in wealth or feeling confidence through riches.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

In today's reading, the Psalmist continues his meditation on the foolishness of spending life in anxious contemplation of and labor for wealth and riches.

- ⁹That he should still live for ever,
and not see corruption.
- ¹⁰For he seeth that wise men die,
likewise the fool and the brutish person perish,
and leave their wealth to others.
- ¹¹Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever,
and their dwelling places to all generations;
they call their lands after their own names.
- ¹²Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not:
he is like the beasts that perish.
- ¹³This their way is their folly:
yet their posterity approve their sayings.
- ¹⁴Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
death shall feed on them;

and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
and their beauty shall consume in the grave
from their dwelling.

¹⁵But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:
for he shall receive me.

1. My translation attempts to capture the point and the mood of the Psalmist's difficult saying concerning the vanity behind the search for economic security.
 - ? What insights did you glean from the author's translation that you might have missed in reading the KJV?
 - ? What foolish attitudes and actions possessed by those who seek wealth does the Psalmist point out?
 - ? How do you feel about the Psalmist's pointing out the foolishness in "naming" lands and possessions after themselves as an attempt to gain "immortality"?
2. The apostle Paul shares much the same "difficult wisdom" concerning wealth that the Psalmist shares in this psalm.

“...Supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6.⁵⁻⁹).

- ? What similar teachings do you find in these two passages?
- ? What insights concerning “foolish and hurtful lusts” does Psalm 49 suggest?
- ? Certainly, the wealthy hope to eat well through their means. How do you feel about the Psalmist turning the tables to discuss how “death feeds on them”?
- ? How do you feel about the “rudeness” of the Psalmist in pointing all this foolishness and vanity out? (this might be thought of as part of his “difficult” or unwelcome wisdom?)
- ? How does the world in general respond to the “rudeness” of the Psalmist's “difficult wisdom”?

Psalm 49.¹⁶⁻²⁰— just scripture

- ¹⁶So don't be overawed when someone grows wealthy;
as their house grows more impressive.
- ¹⁷Because, when they die, they can't take a thing;
their grandeur won't follow along.
- ¹⁸Though they might celebrate their life while living,
others praising them because they do well for themselves,
- ¹⁹they will end up right where their fathers did.
From then on, they'll see no light.
- ²⁰Individuals who have prestige, but lack insight
are exactly like senseless animals (Author's translation).

Questionary

Today's reading is the last of four from psalm 49.

In the first reading (verses 1-4), the psalmist informed us that he had important wisdom to dispense. It represented wisdom difficult to grasp—perhaps less because it was intellectually challenging, and more because it was emotionally unwelcome. The Psalmist offered this wisdom to all humanity, with the “low and high,” “rich and poor” specifically called out.

In the second reading (verses 5-8), the Psalmist pointed to the inadequacy of wealth and even a “multitude of riches.” The Psalmist also spoke to the foolishness of trusting in wealth or feeling confidence through riches.

In the third reading (verses 9-15), the Psalmist continued his meditation on the foolishness of spending life in anxious contemplation of, labor for, and confidence in wealth and riches.

For those who wish to compare translations, here is the King James Translation.

- ¹⁶Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
when the glory of his house is increased;
- ¹⁷For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away:
his glory shall not descend after him.
- ¹⁸Though while he lived he blessed his soul:
and men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.
- ¹⁹He shall go to the generation of his fathers;
they shall never see light.
- ²⁰Man that is in honour, and understandeth not,
is like the beasts that perish.

1. In today's reading, the Psalmist discourages his readers from being overly impressed “when one is made rich” or when the possessions of the wealthy inevitably expand more and more.
? How are you at following this counsel?
? How does our society do at following this counsel?
2. In the final verse of today's reading, the Psalmist levels a charge against those who do not understand that the honor that comes to them because of their material successes are little more than animals that die an unremarkable death.
? How do you feel about this uncompromising, and, perhaps, offensive charge?
? How might our society feel and respond to such a charge if it was well publicized and had a significant population that maintained it boldly?
3. In this psalm, as is not uncommon in Old Testament poetry, the wealthy—those who nearly inevitably place false trust in material success—are contrasted with “the upright (verse 14).”
? How do you feel about the wealthy being contrasted with the “upright”?

- ? How does this compare with the modern “doctrine” of the righteous being materially blessed?
- ? How would society be different if it took the Psalmist’s warnings about attitudes toward wealth and riches more seriously and attempted to apply those warnings, both at the individual and the societal level?