

psalm 130.<sup>1-8</sup>— lent and atonement

<sup>1</sup>Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.  
<sup>2</sup>Lord, hear my voice:  
let thine ears be attentive  
to the voice of my supplications.  
<sup>3</sup>If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,  
O Lord, who shall stand?  
<sup>4</sup>But there is forgiveness with thee,  
that thou mayest be feared.  
<sup>5</sup>I wait for the LORD,  
my soul doth wait,  
and in his word do I hope.  
<sup>6</sup>My soul waiteth for the Lord  
more than they that watch for the morning:  
I say, more than they that watch for the morning.  
<sup>7</sup>Let Israel hope in the LORD:  
for with the LORD there is mercy,  
and with him is plenteous redemption.  
<sup>8</sup>And he shall redeem Israel  
from all his iniquities.

This reading is our 19<sup>th</sup> for Lent 2025. It is also one in a series of readings on Atonement that we entitle, “Renewal: The Hope, Joy, Peace, and Power of Atonement.”\* This Psalm is one of the “Psalms of Ascent” or “Psalms of Pilgrimage. Finally, it is the sixth of seven Penitential Psalms. It is, then, a busy Psalm, one frequently represented on this site, and one of my favorites.

1. Psalm 130 might be thought of as a prayer offered in association with a sacrifice offered in hopes of atonement or forgiveness of sin. For example,

“If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord. And he shall put his hand upon the head of the burnt offering; and it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him” (Lev. 1.<sup>3-4</sup>).

- ? How does this possibility impact how you understand the psalm and the feeling that you get from it?
2. The Psalmist begins his prayer by informing God that his prayer is coming “out of the depths.”  
? What do you see when you imagine “depths”?

We avoid deep places. Such places are dark and cold. Deep places intimidate us. If we are talking about watery depths, then deep places suffocate and kill.

- ? As you consider this psalm, what are the “depths” that threaten the Psalmist?
- ? The depths are a metaphor for the Psalmist’s iniquities— abundant enough to bury, and threaten to snuff out his life. Have you felt your sins to be threatening?
- ? How were they threatening and what did you do about it?

3. Consider the question posed by the Psalmist: “If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?”
  - ? What do you think about this question?
  - ? What is the answer to the Psalmist’s question?
  - ? What does it mean to “mark” sin?
  - ? Does anyone live without iniquities?
  - ? If we accept the implied answer that no one lives without sin and that no one can stand before God if he marks their sins, who will be able to stand before the Lord?
  - ? What is it that gives anyone the ability to stand before the Lord?

4. The Psalmist’s question suggests that the Lord does not “mark” our sins? To “mark” means to “call to mind,” “acknowledge,” “pay attention.”
  - ? What do you think about the suggestion that the Lord does not “take note” of all our iniquities?
  - ? What makes it possible for him to “overlook” our iniquities?
  - ? What does this suggest about the character of God?
  - ? How does God’s feelings of at-one-ment—connectedness, attachment, unity—with us influence this willingness to overlook the sin we inevitably commit?

5. In verse 6 the Psalmist says that he “waiteth for the Lord.”

- ? What do you think the Psalmist is waiting for?

Consider the possibility that the Psalmist is waiting to hear the voice of the Lord come into his mind, as Enos did, that his sins are forgiven, or, in other words, that the Lord refuses to “mark” his “iniquities.”

- ? Have you sensed this willingness on the part of God to not “mark your iniquities”?
- ? What does it mean to “wait”? What kind of a wait is it? Is it an anxious, uncertain wait? Or is it a hopeful, expectant wait? What is the difference between the two? Why do you answer as you do?

The Hebrew word, “wait,” suggests the latter.

6. Think about the Psalmist’s confession that he waits on the Lord “more than they that watch for the morning.”
  - ? How confident and expectant are you that the morning will arrive?
  - ? Do you possess this same degree of expectancy about the Lord’s willingness to forgive you?
  - ? Do you possess this same degree of expectancy that the Lord *does and will* forgive you?
  - ? What is the basis for the Psalmist’s confidence? How does verse 7 answer this question?
  - ? Does the notion that redemption is “plenteous” with God comport with your own experiences with God? Why do you answer as you do?

- \* 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”

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