

July 8, 2018

The Servant Life

Psalm 123

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship*. Romans 12:1

Their gaze is fixed intently on a single point near at hand, with the trained watchfulness of the servant who is ready for the smallest gesture. The comparison must not be pressed: these servants are watching for relief, not for orders; yet servants they are, still loyal and submissive. They have refused to ease the strain of waiting for God by renouncing Him, or to buy off 'the contempt of the proud' by joining them (D. Kidner, 1973).

The prayer is the voice of one in the “servant class” who looks to an alternative “Master.” What a way to think of prayer, as a re-characterization of social relationships with the new character YHWH, God of mercy, as defining reference! This presents the socially humiliated turning from the ones who “are at ease” to the One “enthroned in heaven,” a turn that means a departure from contempt and an embrace of mercy. The God of mercy thus is presented as alternative and antidote to unbearable relationships and social inequity. While the psalm does not say so, we imagine “mercy” here is not only divine attribute and intention, but also a matter of practice by adherents of YHWH, who will not engage in scorn and contempt toward the needy. The prayer is an immense act of hope, a conviction that demeaning social relationship are not the norm and need not endure. The ground of such hope is in the One addressed, the God of all hope, Who will, soon or late, turn the world to well-being, even for those whom the the world holds in contempt (W. Brueggemann, 2009).

Next week: *Psalm 133*

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SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR THIS WEEK:

Today: *Psalm 4* (What is God saying to you?)

Monday: *Romans 1:1-17*

Tuesday: *Colossians 1:9-23*

Wednesday: *Ephesians 1:1-14*

Thursday: *2 Corinthians 12:1-10*

Friday: *1 Peter 1:1-9*

Saturday: *1 Corinthians 1:18-31*

Almighty God, may the transforming power of Your Gospel be at work in our lives today and always. May we go forth to serve in the strength, love, and presence of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is in His Name we pray, Amen.

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