

## MID-WEEK DEVOTION – 11 NOVEMBER 2020

### PSALM 123

#### LINKED CONGREGATIONS OF BELLARINE

##### OPENING WORDS:

John Bunyan said: "Prayer is a sincere, sensible, affectionate pouring out of the heart or soul to God, through Christ, in the strength and assistance of the Holy Spirit, for such things as God has promised, or according to his Word, for the good of the church, with submission in faith to the will of God"

**Lord, I look up to you.**

##### READING:

<sup>1</sup>LORD, I look up to you,

up to heaven, where you rule.

<sup>2</sup>As a servant depends on his master,

as a maid depends on her mistress,

so we will keep looking to you, O LORD our God,

until you have mercy on us.

<sup>3</sup>Be merciful to us, LORD, be merciful;

we have been treated with so much contempt.

<sup>4</sup>We have been mocked too long by the rich

and scorned by proud oppressors.

##### REFLECTION:

"Extremely short as this psalm is, it suggests two matters touching practical religion which are of weighty import; though not expressed in words, they are none the less impressive. The first is the wholly beautiful spirit which seeks refuge from the aggravation caused by contact with disagreeable fellow-creatures in an appeal to the Almighty, with whom lies the power to effect a change of heart in the most obstinate. And the second is the entire absence of any sign of retaliation for the injury done; this is in striking contrast to the bitterly revengeful spirit so often evinced in other psalms (e.g. 109, 120). The psalm witnesses to what was best in the Jewish religion. But, further, it may be said that this psalm illustrates the effect that social humiliation and oppression may have on the way of envisaging the relation with God, and the conception of God."

Today, being Remembrance Day we remember the end of a war. We reflect on the death of so many and the lives of so many who returned shattered by the effect of war – in the past and still today. We can imagine soldiers using this psalm to cry out to God for mercy and help in combating the enemy – their oppressors.

The psalm is short – it says we look to God, we depend on God and we seek God’s mercy.

PRAYER: “When you are feeling down”

Hey, everyone! Celebrate God’s love with me!  
Join in, all you people who are feeling down!  
Today is a time for affirming life, each hour a commitment in hope.  
When we are feeling low, that is the time for praise; when our feelings mock us, our mind should give thanks.

On some days it is easy to worship, for love and gratitude arrive eagerly, bringing heart-warming joy, like children coming to a party.  
Such praise is as native as the grevillea, as natural as mallee blossom in springtime.

But there are other days when we see only the shadows:  
the grime on buildings, the papers in the gutter, the cat stalking the blackbird, the wind tearing a limb from the red gum, the politician’s absurd duplicity, the unionist’s stupidity and the business executive’s greed.  
Music on the radio is banal and absurd, while newspapers headline the horrible.  
Even the church seems to have cliques where people love darkness rather than light.

Come, my friends, you know such times; some days are soaked with gloom.  
But shall we submit to life’s shadows? Shall we add to life’s sorrows?  
When darkness appears to reign, that is the time to trust the light.  
When ugliness flaunts itself, then is the moment for beauty.  
If life snarls up in meaninglessness, there is space for Christ’s purposefulness.  
When our path is stained with the suffering of humanity, then shall we recognise Christ’s presence.

My friends, have we made our moods into an idol? Shall we obey our feelings rather than God?

Hey, everyone! Make a stand with me!  
Defy your feelings and put your trust in God!  
Call the bluff of cloudy chaos and make room for some life and shape.  
In the midst of gloom God speaks, saying, “Let there be light”.

Amen.

**BLESSING:**

Go, remembering that we can seek mercy from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who is always there for us. Amen.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

Quotation from John Bunyan (1628-1688)

Reading from the Good News Bible

Reflection based on "The Psalms" by W.O.E. Oesterley

Prayer from "Australian Prayers" by Bruce Prewer

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