

Daily Devotional, September 9, 2020 Lifting Up Those Who Depend On Us

I lift up my eyes to you, to you who sit enthroned in heaven. As the eyes of slaves look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a female slave look to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he shows us his mercy. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy on us, for we have endured no end of contempt. We have endured no end of ridicule from the arrogant, of contempt from the proud. Psalm 123 (NIV)

The Songs of Ascent are a handful of fifteen Psalms that people would recite or sing as they climbed the long, steep way up to Jerusalem and the Temple. They have also been called by other names: the Gradual Psalms, the Songs of Degrees, or the Songs of Steps. They are named for the necessary and difficult climb ahead of the travelers who were going up to Jerusalem for worship or for festivals, alms-giving or sacrifice. What awaited them up there as far as they could tell, would all be worth the climb, as they walked up and sang their lamentations.

Continuing their mount, they lift their eyes to Jerusalem and imagine the One who awaits them. They keep their eyes lifted and fixed on God as they trudge. It seems to them that their eyes and minds are as trained on Him as they would be on an earthly lord or lady, whom they watched respectfully to see what would be wanted next. They hope that God will show mercy, just as they hope earthly lords and ladies would show mercy to their servants.

And why do they need mercy? They are simple people who are treated with scorn by their richer and more powerful neighbors. They are lorded over by proud and condescending wealthy people. All they have is God, and they are climbing up to meet Him. They are climbing ahead to receive God's mercy.

In this time of pandemic, we have become fractured: rich isolated from poor, powerful from those more simple. Or at least we see the fractures as we never have seen them before. They are more obvious, more blatant. The virus has laid bare the everyday use we sometimes make of others. To insulate ourselves, we call on others to serve our needs. We accept deliveries from their hands and close our doors behind us. On a whim we eat or drink in an outdoor patio area, seeking to be served. Hopefully leaving a substantial tip for those who depend on it now, more than ever.

This scripture reminds us that the Psalmist wrote these words not for folks like us—but for those who wait on us. Like the climbers in the Psalm, there are those in our society who are watching us and hoping for mercy. They hope for that same mercy the simple people in the Psalm sought when they lifted their eyes to God and prayed as they walked up the steepest hills of life. For us, the choice is not to lift up our eyes, but to

open our eyes and to be aware of the need surrounding us that never goes away. Be observant. Be caring.

Prayer: Oh Lord, our God, We lift our eyes to You as we climb through this hard time. We want to remember that You are there at the end of the climb and that You also walk beside us. Every day. Lord help us to open our eyes and hearts to see those around us who serve, who wait and watch and give. Help us to find ways to be merciful. Teach us and change us, Oh Lord of mercy, as we praise you on high. In the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.