

## Daily Devotional. July 13, 2021 Help Me to be a True Help

***God presides in the great assembly; He renders judgment among the “gods”: “How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked. Psalm 82:1-4 (NIV)***

Most of us don't recognize that the Bible is almost exclusively written from the perspective of the underdog. The people of God, the people of Israel, are always under attack from some opposing power, a power that seeks to subdue, enslave, or rule over them. This also holds true throughout the New Testament, as it was written during a time when Rome held sway as the known world's super-power, and we have all heard about the martyrdom of essentially every one of the apostles, those who weren't martyred, were exiled, which may have been worse as they were cut off from those they cared about and the rest of civilization.

The fact that we have the scriptures at all today, is in itself, nothing short of a miracle. Yet how often do we stop to thank God that we have the ability and good fortune to have these scriptures to read?. Today, we are able to read from a psalm that is attributed to Asaph. There are three biblical figures named Asaph, but there was also a company of musicians during the first temple period known as Asaphites. It is not clear whether this song is sung in the style of the Asaphites, or if it is attributed to one of the biblical figures whom were appointed by David to sing praises to God before the assembly.

However, what we can understand from the psalm, is that those who were weak, orphaned, lowly, needy, and destitute, were in need of God's divine help. Those who were the outcasts and lower-rung of society, did not find the justice that the writer believed God should give them, rather, they were still in the hands of the wicked.

These are hard words for us to justify in our modern environment. We, the church, want to help, to offer what we can for others, but we don't always know that to do. We tend to rationalize that the help we offer to others, and the missions and charities in which we choose to participate, are good and helpful—and they are. Yet, sometimes I wonder if we could'nt use our status in the world to truly help others? Let me offer a small parable.

A person is stuck in a hole, they're lonely, hungry, and tired, and they don't know how to get out. Someone walks by and has some leftover food, spots the one in the hole and says; “would you like something to eat? They then give the one in the hole their leftover. The one in the hole is grateful for the gift, the one who gave the food feels confident they have helped, and they move on. A second person walks past the hole and hears someone crying. They stop, sit, and talk with the person offering words of hope and compassion. At some point their phone rings and they need to move on, but they feel good that they have helped the person stuck in the hole feel connected to another human being. Finally, a few days later, another person sees this one who has been stuck in the hole, and asks, “would you like to get out?” “Yes!” the one in the hole replies, “but I don't know how.” This new person reaches a hand down and uses every ounce of strength to help the stuck person out of the hole. They then work together to fill the hole, so that no one else will fall in and become trapped.

Which of the three “helpers” epitomizes Jesus' teaching on love for neighbor?

While I know an argument could be made for all three, it is the one who stays by the side, who offers a hand of deliverance, and works to bring justice by filling in the hole that truly does what Jesus has done for us.

The injustice we see in the world around us is that person stuck in hole who knows no way to get out. What can we do with our positions to offer help, and bring justice, and create a world with no hole in which to fall? May God's Holy Spirit give us the courage and understanding to do what is right in the eyes of God, and in the name of Jesus.

***Prayer: Dear Lord, We pray that You would use us to help those in need in any way we can. Open our eyes and make us aware of the opportunities we have to bless others. Help us to not be selfish, help us to share. All that we have is Yours and we surrender it to You. May Your will be done in Jesus' name, Amen.***