

CONCORD
SUNDAY SCHOOL

LECTIONARY
LESSON 17

SUNDAY,
APRIL 26, 2020



Psalm 116:1-4 NRSV

- 1 I love the Lord, because he has heard
my voice and my supplications.
- 2 Because he inclined his ear to me,
therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
- 3 The snares of death encompassed me;
the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me;
I suffered distress and anguish.
- 4 Then I called on the name of the Lord:
“O Lord, I pray, save my life!”

Background

This Psalm is not a letter like we’ve been studying for the last few weeks. It is one of a few psalms of thanksgiving. This particular Psalm is often read or sung during the Jewish remembrance of Passover. Old Testament scholar James Limburg contextualizes this psalm with a reminder that “Psalm 113 is a hymn,” Psalm 114 “reports the event of the exodus,” Psalm 115 is a “call to praise” and “Psalm 116 is the story of an *individual’s* deliverance from death.” Throughout the Psalms, there are stories of both *individual* and *communal* testimony.

In your own devotional period this week, consider the moments that are “communal” and “individual.” Are there instances when you feel like you’re having a personal challenge? Are there instances when you feel like you are experiencing something *along with* others? How do you differentiate?

Today's lesson will focus on **talking with God**.

Read the scripture out loud.

Discuss with someone in your home. **What is prayer for you?**

What's happening during this passage?

This Psalm is a favorite at Concord. You may know it as, "I Love the Lord," led by a solo from Shahara Jackson. This is a song of thanksgiving and praise. Quite simply, the writer "loves the lord" *because* "he has heard my voice." *Because* "he inclined his ear to me," *therefore* "I will call on him as long as I live." The writer gives us two examples of cause-and-effect. The writer trusts in the Lord because the Lord has made it clear that he is listening. Even through the "snares of death," the writer felt compelled to call on the Lord. Quite simply, the prayer was, "O Lord, I pray, save my life!"

What is Sheol?

Sheol is the underworld, or the abode of the dead. In the Old Testament, this word is used in a number of different ways, including the spiritual underworld and to refer to actual graves. It represents a spiritual or physical separation from God. Writers who use this word are invoking intense and serious language for a reason. We do not use the word "Sheol" for minor instances. Sheol refers to incredible grief, sadness and loss. As the writer of this psalm reflects, even when the "pangs of Sheol" were near, still God could hear the cries and please.

What other examples of prayer do you have?

There are so many examples of in the Bible. We have Job's laments. Mary sang her response to the angel's news. The people gathered on Esther's behalf and prayed in their homes. And of course, we have the Lord's Prayer. There are so many examples of prayers that people have sent up to God.

We pray because prayer changes things. Prayer is a way to communicate. First, it is a way to communicate *to yourself* that you need someone other than you. Secondly, it is a way to communicate *with God*. Every relationship needs communication; our relationship with God is no different. Our passage today is evidence God answers even the shortest, urgent prayers. If all you can say is, "Lord, Help!" or "God, you know," that's enough to be heard.

What questions do you still have of this scripture? How will you commit to journeying with this text this week?

Connection to Today's World



Lessie Benningfield Randle is one of the last known living survivors of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre. A mob of angry White people charged upon the Black neighborhood in Tulsa, leaving an entire community in shock. Hundreds of Black people were killed, making it a bloody story. Randle had one wish-- she wanted to see her childhood home restored. Community organizations

and leaders came together to support her dream. When asked about how she felt, she quipped, "like a queen." She also said, "I'm just so pleased and so happy to be with you and you all to be with me, God has blessed me over 100 years and I thank Him." In her short speech, she gave thanks and honor to where it was due-- to God and to the people God involved to make her dream come true.

Imagine all the conversations Mother Randle had with God.

Journal: Here's a challenge. Write a prayer (like the one in verse 4) in one sentence.

Closing: Sing “I Love the Lord”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPLP1ui4YNc>

*“I love the Lord,
He heard my cry
And pitied every groan.
Long as I live,
And troubles rise,
I hasten to his throne.”*

Prayer:

Dear God,

You hear us. We need you. Oh Lord, we pray, save our lives and fortify our spirits.

In Jesus’ name we pray,

Amen

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