

To You We Cry
 Psalm 70
 November 8, 2020
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Be pleased O lord to deliver me.
 Make haste O lord to help me!

Let all who seek you, rejoice and be glad in you.
 Let those who love your salvation say evermore, "God is Great!"
 But I am poor and needy; hasten to me O God!
 You are my help and my deliver;
 O Lord do not delay!

Thus says the author of Psalm 70. Biblical Scholar H-J Kraus describes the psalm as having the overall effect of a sigh. The person praying the psalm is faithful, hopeful and descending into desperation, and in that desperation turns to God.

One of my favorite theologians Walter Brueggemann says that this is a prayer of "Lucid brevity, in one sense that this prayer is all the petitioner has." (p 305 Psalms: New Cambridge Commentary 2014).

I am here, O Lord, I do all I can to believe in you. I need you now, I find myself thinking unkind thoughts about those whom I believe want to hurt me, those who disagree with me, but O Lord let me not think of them, let me turn toward you and everyone else who longs for you and wants to worship you—that would be my paraphrase of this prayer.

Brueggeman says, the petitioner is trying to remind himself, herself that from God alone comes salvation. Thus it has been, thus it will be. So the person in pain and fear, is speaking to God and to themselves, "Remember, remember that God has acted and God will act again. Where are you God—O Lord do not delay. Make haste O lord to help me."

This is how I have been feeling. It is a hard, provocative time for our country and our communities. Much is shifting and it is hard to know where all of this will lead. And so my friends in desperate times, in times like these, it is good for us to remember that we are not alone. That God has promised from the beginning of time to be with us always and God's promise and God's presence does not fade though we find ourselves mired in the muck of despair and the clay of despondency. So we like the psalmist of old cry out:

"[For] you are my help and my deliverer; O Lord do not delay."

As people of faith, [says Brueggemann] we desperately try to remind ourselves that God is the one who can "make life different and deliver the faithful..." (Ibid. p 305). The

person who uttered these words some 3000 years ago, found themselves in a time when they realized that all they had to hang onto was prayer.

Perhaps you and I could learn from this. Perhaps when you hear this sermon we will know who has been elected president, perhaps we won't. But what I do know is that we will remain a country deeply divided, a people feeling unmoored and at sea. So rather than fixating only on my phone, on my newsfeed, perhaps I, you, perhaps all of us might take a break from the partisan back and forth and instead pray to God, sit with our sadness, offer our hollowness to the Holy One. Knowing that is God alone who saves us.

“We are poor and needy;
hasten to us, O God!
You are our help, our deliverer;
O Lord do not delay!”

May this then be our unceasing prayer, our sigh, our hope, our petition for something more.

Be pleased O God to deliver me.

Amen.