

Saturday

Lament and Hope in the midst of uncertainty (Psalm 130) - Jude Nnorom

In Psalm 130, the psalmist invites us to reflect on the creative tension in complaint and prayerful petition. We can appropriate it as the dialogical encounter between the most vulnerable in our towns and cities living in the uncertainty of the current lockdown, and the Risen Christ. The reality of the poor, the homeless, dwellers of precarious housing, calls for complain and petition. Covid-19 is unravelling the fragility of our human prowess. Yet, it is exposing us to our shared human values of love and compassion, driving us to reclaim our Christian agency for caring for the vulnerable in our communities.

Psalm 130 – *De Profundis* – is the lament and prayer of the homeless in our streets, the refugees who fled wars and political repression in their countries and the men, women and children excluded from the gains of the new South Africa. A prayer that speaks to the depth of human misery crying out for the redemptive power of the Risen Christ seen in your availability and generosity as site managers or as aptly described by Prof. de Beer, as “God’s assistants.”

This Saturday in the 2nd week of Easter, we are still faced with the reality of the covid-19 induced lockdown. Despite the frustration you encounter of insufficient food, shelter, personal protective equipment, and unrealizable social distancing, you, our esteemed site managers are ministering in different sites. Psalm 130 acknowledges your laments but also unearths the potential of a new humanism praying in the words of Prof Kritzinger for a ‘coronashield’.

This Saturday, let us make our own the laments and petitions of Psalm 130, and prayerfully reflect on each verse as the Risen Lord speaks to us through them:

Out of the depths I cry to You, oh LORD: The depths is a metaphor for *Sheol* – the abyss, physical and emotional lack from which, there seem to be no possibility of ascent! A cry and complain about the unjust effects of this pandemic on the most vulnerable, those excluded from the gains of the empire, who nevertheless make visible the bruised face of the crucified Jesus, yet draw our attention to the glory of Risen Christ.

LORD, hear my voice. Let Your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy: We rightfully petition that the prevalence of hunger at this time demands God’s attention! But, with an acknowledgement of the mercy of God who does not leave his people in their misery. This is a statement of confidence in God’s mercy and a firm belief in Gods promises, which is being realized through your efforts at the sites.

If You, LORD, kept a record of sins, LORD, who could stand? Should we spend time on blame games, on the reasons for this pandemic? Should we be indifferent to the different exclusions that are deepened by this lockdown or should we rather acknowledge our agency as children of God and contribute the much we can to exemplify that God’s unfathomable mercy keeps no record of the transgressions of his people, “for all have sinned and fall short of the grace of God” (Rm 3:23).

But with You there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve You. The forgiveness we receive for our shortcoming and failings calls us to respect and revere God in creation. As we work for

vulnerable individuals and groups in our different sites, we recognize in our fragile humanity, a deep reverence for our creator.

∴I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope. This is a period of anxious waiting. How long will this situation continue? When will the curve be flattened? Will the shelters become permanent? Yet, God's word which never fails gives us the hope that time and space exist in Him and our hopes does not end with this lockdown and temporary shelters, but is renewed to continuously work for Justice, Peace and Integrity of creation.

∴I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning. We are invited to live expectantly, recalling the various ways in which the Lord acted in the past by redeeming his people from bondage. Expectant waiting is not desperation. Rather, it is an invitation as Pope Francis writes in his 2020 *Urbi et Orbi* to "open a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good which is the hallmark of the power of God."

∴Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with Him is full redemption. Redemptive hope is firmly anchored in the Lord and is revealed in the smiles, the jokes and the laughter of the shelter dwellers, irrespective of their situation.

∴He Himself will redeem Israel from all their sins. Our hope in the steadfast love of God will redeem the world from this pandemic. God calls Israel and ourselves not to be afraid for as we pass through the waters, rivers and fire, they will not harm us, for He is with us always (Isaiah 43:1).

Prayer

Lord God,

Grant us Your Holy Spirit,

To Protect and Empower us.

As we encounter You in our vulnerable brothers and sisters,

may we recognize You like the disciples at the breaking of bread.

Grant us Your Courage that in our lamentation and petition,

We may see Your power and blessings on us for You are the Lord

Who is and Who is to come,

Amen.