

Biblical Reflection 10: “What does it mean to wait for God?”

April 21, 2021

On Tuesday, in a Minneapolis courtroom, Derek Chauvin, the White police officer who killed George Floyd, a Black man, almost one year ago, was convicted of murder. It was a great day for all those who have been victims of racism or brutalized by police. Some people thought such a verdict wasn't possible. Some people had given up hope. Justice has been a long time coming for Blacks and other people of color in the USA. A very long time.

Likewise, in Myanmar, many have been waiting for justice...and for God to act for decades. The current crisis is new only in the sense that it is so widespread, with millions of people suffering cruelly and unjustly at the same time. Some feel angry or abandoned by God. Others are on the verge of despair. Still others have lost all patience and are already fighting back.

3000 years ago, in anguish over what his enemies were doing to him, the Psalmist prayed, “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck. I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold; I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me. I am weary with my crying; my throat is parched. My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God” (Psalm 69:1-3, NRSV).

Clearly, he'd been suffering and praying for a long time without an answer. Why didn't he give up hope? Why didn't he just take matters into his own hands, and forget about relying on God? What was he waiting for?

A clue comes later in the psalm: “But as for me, my prayer is to you, O LORD. At an acceptable time, O God, in the abundance of your steadfast love, answer me. With your faithful help rescue me from sinking in the mire; let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters... Answer me, O LORD, for your steadfast love is good; according to your abundant mercy, turn to me” (Psalm 69:13-14, 16).

Here's the answer, then. The Psalmist waits for God, because he believes that God is just, merciful, and faithful to his people. He doesn't lose hope for deliverance, because he believes that the LORD is filled with loving kindness and wants to save those who call upon his name. He is willing to wait for God to act, because he trusts that God alone knows the “acceptable time” to answer his prayers.

King David, the author of this psalm, was a man of action, strong leader, warrior, and hero among his people. Yet, he keeps praying, because sometimes only God can rescue us in our time of need. In our own strength, we can accomplish many things; but when God acts, hearts and minds are transformed, the plans of the wicked are thwarted, and the seemingly impossible becomes possible. Wrongs are righted, and justice sometimes emerges from the ashes.

And so, my beloved ones, I urge you to pray, without ceasing. Keep waiting, without losing hope. Keep trusting God to work in you and through you in ways that fit with his good, loving, merciful, and faithful character. And, as you pray and wait, always stay ready for action—not apart from God, instead of God, or because you got tired of waiting for God, but

action that is Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered. Let us see what God will do for those who call upon the name of the LORD.

“Let the oppressed see [God’s salvation] and be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive. For the LORD hears the needy and does not despise his own that are in bonds” (Psalm 69:32-33).



I am praying, waiting, and working with you, every day.

With Christ’s love,

Dr. Tim

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