

Here is Alison's final reflection on the psalms set for this week. I'd like to thank Alison very much for all the time and effort she has put in; I know she has had much positive feedback, so many thanks. Simon.

Dear Friend

Well, here we are at the end of the week with the last reflection on this collection of Psalms. We started at Psalm 111 and we're finishing with 116. We've travelled through the Hallel psalms, which can include the next two psalms as well but we are finishing on the one which is the last to be used at the Passover meal.

It's a joyous, spontaneous psalm where the psalmist is grateful to God for deliverance. It seems like he has been delivered from death during an illness, although this could be seen as a metaphor. One commentator says that "in Old Testament poetry 'death' and 'Sheol' are aggressive, clutching at the living to waste them with sickness or crush them with despondency".

Malcolm Guite in "Reflections on the Psalms" (Church House Publishing) says: "This is the psalm for anyone who has been brought 'low', brought even to the brink of death and then, against the odds, and by sheer grace, restored. Everything is different after that. You look at life as one who could have been dead. Each new day dawns as an unexpected bonus, and all you do that day, all you receive, and all you give, comes as a gracious and unexpected extra. Recovery after trauma is strangely liberating; there is a lightness and freedom, a sense of untrammelled over-abundance, and this lovely psalm is full of it." This was written before Coronavirus was even heard of and interviewees who have recovered from the virus have said very similar things.

It seems to be so appropriate for our current times. This is why, if I only had the choice of one book from the Bible to take to my desert island, I'd take the Psalms because there's something in it for every human situation. We are definitely in the clutches of Sheol right now! We are certainly all of us calling 'O Lord, I pray, save my life!' And then like the psalmist there will be a time when we too have been delivered and will also be able to thank the lord for delivery. And then we can shout once more with feeling "Praise the Lord" Halleluiah!!

Let us pray:

As we walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
may we call upon our name,
raise the cup of salvation,
and so proclaim our death, O Lord,
until you come in glory. Amen.