

The Room With A View & Hope

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[0 : 00] Book of Alternative Services and found it. The prints larger there. Don't turn to the Book of Common Prayer because all the verses are different in that from the Bible.

So if you can turn to that, that would be helpful. And reading from chapter 31, verse 9, to the end of verse 13.

Would you just read that with me? Verse 9 to verse 13. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. My eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.

For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing. My strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.

I have become a reproach to all my enemies, and even to my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance.

[1 : 21] When they see me in the street, they avoid me. I am forgotten like a dead man out of mind. I am as useless as a broken pot.

For I have heard the whisperings of the crowd. Fear is all around. They put their heads together against me. They plot to take my life.

Thank you. You will see, just by looking at the text, that it is basically a plea. That section is basically a plea for mercy.

What he's talking about is God having mercy on us, or on him in terms of the conditions of his personal life.

Now, I really want you to get hold of this, so what I'm going to do is ask you to imagine that you are out of work, that you've sent in all sorts of applications for jobs, and nobody has replied, and you haven't got interviews, and you're running out of money.

[2 : 32] And you may think this is an extreme statement, but it's like one of the rooms which is part of our lives.

It's part of our human existence. What you are as a human being contains this room. It may not be a room you often find yourself in, but it is a room which belongs to your humanity.

So if you imagine yourself in a position of perhaps you are terminally ill, perhaps you have contracted AIDS, perhaps you are unemployed, perhaps you are a victim of one of the many kinds of victims that have been designated in our society, perhaps you feel deeply your victimization.

Now, I'll read it again, will you, 9 to 13. And, but remember, identify who you are as you read it, because you may not think this applies to you, but it does.

It's one of the rooms in your house. It may not be a room you're in at the moment, but it is a room that you will come to, or it also is a room that you may have spent a lot of time in in the past.

[3 : 48] So let's go and look at the furnishings of this room again, as you read verse 9 to 13.

Remember, it begins with a plea for mercy, but listen as we read.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. My eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly.

For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing. My strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones are consumed.

I have become a reproach to all my neighbors, and my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance. And when they see me in the street, they avoid me.

I am forgotten like a dead man out of mind. I am useless as a broken pot, for I have heard the whispering of the crowd.

[4 : 49] Fear is all. Fear is all. They put their heads together against me. They plot to take my life. Well, just, I mean, I want just to tell you that one of the characteristics of the psalm, when you begin to read it and to look at it, is that we are, for the most part, people who are, are, we have physical

symptoms, or a physical disease, which has spiritual symptoms.

In other words, because we are sick physically, we feel badly about our world. And so, we know that we can take appropriate drugs, and appropriate medication, and get appropriate therapies to help us physically feel better.

And when we physically feel better, then we'll spiritually see more clearly. But the philosophy of medicine, at the time that this psalm was written, was quite the opposite.

It has the view that if you are spiritually well, then the physical symptoms will clear up. Look at how that's stated for you in the psalm, when it says, my eye, you see in verse 9, my eye is consumed, my throat, and my belly.

Now, they're trying to be pretty literalistic about it, because, as you know, for the Hebrews, writing in the Old Testament, they didn't identify diseases as sort of being, having a kind of pathological basis in the condition of your various organs.

[6 : 45] Your various organs had their significance in the spiritual influence they had. So, the way they saw it is that physical symptoms were the result of spiritual illness, not the other way around, where our spiritual illness was because of our physical illness.

Our spiritual illness were the symptoms of our physical illness. And if you could only correct man's physical state, then you'd have a totally happy person.

Well, the psalm says, if you correct a man's spiritual state, then you'll have a measure of physical well-being. I'm not going to make that a conclusive argument.

I just want you to look at it, because it's a totally different perspective. Now, the thing about this psalm, which you should look at, too, is that it was quoted by a number of significant people at significant times in their lives.

So, if you look at verse 6, you can imagine that verse 6 is quoted by Jonah from the belly of the whale.

[8 : 09] This is really the point of Jonah's conversion. And he quotes Psalm 31, verse 6, when he says, I hate those who cling to worthless idols, and I put my trust in the Lord.

So, Jonah was familiar with this psalm at a very critical point in his life. You can, if you look at verse 13, and I don't know if you have the R.S.

if you have the B.A.S. open, but I'll read it to you from the R.S.V. Verse 13 of chapter 31 reads, Yea, I hear the whispering of many, terror on every side, as they scheme together against me, as they plot to take my life.

Terror on every side was almost a lifetime slogan for the ministry of Jeremiah. He carried on his life and ministry surrounded constantly by terror and threats upon his life.

So, it's fascinating to think that Jonah knew this psalm, Jeremiah knew this psalm, David knew this psalm, in his old age he quoted again.

[9 : 32] And of course, it's assumed that he wrote it, but in Psalm 71, he quotes it again when he writes about old age. And he turns to Psalm 31 to understand some of the realities of old age.

In verses 1 to 3, if I can but find it, I'll read it to you. In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge.

Let me never be ashamed. In your righteousness, deliver me and set me free. Incline your ear to me and save me. Be my rock, a castle to keep me safe.

You are my crag and my stronghold. So, David is again quoting from a part of Psalm 31. Psalm 31. Then if you look at verse 5, you will recognize it, I think, almost immediately.

Perhaps, perhaps you could read, you could read it with me. Verse 5. Into your hands, I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

[10 : 49] And those are the final words recorded from the lips of the Lord Jesus as he died on the cross. Into thy hands, I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord God of truth.

So, you can see that there is a wide range of people who intimately knew this psalm and understood something of their own lives in terms of this psalm.

And that's why I want you to accept it as part of your life. That this psalm describes a particular room in the house of your own personal humanity.

And those verses, which I read to my wife this morning, and she said, how depressing. And but I want in a sense to bathe you in the depression of these verses to make you familiar with the room in your house, which if you have not come to it, you most certainly will come to it.

And it would be nice if you knew what a wonderful room it is. I haven't told you why yet, but it is. But be patient. Examine again the furnishings of the room.

[12:14] Think again of the person in distress. I mean, the person who is a victim of the circumstances of this life.

It's the kind of, you sometimes enter into this room when you are depressed, when you are overstressed, when you are badly fatigued.

sometimes the flu can bring you into this room in your life so that you experience these things and you understand them.

So, what I want you to do is make a supreme effort this time, and for some of you it will be easier. I mean, I recognize as I see your faces and I know some of the sorrows that you've been through. I know some of the tragedies that you've faced, some of you. I know quite a lot about some of you and the chronic problems that you have carried over many years.

[13:23] I know that about you. Our world doesn't particularly want to admit that this room is part of our humanity, but it is, and it's well to become familiar with it so that when you find yourself in this place, you won't feel that this is a strange place to be, but it's a place where many people have been before, and I want to explain something about it to you.

So just think about it again in terms of your own life and see if you could reduce yourself to saying this. This actually is not unlike the kind of thing that people write in their very private diaries, their spiritual diaries.

These words appear in those private diaries very often when you feel you can articulate your despair or you can talk about your distress.

You can't do it in the world. You can't tell people about it because people would offer you sympathy and sympathy is no help. It only compounds the misery very often and for reasons that you see as you examine it.

So look at it again and really try hard this time to accept this as part of your life, part of your personal human habitation.

[15:07] This is a room that is part of your life. read it with me again, 9 to 13. Now, get hold of it this time for yourself.

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress. My eye is wasted from grief, my soul and my body also, for my life is spent with sorrow and my years with sighing.

my strength fails because of my misery and my bones waste away. I am the scorn of all my adversaries, a horror to my neighbors, an object of dread to my acquaintances.

Those who see me in the street flee from me. I have passed out of mind like one who is dead. I have become like a broken vessel.

I hear the whisperings of many terror on every side as they scheme together against me and as they plot to take my life.

[16:16] So, again, if you look at it, you see, what he says is this disaster, this distress, this trouble that he is in involves his life, his years, his strength.

It goes on to describe the whole human association among whom he lives, where there are enemies who hate him, neighbors who despise him, friends and acquaintances who have deserted him, people who treat him as though he were already dead.

He is, in the society in which he lives, a reject and a discarded item, a broken piece of pottery. That's who he sees himself to be.

And that's, in a sense, a portrait for you and me to describe one room in your house. Now, the thing about this particular room in your house can then be looked at when you look at the next verse.

Look at verse 14. And I'm now actually working from the RSV, so there's some differences here. But in verse 14 it says, remember, he's in this room and then he looks out the window.

[17:51] Perhaps just a tiny window, but it has a terrific sort of span that you can see if you get your eye close to it. He goes to the window and he says, But I trust in thee, O Lord.

I say, thou art my God. My times are in thy hands. Deliver me from the hands of my enemies and persecutors. Let thy face shine on thy servant.

Save me in thy steadfast love. God. You see, this is a wonderful place to come to because it's the place from which we see the mercy of God.

It's in this room of anguish that we find the basis of assurance about our lives. And it's in this room that he moves from anguish to assurance.

Do you remember the publican who went to the temple and acknowledged, God be merciful to me, a sinner. God be merciful to me in my anguish, in my distress, in my trouble.

[19 : 12] And Jesus tells us he went down to his house justified. Peter came to this point of anguish in his life when he saw Jesus and said, depart from me for I am a sinful man.

I have nothing to do with you. He suddenly, in his anguish, discovered more deeply who Jesus was. Isaiah discovered it when he said, I am a man of unclean lips and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

And David discovered it when he looked out the window and saw, against thee only have I sinned. So it's this reality that this psalm confronts us with, that at the point of our anguish we come to the place of trust in the mercy of God.

And that that is, in a sense, the glory of our humanity. Not that we are free of this anguish, but that in this anguish we discover the mercy of God.

Now, I tell you this because this Holy Week we are to see Jesus come into this room.

[20 : 36] We are to see Jesus, as it were, experience this reality, the reality which is described in verses 9 to 13.

read it as though you were the Lord Jesus, as he enters into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, as he sees the mounting hatred and the antagonism, as he sees the inevitable physical suffering and death, as he recognizes that it is his responsibility to become, as Paul describes it, obedient unto death.

It's the picture Jesus has when he says, take this cup from me. And what we watch as we watch the events of Holy Week unfold, we see Jesus work his way through the trials and the sufferings that are so eloquently and articulately described here.

Just think of each event here, an eye wasted, grief, of soul and body, strength failing, bones wasting away, an object of horror and dread, people fleeing from him and deserting him, his friends turning away from him.

All those things are part of Jesus both sharing our humanity and showing to us the nature of our humanity.

[22 : 26] But in that place of suffering, he sees the mercy of God and he says, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

That climax, that cry that comes from the cross, and he says that. And with those words, we understand most deeply the fact that he shares the whole of our humanity.

He doesn't share it to the point of ultimate despair. He shares it because this articulated anguish leads to the pronouncement of assurance.

The pronouncement of assurance which David describes in the psalm when he says, I trust in you. You are my God, my times, the whole of the circumstances of my life, my illness, my being despised, my failure, all that is part of my human anguish, all that contributes to the breaking of my heart.

[23 : 52] You have shared, but they are in your hands, and you can deliver me from the ultimate enemy. You can deliver me from my persecutors.

And so, you see, it moves from the mercy of God to the redemption of man through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

And so, what we all need to do this week to take advantages of the services, in particularly of the Bible readings which trace this week, and to feel the reality of our own human anguish and the anguish of the world around us, and from the perspective of that anguish, to glimpse the mercy of God, and finally to come, as he does at the end of these verses which we're looking at, to the place where he says, let your face shine on your servant, save me in your unfailing love.

You see, it's in that peculiar room that we see the mercy of God. I remember the old Union Station in Toronto, it doesn't work quite this way anymore, but in the good old days, when you had been to a far country and came home again, and you got off the train and went down into the Union Station, there were guardrails along, all sorts of people packed along the guardrails waiting for somebody to arrive, and that you had to walk down the middle of this, and you got the message from all the people leaning over the rail, that you weren't the one they were looking for, and you hoped that somewhere you would see a shining countenance, which at the sight of you would shine forth, and you would know that there was somebody there to meet you.

And so that, in a sense, describes the anguish and the misery of this song, which ends with this beautiful line, let your face shine on your servant.

[26 : 13] And of course, that's picked up in the scriptures when we talk about God's letting his face shine upon us. That someone is there in the midst of all this, whose face is shining in expectation as we come to the place that he has called us to be, as we come out of the agony of our humanity in all its suffering, into the place of assurance.

And this psalm cycles back and forth from anguish to assurance, from anguish to assurance, as our lives do.

They go from anguish to assurance, back to anguish, and then back to assurance again. And the place that we come to finally is the place that, the place of assurance.

The difficulty I think is, and with this I'll quit, but I just want to tell you this, is that I think for us in our humanity and in our limitations, when we're in the midst of the anguish, we can't quite comprehend the assurance.

When we're in the midst of the assurance, we can't quite comprehend the anguish, but our lives lead us from one to the other until we come to the place where we see his face shining.

[27 : 44] That's why we sing that hymn, Shine, Jesus, Shine. I think it comes from here, or at least is related to this passage. And the joyful anticipation God has, that you will come through the anguishing circumstances of your humanity.

And in order that you may do that, that you will watch Jesus Christ as he faces the acute anguish of his Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, the arrest, the scourging, the trial, and crucifixion.

And as you see him go through that, and thus share the depths of our humanity, then we are made aware that this place of anguish is not a place to be avoided.

But as we recognize that place in our lives and in the lives of others, we recognize that that's the place from which we see the mercy of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Amen. In response to what Harry said, we're going to sing our offertory hymn.

[29 : 16] It's number 149 on these white sheets. One, four, nine. alfriced, and host in the during the afternoon Ahhh a con classic I'm the vor therein out.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[33 : 46] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. We thank you, Lord God. Everything we have is a gift from you. We ask, loving God, that these gifts may be used, that the news of salvation from your Son may be proclaimed to those that are lost and those that are in despair, that they may be liberated.

We give you thanks for Christ's sake. Amen. Please be seated. Let us kneel to pray.

Amen. Even in this spreading of salvation, that you may be part of your... Father, you may not be loved. Today we have been reminded, Lord, of your triumphant entry into Jerusalem and of the enthusiastic crowds which greeted you on your arrival.

We thank you, Lord, that you accepted the praise of these crowds whom you knew would both forsake you and betray you within the week.

[35 : 11] We thank you for we know our own hearts, how changeable they are, assured and enthusiastic for you one day, and anguished, weak, and fearful another, unwilling to acknowledge your lordship to those around us.

We confess, as did the Apostle Paul, that we all fall short in many ways. We thank you, Lord, that you are with us in our weakness, even as you desire to embolden us, as you did your first disciples. Embolden us, Lord, by the power of your Holy Spirit, that in our weakness we may know your strength. Empower us so that we will not be ashamed to confess Christ crucified and to proclaim him in the power of the Holy Spirit.

We pray for our nation, for our province, for our Prime Minister and his Cabinet, that you would grant them wisdom, that they, along with the premiers of our provinces, would together seek the common good.

We pray in particular for our province and our city, for our legislature, for the leaders of our political parties, for all our mayors and elected officials, that they, too, would seek the common good.

[36 : 41] We pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in which they struggle with discontent in their jobs, for those who long for relief from the situation in which they work from day to day.

We pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in which they daily live with pain and suffering, both physical and emotional, that you, Lord, would strengthen, comfort, and relieve.

We pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in which they are lonely and depressed, we pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in which they struggle with doubt and unbelief, we pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in which they struggle with doubt and unbelief, we pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in their lives.

We pray that they might come to a full knowledge and solid assurance of your love for them manifest in the cross of Christ. We pray specifically for the following members of our family who are suffering in spirit, mind, or body, for joy, Jocelyn, Rosemary, Herbert, Kathy, Ken, Jillian, for Elliot and his family.

We pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in their lives in their lives in their lives in their lives. We pray for those among us who are in a room in their lives in their lives in their lives in their lives in their lives. We pray for those among us who are comfortable and at peace, that they will rejoice in God's goodness and blessing, and not forget the God from whose hands these blessings have come.

[39 : 03] And finally, Lord, we pray for all of us together as the body of Christ here at St. John's, that each of us will come to appreciate that whatever room we find ourselves in, that we are all still members of the household of God, a household that you are building, and in which you dwell by your Holy Spirit.

We ask all these things in the name of and for the glory of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.