

Ciael Hills
Homily on Psalm 142 and Habakkuk 3
Preached at Kings Chapel
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Imagine yourself hiding in a cave surrounded by your worst enemies... That was David's predicament all those many centuries ago. And what did he do? He tells us in the Psalm appointed for today. He reaches out to God for help:

With my voice I cry to the Lord
I pour out my complaint before him;
I tell my trouble before him.
When my spirit is faint,
You know my way.
I cry to you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my refuge."
Give heed to my cry
For I am brought very low...
The righteous will surround me for
You will deal bountifully with me.

David expresses his faith that life will not always be this hard. There is life beyond fear, suffering, perhaps even dying. Let us hope so.

There is no escaping the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, as Hamlet said. And when we are beset by (crushing odds, great misfortune, injustice, overwhelming grief and) seemingly endless troubles, we tend to want to run away and hide until they pass. But it is best to turn and face them. In faith, one may pause and pray for strength, pour out one's troubles and ask for help. Reassure oneself by remembering the words of the psalmist "I cry unto you, O Lord; I say, you are my refuge."

There have been times in my life when I was overwhelmed by grief and fear. I felt utterly helpless and powerless. But it was in those times that I reached out, remembering that God is there, and that I would be able to get through my time of trouble...

It was after my father died unexpectedly out of state. I had to go to Florida to make the arrangements and deal with doctors, lawyers, and insurance agents. Awfully hard to do, especially when your heart is breaking. I prayed for strength and wisdom to handle all the formalities. I decided to schedule the appointments in the afternoon. So in the morning I could prepare by letting out my emotions in a safe place. I sat in the waters of the Atlantic and wept. And it was there that I really felt the presence of God... in the waves that were washing over me and receiving my tears; in the roar of the surf that absorbed my cries so I could hoop and holler my

heart out one step removed from other swimmers. And I felt God holding me up and supporting me as I floated on the water and looked up at the sky.

Daddy never met my daughter Rachel, but she is brave and kind like him and I know he would have loved her.

A few years later when she was eight years old, we went to visit an old school friend of mine in England. We were flying back home over the Irish Sea when the pilot announced that we were going to have to make an emergency landing. There was a hole in one of our wings... so it was best to turn back.

My daughter went over to inspect. She saw the wing, she saw the hole and came back to tell me all about it. In an excited voice she explained that the hole was right near where the wing joined the plane.

Meanwhile panic had overtaken some young people near us and the girls were crying out that we were going to die. I wanted to muffle their shrieks so as to keep my daughter calm and stop thinking about what would happen if the hole got bigger... so I reached for my King's Chapel Prayer Book--which I rarely travel without--- and began reciting the Twenty-third Psalm in a strong declarative voice for all to hear.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want
He makes me to lie down in green pastures
He leads me beside the still waters
He restores my soul.
Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death
I will fear no evil;
For you are with me;
Your rod and your staff—
They comfort me...
Surely goodness and mercy
Shall follow me
All the days of my life...

Meanwhile back on the plane, things had grown quiet around us. I guess I wasn't the only one reassured by these words. Soon enough we landed safely at the nearest airport, stepped out onto terra firma, and waited for the next flight home.

The Bible is filled with stories of people in dire circumstances who turn to God for help. The Old Testament reading we heard today is from the book of Habakkuk, a prophet who lived about 600 years before Christ. In our passage we meet an extraordinary man who says that despite appearances of desolation "I will rejoice in the Lord for he is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer..." There is a lightness to a person of faith who believes that God can get us through the bad times, provide respite for our cares, and lift our spirits.

So let us remember in times of trouble, that there is life beyond these present woes,
that we may find relief in pouring out our souls and asking for assistance, that God is
our refuge and very present help
In times of danger.

In this transitory life, nothing is forever, (even this homily) and sometimes, that is a
very good thing!

Thanks be to God,

AMEN

Benediction:

“ May the Lord bless you and keep you
May love and strength be in your hands
May love and courage be in your heart
May love and wisdom be in your mind
May God go with you and work through you
Today and in all your days.

AMEN