



still waters

home church studies

Psalms 24

[Worship]

1 The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; 2 for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers. 3 Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? 4 Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully. 5 They will receive blessing from the LORD, and vindication from the God of their salvation. 6 Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.
Selah

7 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. 8 Who is the King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle. 9 Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors! that the King of glory may come in. 10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory.
Selah

Consider:

[Words]

There is some pretty heavy stuff in this series of readings. King David is in an exultant mood as he accompanies the reclaimed Ark of the Covenant, the symbol of God's presence, into Jerusalem. But the danger of familiarity with God and assuming that God can be controlled by humans is sharply exposed (2 Samuel 6:6-8). David realizes that there are limits to his influence and power, and the psalmist reminds us clearly that the true presence of God is available only to those who are clean of hands and pure of heart.

Mark confronts us with a story of the apparent victory of evil over good. Herod and the coalition of government, political, and commercial interests represented at his dinner party seek to terminate the prophetic criticism that calls for an end to double standards. John's summary execution, on the scheming whim of one of the accused parties, is typical of tyrannical activity in every age.

Against the background of emperor worship and relentless persecution of the Christian community by religious and secular authorities, Paul offers a theological treatise on the nature of the

salvation of God. He reminds us of the everlasting nature of God's presence and reiterates to those in fear that, before the world was made, God marked us out to be adopted children in Christ. Paul declares that there are limits to the oppressive powers; God's pledge is that, when the times have run their course, everything will be brought under Christ.

Reflection and Action

These readings call us to a renewal of our faith in the victory of God. They invite us to honor God's sovereignty, to recognize the limits of secular power, and to revisit the source of our salvation. How might you do this in your life, community, and church?

[Scripture]

Mark 6.14-29

14 King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." 15 But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." 16 But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." 17 For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. 18 For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, 20 for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. 21 But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. 22 When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." 23 And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." 25 Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, 28 brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. 29 When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.