



still waters

home church studies

Psalm 26

[Worship]

1 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering. 2 Prove me, O LORD, and try me; test my heart and mind. 3 For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you. 4 I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with hypocrites; 5 I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked. 6 I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O LORD, 7 singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds. 8 O LORD, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides. 9 Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with the bloodthirsty, 10 those in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes. 11 But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me. 12 My foot stands on level ground; in the great congregation I will bless the LORD.

Consider: Peter B. Price

[Words]

Why do we suffer? Is it our own fault? Are we being punished for wrongdoing? These kinds of questions dog us today just as much as they did the writers of the Bible. Many of the psalms ask the question, Why me? They represent the voices of people who sense that they have lived faithfully: "Lord be my judge...; my trust in God never wavers" (Psalm 26:1). Job also was "a sound, honest man who feared God and shunned evil" (Job 1:1). Yet despite his goodness, he was to experience faith-testing calamity at the heart of an almost Faustian bargain between God and Satan (Job 2:1-6). His resilience in suffering causes first his wife and then others to question God.

Many of the psalms, particularly 38 and 51, reveal a heightened sense of self-awareness over wrongdoing, and there is undoubtedly a real element in suffering that is brought upon ourselves through our misdeeds. Mark points us to the oppression in marriage caused by patriarchy, and the life-tearing pain of divorce when a marriage dies. Or the destruction of the innocence in children, or life's poor "little ones," through abuse and exclusion (Mark 10:13-16). The roots of all violence are to be found in oppression of the small and weak.

Paradoxically, it is through suffering that healing comes. Hebrews reveals a God who throughout the human story has sought ways of

being heard. To wrest humanity back from its own destruction, God did not choose angels, but human beings: "What are human beings that you spare a thought for them?" asks the writer rhetorically, and answers, "You have crowned them with glory and honor and put all things under their feet" (Hebrews 2:6-8).

Human failure to live up to its destiny means that God's intervention through Jesus, and his submission to suffering and death, was to "benefit all humanity" (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus' example is not something we are required to observe through the rearview mirror of history, but to follow in every detail in order to "make perfect through suffering the leader of their salvation" (Hebrews 2:10).

Some mystery!

Reflection and Action

When have you asked the question, Why me? Have you had times when your own sense of wrongdoing has been heightened? What caused such a change of perspective? How has Jesus' experience of suffering challenged you to live your life as he did?

[Scripture]

Mark 10:2-16

2 Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" 4 They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." 5 But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. 9

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." 10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery." 13 People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. 14 But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. 15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it."

16 And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.