

still waters

home church studies

Psalm 71.1-6

[Worship]

1 In you, O LORD, I take refuge; let me never be put to shame. 2 In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; incline your ear to me and save me. 3 Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress. 4 Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked, from the grasp of the unjust and cruel. 5 For you, O Lord, are my hope, my trust, O LORD, from my youth. 76 Upon you I have leaned from my birth; it was you who took me from my mother's womb. My praise is continually of you.

Consider:

[Words]

The more excellent way of the gospel is a way of generous forgiveness that hopes all things and forgives all things. It is a way that is against the grain of the world, so that the church is called to a daring, subversive life in the world. The performance of that way in the world is demanding and costly.

We have two examples of the more excellent way that is against the grain. Jeremiah is called to radical obedience against the political economy of his day. He does not want such a call, but God sends him on his way of obedience (Jeremiah 1:6-7). Second, Jesus signs on for the same vocation and receives the same rude reception. He has declared jubilee through his own life. He showed the radicality of jubilee by reference to a foreign woman and a foreign general. In response, they tried to drive him out and to kill him (Luke 4:25-30).

Both Jeremiah and Jesus are grossly unwelcome, and their lives are at risk. We may imagine the two of them falling back on the prayer world of the psalms to cope with their burden. They fall back on Psalm 71, a prayer for rescue from "the grasp of the unjust and the cruel" (Psalm 71:4). The prayer confidently assumes God's readiness to respond and sustain. They know that the God who calls is the God who rescues.

Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Luke 4.21-30

21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"

24 And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. 25 But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; 26 yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. 27 There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. 30 But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

