



# still waters

home church studies

## Psalm 131

[Worship]

1 O LORD, my heart is not lifted up, my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. 2 But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; my soul is like the weaned child that is with me. 3 O Israel, hope in the LORD from this time on and forevermore.

### Consider:

[Words]

Paul insists that he is not to be judged by human criteria, for judgment belongs to God. From that he extrapolates that his congregation is not to use its energy judging and standing in God's place doing God's proper work. The congregation has enough to do with its own life of trust and obedience.

In the Isaiah reading, exilic Israel, in its anxiety, had judged God to be fickle and forgetful. The poet, however, refuses such a verdict on God. God is the one who remembers, even when a nursing mother may forget (verse 15); who comforts with compassion those in need (verse 13); who gathers all the lost to come home (verse 18). The poem is a vision of homecoming wrought by the faithful power of God. Clearly Israel has "misjudged" its God!

Psalm 131 is a quiet, modest, meditation on what it means to be "at home" with God ... free of care and finally filled with hope (verse 3). One could imagine that the homecoming of Isaiah culminates in the restfulness of this psalm. It turns out that "home" is wherever one is remembered, comforted, and gathered by God.

The invitation to trust God in every circumstance is the summons of Jesus. Jesus knows about a life of anxiety when one is in pursuit of "Mammon," because pursuing Mammon produces alienation, abandonment, and fear or rejection. Such a pursuit leaves one never good enough, never having enough. The good news is that there is another way to freedom from rat-race anxiety, having come down in

God's good generosity. Those who come down that way are free for the counter-pursuit of God's righteousness for the world.

These texts resist the "edginess" of judgment (Paul), being forgotten (Isaiah), being "far from home" (the psalmist), and being filled with anxiety (Matthew). The Mother God in Isaiah 49:15 offers a safe place of peaceableness, joy, and freedom—enough well-being to live out God's righteousness for the world (Matthew 6:33). – Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

## Matthew 6.24-34

24 "No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. 25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? 27 And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? 28 And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, 29 yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. 30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' 32 For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."

Reread

Isaiah 49.8-16 &  
1 Corinthians 4.1-5