

“Calling and Celebrating Together”
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ELORA UNITED CHURCH

Psalm 20

September 25, 2016

May God answer you in the day of trouble,
and the name of God defend you.

May God send you help from the sanctuary,
and give you support from Zion.

May God remember all your offerings,
and accept your burnt sacrifices.

May God grant you your heart's desire,
and give success to all your plans.

May we rejoice in your victory
and raise our banners in the name of our God.
May God fulfil your every wish.

Now I know, O God, that You help your anointed,
and will answer from Your holy heaven
with the victorious might of Your right hand.
Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses;
but we will trust in the name of our God.
They will totter and fall;
but we shall rise and stand upright.

God, save those who rule,
and answer us on the day we call.

Psalm 20

Psalm 20 is about a community of people, gathered together. They are calling on God's help. Not for themselves, however. They are petitioning God—we sometimes call that “intercession”—they are interceding on behalf of their king. Their king is going off to battle.

We are not royalty. Still, can this Psalm 20 tell us something about being this community, gathered together in Christ Jesus? Can it teach something about calling on God's help together? Not just about calling on God's help for ourselves, but for each other. Each of us is facing battles, if not today then tomorrow. We need God's help. We need others to pray for us.¹

¹ Ellen T. Charry, [Psalms 1-50](#) (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2015), 99 and Doug Bratt, “Proper 6B: The Lectionary Psalms” [Centre for Excellence in Preaching Sermon Starters](#) (June 8, 2015).

II

May God answer you in the day of trouble.

You are having a day of trouble. You cry out to God. We cry out with you.

Our prayers are preludes to God's performance. We pray because we know God will act.²

- In the psalm's words, we call on the God of Jacob, our spiritual ancestor. God answered him in the day of his distress, and stayed with him wherever he went.³
- We call on God to protect you. God is your refuge. Behind God, you are shielded.⁴
- We call on God to send you help and give you support, from the very heart of God's holiness, the very centre of God's goodness.
- We call on God to honour your faithfulness.
- We call on God to give you what you need.

We've all got troubles. Church, we call on God for each other!

III

In the psalm, they are calling on God while the king goes out. But they are already getting ready for when the king comes back

*May we rejoice in your victory
and raise our banners in the name of our God.*

In her comments about this psalm, Ellen Charry says that, "*When one suffers, all are affected; when one is lifted up, all will celebrate.*"⁵

To celebrate, we need good news. The good news of God, who will not leave us. The good news of God, who will not forsake us, and who does not condemn us. The good news of God who saves us, heals us, rescues us, forgives us, carries us. The good news of what God is doing in your life.

Church, we celebrate God's victories in the life of our sister, our brother.

IV

Why can we call out confidently in days of trouble? Why can we celebrate hopefully, anticipating days of victory? Because we know God. We know what God is like. We know what God does. Jesus shows us God, so we know.⁶

http://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/proper-6b-2/?type=the_lectionary_psalms

² God is the subject of the verbs in the psalm. Doug Bratt writes, "while Israel's king is one of Psalms 20's central figures, Yahweh remains its primary actor."

³ See Genesis 35:3.

⁴ Willem A. VanGermeren, "Psalms" in Frank E. Gaebelien (ed), The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Volume 5 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 189.

⁵ Charry, 100.

⁶ "'Now I know' (v.6) is equivalent to 'I have come to the conclusion that.' It does not follow that the victory has already been achieved. It is an emphatic expression of confidence in the Lord and in the victory that

The psalm says,

Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses . . .

That was the advanced military technology of the ancient world.⁷ We can think today of our war weapons, and anything that represents human power and the allure of security. The more we have, the more courageous and confident we feel.⁸

But where are those chariots and war horses now? What good are they now? What about the empires that trusted in them? Where are they now?

What about the things we trust in? The powers we rely on?

*Some put their trust in chariots, and some in horses,
but we will trust in the name of our God.*

“God’s name” stands for everything God has shown us about Godself. God’s name stands for God’s presence, power, and character—what God is like!⁹

Church, this is God, to Whom we cry out, and with Whom we celebrate!

V

Bonnie and Arlene are going to talk with us about *Touchstones*. This is a new way for us to connect with each other, and a new way for us to pray with each other: to call out together, and to celebrate together. We do this because we belong to Jesus.

This psalm 20 points us to God and, in its deepest sense, to Jesus, God the Son. He is the King of kings. He has gone out, to join us in our Day of Trouble. He has joined the whole world, all of creation, all people everywhere, as we have faced our foe. And he has done battle. Jesus has done the battle for us. He did not trust in weapons of war, but in the giving of his own body. His weapon is his love! And God gave him the victory!

Church! As we pray together, for each other, we join with Jesus in calling out to God his Father. Church! As we pray together, rejoicing with each other, we join with Jesus in celebrating the wonder of God. Praise be to God!

formed the substance of the prayer (w. 1-5).” VanGermeren, 192.

⁷ Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-72* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity, 1973), 103.

⁸ John Calvin wrote: “There is here a comparison between the people of God and all the rest of the world. We see how natural it is to almost all men to be the more courageous and confident the more they possess of riches, power, and military forces. The people of God, therefore, here protest that they do not place their hope, as is the usual way with men, in their military forces and warlike apparatus, but only in the aid of God.” Quoted in Charry, 101f.

⁹ Kidner, 101 and Luke A. Powery, “Palm Sunday Lectionary Commentary” in *The African American Lectionary* (April 5, 2009). www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/PopupLectionaryReading.asp?LRID=77