

Psalm 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah.

- ¹ O God, you are my God, I seek you,
my soul thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.
- ² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,
beholding your power and glory.
- ³ Because your steadfast love is better than life,
my lips will praise you.
- ⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.
- ⁵ My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
- ⁶ when I think of you on my bed,
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;
- ⁷ for you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.
- ⁸ My soul clings to you;
your right hand upholds me.
- ⁹ But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth;
- ¹⁰ they shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.
- ¹¹ But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by him shall exult,
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Luke 13:1-9

At that very time
there were some present
who told him about the Galileans
whose blood Pilate had mingled
with their sacrifices.

²He asked them, 'Do you think
that because these Galileans suffered in this way
they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?

³No, I tell you;
but unless you repent,
you will all perish as they did.

⁴Or those eighteen
who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—
do you think that they were worse offenders
than all the others living in Jerusalem?

⁵No, I tell you;
but unless you repent,
you will all perish just as they did.'

⁶ Then he told this parable:
'A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard;
and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.

⁷So he said to the gardener,
"See here! For three years
I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree,
and still I find none.
Cut it down!
Why should it be wasting the soil?"

⁸He replied,
"Sir, let it alone for one more year,
until I dig round it and put manure on it.

⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good;
but if not, you can cut it down."

Reading the Psalm This Week

Here's an audio earworm: Rawn Harbor, African American,
Roman Catholic from Washington DC OLOPH cathedral

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHD0BDw9Im8>

Here's another: Shane & Shane, evangelical guitarists,
Evangelicals from Montana (and touring)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdS6fDf170>

The Scottish Psalter of 1650 settings,
Likeliest sung in Leith and Trinity in the 1800's:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SVDZI443J7Y>

This is a thanksgiving psalm, a praise chorus,
And Second Temple editors linked it to David's story,
On the lam from Saul, running a protection racket in Judah

Attributing psalms to David is common, in varied 'headings',
In this 'hymnbook' edition collected 500 years before Jesus
(and 500 years after David)

The experiences – or metaphors – of thirst and hunger,
Set in context of waste land, fugitive from sanctuary
Is poetry, not prose history

Curses on enemies are of scavengers rather than graves
And the ending twists from personal to political/public
Perhaps an edit for temple use

We back up a bit in Luke's special section, in Galilee teaching,
For a controversy story and a parable, both only in Luke
(don't confuse cursing a fig tree in Mark 11 and Matt 21)

Bystanders gossip to Jesus about an arbitrary crime by Pilate
Jesus denies any justification for selecting these victims –
Then warns listeners to repent or perish as they did

Then he adds an industrial disaster story
Again to deny justification for those deaths,
And to amplify by repeating his warning to repent or perish

Gossip about 'acts of God' or industrial 'accidents' is familiar,
Universal human nature of popular bad theology –
Jesus denies ruler, builder, or listeners evasion of morality
'Neutrality' or 'victim blaming' is rejected, prophetically

The parable of the fig tree seems loosely connected
Perhaps on a theme of change and urgency

A parable is not an allegory or fable with a moral –
It's a *mashal*, a Hebrew form of provocative paradox
Resist 'God is the owner, we the gardener' allegorizing
What do you do with a fig tree not yielding?

Our culture and economy worships productivity and efficiency
Do farmers and gardeners have any dissonance,
In demanding mechanistic maximizing of outcomes?
Is the gardener's counter-proposal plausible?

If the theme is change, or perish as they did –
Doesn't human mortality guarantee we change and perish?

Reading the Gospel This Week