

The Psalm for this morning offers an image-laden portrait of God's absolute steadfast love and faithfulness. It reminds us to praise God -- who stretches wider than the heavens, who stands firmer than the mountains, whose understanding reaches to the depths of the earth, and who provides salvation, refuge, and fountains of life for all who turn to God. In a world plagued with uncertainties and loyalty only to self, the assurance of God's faithfulness is a rich blessing indeed.

Wickedness, hatred, deception, and other evils that harm the community truly exist alongside God's steadfast love. Every Christian must wrestle with that. Avoiding troublesome aspects of the life of faith does no one any favors, and the psalmist here models a way to offer honest worship in the midst of a messy life.

Psalm 36 (NIV)

¹ I have a message from God in my heart
concerning the sinfulness of the wicked
There is no fear of God before their eyes.

² In their own eyes they flatter themselves
too much to detect or hate their sin.

³ The words of their mouths are wicked and deceitful;
they fail to act wisely or do good.

⁴ Even on their beds they plot evil; they commit themselves to a sinful
course and do not reject what is wrong.

⁵ Your love, LORD, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies.

⁶ Your righteousness is like the highest mountains,
your justice like the great deep.

You, LORD, preserve both people and animals.

⁷ How priceless is your unfailing love, O God!
People take refuge in the shadow of your wings.

⁸ They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.

⁹ For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light.

¹⁰ Continue your love to those who know you,
your righteousness to the upright in heart.

¹¹ May the foot of the proud not come against me,
nor the hand of the wicked drive me away.

¹² See how the evildoers lie fallen—
thrown down, not able to rise!

The situation in the passage of Isaiah 62 grew out of the frustration between promise and reality. Encouraged, emboldened, and empowered by the eloquent words of the prophet, the people had returned to the ruins of Jerusalem and Judah to begin again. God was doing a “new thing” among them. If the Babylonian exile felt like punishment for sin, the return to Jerusalem became God’s act of forgiveness (40:2). The prophet’s soaring words inspired the people. Nevertheless, when they followed the prophet back home, they encountered infighting, setbacks, and frustration.

Within that situation, the prophet scholars call III Isaiah (Isaiah 56-66) expresses the pain of the people. The prophet not only gives voice to lamentation, he speaks with persistence, even defiance. He will speak up and continue to speak, refusing to rest. This bold, unflinching, unrelenting outcry enables the people to vent their feelings, but also reveals much about the divine-human relationship. If the prophet assumed that God did not care, he would not need to persist in speaking out. The passage suggests that the prophet assumes God will listen, if the prophet does not give up.

Hear now **Isaiah 62:1-5 (NRSV)**

The Vindication and Salvation of Zion

62 For Zion’s sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn,
and her salvation like a burning torch.
2 The nations shall see your vindication,
and all the kings your glory;
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the Lord will give.
3 You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
4 You shall no more be termed Forsaken, [a]
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; [b]
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, [c]
and your land Married; [d]
for the Lord delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
5 For as a young man marries a young woman,
so shall your builder marry you, [e]
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.