

Darkness Is My Closest Friend

Scripture Reading — Psalm 88

*You have taken from me friend and neighbor—darkness is my closest friend.
Psalm 88:18 —*

Many North American Christians are naïve about suffering. We design a remedy for every anguish. We go to the doctor to replace a creaky knee. We go to the pharmacist for quick pain relief. We leave neighborhoods or jobs or spouses or children to avoid suffering. But in this “dark” psalm, God gives us a gift.

This psalm leaves us teetering, dangling in the depths, pleading without a clear sign of rescue. This is an important prayer to have in our psalm book, because life is often unresolved like that. Faith does not always fix the painful stuff of our life. Not every crisis has a way out.

Too many church people and leaders act as if we can resolve things with the right formula. They treat the Bible like a recipe book of faith fixes. But this psalm shows us that faith isn't naïve. Nor does it charge ahead to some imagined, or forced, resolution. Faith stays in reality, even if that reality has a slow, tortuous pace. Faith includes trust that God will make things right in the end, but we don't know when or how that will take place. We all spend time in darkness, no matter what we do.

When John Donne was pastor of St. Paul's Cathedral, three waves of a great plague swept through London. Half-crazed prophets stalked deserted streets saying God had sent the plague to punish London for its sins. But John Donne taught people to pray like Psalm 88.

Prayer

Father, thank you for giving us words to pray when troubles overwhelm us. Help us to remember that our Savior is also praying for us always (Romans 8:34). In his name, Amen

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