

Third Sunday in Advent – Psalms #3
Psalm 130
December 13, 2015
Our Cries Ascend from the Depths to the Lord
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Dear friends in Christ Jesus,

In 2010, 33 Chilean miners cried out for help from the depths of a copper mine. The mine had collapsed and trapped them about three miles underground. That is about from here to 465. Their cries ascended from those depths to the rescuers on the surface. Those rescuers heard their cries and delivered all the men alive from their temporary entombment.

Our cries for help ascend to the Lord from the depths of the guilt of our transgressions against God's will. Those cries go up to the One, and only One, who can rescue us from the guilt that threatens to entomb us in anguish and despair. Psalm 130 is one of the seven penitential psalms.

In this penitential season of Advent, with the words of this psalm, **Our Cries Ascend from the Depths to the LORD**. His attentive ears hear my voice. His forgiveness lifts up my heart. His Word reaffirms my hope.

We would not be wrong to equate these "depths" with the results of sin we must face in life. We use it in those circumstances often. I have used Psalm 130 in private devotion with people dealing with family problems, health issues, and adversity. From such "depths" it is fitting to cry up to the Lord. His attentive ears hear my voice.

Most likely the psalm writer is referring to the iniquities and transgressions we commit against the Ten Commandments. I think of the times I kill someone softly with my angry words. I think of talking about someone behind the back either with falsehood or the truth to hurt them. There are the times I fear for the future as if God were not going to take care of me. What about the failure to spend time in God's Word? These are the depths of my sin from which our cries ascend from the depths to the Lord.

God's attentive ears hear confessions that come from broken and contrite hearts. "Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy." The Lord has his ears turned to us. He has them tuned to us much like a mother perks up her ears to a baby monitor listening for any cry. The Lord is like those mine rescuers listening hard to hear the cries of the trapped miners.

Jesus cried out in his anguish from the cross. There was no mercy for him. The Son's Father had forsaken him, turned a deaf ear to his cries. Because of that, the Father listens to us. Because of that, the Father is merciful to us. His forgiveness lifts up my heart.

Are there any more uplifting words we can hear than, "I forgive you?" It is not the sound of the words but their meaning that lifts up the heart. The psalmist gives us one meaning, "If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand?" Forgiveness means God does not keep a record of our sins. The LORD has covered over, erased, and washed away any record of our sins with Jesus' holy blood.

Forgiveness does not mean God just forgot about for no reason our breaking the commandments. God does not keep a record of our sins because Jesus died on the cross as full payment for them. We may ascend the LORD's holy hill, and stand in the presence of the holy God, as we heard last week in Psalm 24, because of Jesus' blood. If the LORD kept a record of our sins, we could not do that.

The LORD's forgiveness in Christ of all our sins against him is empowering. The words, "I forgive you," are uplifting words to hear not only from God but from one another. We use the

same lack of record keeping. In an argument with spouse or child or parent we do not go to some past record of sin and drag it to the forefront. Previous sins are not current weaponry. Are there any more hurtful words than, "O yeah, well I remember the time you..."

The rescuers in Chile heard the miners' cries. The people on the surface built a shaft with a capsule and pulled every trapped miner up to safety. The LORD God for Jesus' sake hears our cries and forgives all our sins. He lifts us up out of the depths. He removed all our guilt. He has remitted all punishment which Jesus already has suffered.

We know this because the Holy Spirit has told us in his Word. The miners knew help was coming because the rescuers told them to hang on. God has told us in his holy Word that help is coming in every need especially our daily sin. This gives us hope. His Word reaffirms my hope.

"I wait for the LORD, my soul waits and in his Word I put my hope. My soul waits for the LORD more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning."

In the midst of our anguish over sin, God's voice comes to us in his Word. There is no false hope here. There is only genuine hope, the eager expectation in the certainty of what is coming. We are like the watchmen standing on the wall waiting for the sun to peek over the eastern horizon. The sun's appearance means the long night watch is ended. Finally, they can go home to rest.

Doesn't that beautifully describe our Christian life on earth as our hearts look forward to the dawn of the Morning Star? This is Advent. The Son of God is coming to the earth to give us hope. The gospel comes to us in the Word of Christ to give us hope. The trumpet sounds, the King of glory appears to give us hope.

In the early verses, the writer spoke in very personal terms each of us may use. He closes with a collective appeal for the entire congregation of saints, "O Israel, put your hope in the LORD, for with the LORD is unfailing love and with him is full redemption. He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins."

So we pray, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, Come. Amen." <SDG>