

Readings

Scripture

¹ O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, what deeds you performed in their days, in the days of old: ² you with your own hand drove out the nations, but them you planted; you afflicted the peoples, but them you set free; ³ for not by their own sword did they win the land, nor did their own arm save them, but your right hand and your arm, and the light of your face, for you delighted in them.

⁴ You are my King, O God; ordain salvation for Jacob! ⁵ Through you we push down our foes; through your name we tread down those who rise up against us. ⁶ For not in my bow do I trust, nor can my sword save me. ⁷ But you have saved us from our foes and have put to shame those who hate us. ⁸ In God we have boasted continually, and we will give thanks to your name forever. *Selah*

⁹ But you have rejected us and disgraced us and have not gone out with our armies.

¹⁰ You have made us turn back from the foe, and those who hate us have gotten spoil.

¹¹ You have made us like sheep for slaughter and have scattered us among the nations. ¹² You have sold your people for a trifle, demanding no high price for them. ¹³ You have made us the taunt of our neighbors, the derision and scorn of those around us. ¹⁴ You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples. ¹⁵ All day long my disgrace is before me, and shame has covered my face ¹⁶ at the sound of the taunter and reviler, at the sight of the enemy and the avenger.

¹⁷ All this has come upon us, though we have not forgotten you, and we have not been false to your covenant. ¹⁸ Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from your way; ¹⁹ yet you have broken us in the place of jackals and covered us with the shadow of death. ²⁰ If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, ²¹ would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart. ²² Yet for your sake we are killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.

²³ Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!

²⁴ Why do you hide your face? Why do you forget our affliction and oppression? ²⁵ For our soul is bowed down to the dust; our belly clings to the ground. ²⁶ Rise up; come to our help! Redeem us for the sake of your steadfast love!

- Psalm 44 (English Standard Version)

Reflection

The story in which God does his saving work arises among a people whose primary experience of God is his absence. We are made to face this at the very outset of Exodus when we realize that these people have been in Egyptian slavery for over 430 years. Where was God all this time? Did not those covenantal words God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have any continuing validity? Didn't the providential Joseph years in Egypt leave a lasting mark?...Whether the experience of absence is measured in weeks, months, or years, for most of us it doesn't fit into what is 'normal' in our understanding of salvation. But it is normal...Any understanding of God that doesn't take into account God's silence is a half truth – in effect, a cruel distortion – and leaves us vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by leaders who are quite willing to fill in the biblical blanks with what the Holy Spirit never tells us.

– Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places* (p.153-156)

Sermon Outline

His Hiddenness

Psalm 44

Vintage Vinyl

Brad Anderson

Where is God when we need him the most? (Psalm 44:24)

Why did you let this happen?

- Our past victories are because of you... (Psalm 44:1-8, 17-22)
- Our present defeat is because of you... (Psalm 44:9-16)

When will you arise again to help us?

 (Psalm 44:23-26)

- It seems like you are sleeping...
- It seems like you are rejecting us...
- It seems like you are hiding from us...
- It seems like you have forgotten us...

Reflection Questions

 (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- What does it take to rouse you from sleep? Noisy termites? Noisy neighbors? A train going through your living room?
- Read the story located in 1 Kings 18, retelling the spiritual standoff between Elijah and the Priests of Baal. What stands out to you in this story? How would you have encountered the scene as Elijah? As one of the Priests of Baal?
- What does the psalmist recall about God in verse 1-8? What does he realize about his own limitations?
- What problems does he face (verses 9-16)? How does he relate to this problem?
- What is the real problem bothering the psalmist (verses 17-22)? This psalmist felt like God was sleeping on the job. Have you ever felt like this? What did you do to rouse God? What does God's apparent neglect of your situation do to your faith in God's justice and love?
- How does the Apostle Paul use the quotation of Psalm 44:22 in Romans 8? What experiences from Psalm 44 could Paul be inviting the Romans to consider?
- What does it say to you about God that God would have a song like this in the Bible?