

# Praying the Psalms for Life, Faith, Hope. – Here! Now!

Getting from disorientation to re-orientation.

I say, "It has been impossible for me to fulfil the expectations of God. I'm going to hang on to the foot of Christ." And Christ speaks to the Father: "He's hanging on to me. I died for him. Let him slip through!" Martin Luther

Dear members of Synod, dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

Are you hanging on for dear life? Let me encourage you to do this by praying the Psalms for dear *life, faith and hope*. Because that's what they are there for. But let me give you some more background as to why I think the Psalms are the way to go.

Because my daughter has studied medicine and become a doctor, often working long shifts in emergency wards, I have begun reading books about doctors and by doctors – wanting to know what they go through in order to better understand my daughter, especially when she is struggling with her experiences. The author Aoife Abbey, an intensive care doctor in the UK, has written a fascinating book, called: "Seven Signs of Life. Stories from an Intensive Care Doctor." And the "signs of life" that she then writes about are not the ones one would expect a doctor to be looking for in a patient, like breathing, heartbeat or pulse etc. but the core emotions of life:

***Fear, Grief, Joy, Distraction, Anger, Disgust and Hope.***

She says, we all have these emotions at some or other time in our lives, but as a doctor one very often has nearly all of these in a day or less. And she devotes a chapter on each of them with stories from the hospital – very moving, sometimes funny, but always honestly describing experiences that she has had to cope with in her work. Writing them down and finding the words to give raw expression to her experiences and reflect on them helped her, she says, to keep going. As I was reading this book, a thought kept coming up in the back of my mind. These stories describing the various, very human emotions and how they are experienced and expressed, are doing what the Psalms have been doing for those who pray them for centuries. Giving words to what we are experiencing, verbalising our emotions, our trauma, ***our fears, our grief, our anger, our disgust, our joy, our distraction and our hope.*** I believe that in the Book of Psalms we have a treasure trove of resources, a medicine bag full of "cures" for all that ails and delights us. An old Chasidic proverb puts it very well: "Verlasst euch nicht auf Wunder, sondern rezitiert Psalmen." ***Don't put your trust in miracles, but recite the Psalms.*** I'll get back to that later, because it is meant literally, prayed Psalms are life-changers and life-savers.

First let me mention some ***basic information*** about the Book of Psalms.

- They are prayers – a collection of different forms of prayers for a variety of situations, both formal and informal, sacred and secular.
- They are composed in such a way that they can be prayed together or alone –

always linked to the rhythm of our breathing. A reminder that we are “living souls” because God created humans from clay and then breathed God’s breath (the Spirit) into us – so whenever we are out of breath – we should pray the Psalms as a way of re-entering the breathing rhythm of God, of being resuscitated by the power of the Spirit. Prayer is allowing God’s “Ruach” = wind/spirit/breath to pump up our “papwiel” existence. And with that we come to some basics about our “here and now!” The topic of our Synod, which we will be dealing with in more detail under the guidance and help of Hanna Kotze.

- Here and now, I find myself literally out of breath – recently because I had Covid and it put extra strain on my lungs – but also because life in this time is lived under constant pressure and it often feels like my lungs are under constraint – the breath is being squeezed out of me and I struggle to breathe in again.
- I experience people around me to be out of breath – when my wife and I had Covid it was again literally the desperate (Afrikaans: “benoud”) feeling you have when someone close to you is struggling to breathe – coughing and wheezing through the night. In many pastoral conversations I have a very similar experience of feeling with others the shortness of breath, the gasping for air, the desperation of life being pressed right out of you.
- Back to the Psalms – poetically they are composed in such a way that the phrases (in Hebrew) are always just the right length to be said with or in one breath (no translation can really have the same effect). Then there’s a pause to draw breath before the next phrase is prayed. The idea is always that the breathing out that happens while you are saying the words takes slightly longer than the breathing in during the pause – this is fascinating – because that is exactly what I was taught to do when I was struggling with asthma or with anxiety attacks that caused me to hyperventilate. Breathe out as long as you can – getting rid of the used up air inside your lungs, the air that no longer has oxygen in it, and then breathe in – as calmly as you can under the circumstances – but not heaving, rushing or gasping, just enough to start the next phrase, just let the oxygen-filled air flow into you without straining – because in content the next phrase is often a reply to or a restatement of the previous one to let it sink in or find more space within our souls.
- We know that in the corporate worship of the Temple, these Psalms were prayed responsively (we still do it in our liturgy sometimes) – and here there is an added element of breathing assistance – because as the other group says a phrase, we have a chance to breathe in the Word of God they are saying to us and then we have enough breath to tell them, to proclaim to them what they need to hear from God.

We will practice this later, using some of the Psalms – but we can also do it during the breaks, or before lunch as our table prayer – it can become our habit of praying wherever we are.

Let us turn now to the work of the well-known Old Testament scholar, Walter

Brueggemann, who has written extensively about the Psalms and their interpretation. Let us look at the hand-out that you have received – an overview of his categories for the Psalms. He suggests that we regularly find ourselves in one of three places:

- a place of **orientation**, in which everything makes sense in our lives;
- a place of **disorientation**, in which we feel we have sunk into the pit; and
- a place of **new orientation**, in which we realize that God has lifted us out of the pit and we are in a new place full of gratitude and awareness about our lives and our God.

What is particularly interesting with these three is that they are not just three categories into which we can neatly place the various Psalms, but they actually describe the three phases or conditions through which our lives often pass – stages of how we experience our present reality “here and now”. Often it is a recurring cycle or sometimes even a wild ride back and forth between the various ways we experience reality. The one moment I feel quite certain and content about life and find myself trusting that God is here, in charge and all is well (the words from Psalms of orientation help me to express joyfully, that God is good to me) – and then the very next moment something happens, inside or outside of me, which throws me into complete disarray – all vitality drains out of me, I cannot see anything that gives me hope or trust and I admit (hopefully I have the courage to admit) that I have lost the orientation I thought I had (the Psalms of lament and mourning, of disorientation give me words to verbalise this situation) – and then again, often through those very words of lament, of screaming and shouting at God in despair, I am brought to a state of resuscitation, a kind of mouth to mouth breathing assistance by the word of God in the Psalms of reorientation. So, rather than putting the various Psalms neatly into these different categories, let us practice awareness, let us allow the Psalms to reach out to us in these different stages of our struggling lives to do the work that God’s Word always wants to do: Engender **faith** in us, cultivate **hope** in us, nourish and strengthen the new **life** in us, that God’s Word, Jesus Christ, has come to give.

So we have these three categories of prayer forms in the Psalms, but looked at from an experiential perspective the dynamics between these three categories can also be seen as **two movements** – one from orientation to disorientation and then the *second* from or rather out of disorientation to reorientation. And this seems to be very close to what Martin Luther meant when he interpreted the work or function of the Word of God as a dynamic, or even a dialectic tension between Law and Promise (Gospel). Law here not only indicating the texts in the Bible that can be formally recognised as commandments or expectations (see e.g. Psalm 119), although these are included as well, but rather words that hold a mirror before us, that show us that we are in trouble, that we are close to death, that the “wages of sin” are weighing heavily upon our souls, that our separation from God, our desperate attempts at “going it alone” to earn our salvation have landed us in deep despair.

And once we find ourselves there, deeply disoriented and hopeless, crying out to

God with the words provided in the Psalms of disorientation, these words themselves are the ones that re-centre our eyes on what God has wrought for our salvation – we discover those things, those “marvellous Acts of the Almighty” that resuscitate and enliven our trust that “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46).

This double movement is also reminiscent of what the Apostle Paul tells us happens in Baptism – we are crucified with Christ and raised with Him. (Romans 5 and 6) Luther spoke of the Old Adam having to be drowned and then a “new creation” crawls out of Baptism. It is the Theology of the Cross, which is not a static faith in certain truths but a lived experience of having the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus. Described in the Christ-Hymn that Paul probably quotes from the liturgy of the divine service of the first Christian communities. (Philippians 2, 5-11)

<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, (Orientation)  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
<sup>7</sup> but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness. (Disorientation)  
And being found in human form,  
<sup>8</sup> he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him  
and gave him the name  
that is above every name, (Reorientation)  
<sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus  
every knee should bend,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,  
<sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.

At the end of her chapter on “Fear” Aoife Abbey tells the story of her patient Gloria, a ninety year old woman dying of pneumonia. “She gripped my hand suddenly and, looking at me with desperation, said, ‘Please, don’t let me die.’ – I tried to explain, to soothe her, but she couldn’t hear me through her anguish. – The consultant suggested we should phone and invite the family in that afternoon for a conversation. With apprehension, I asked them if they had any thoughts about how Gloria was feeling. As it turned out, they had already suspected she was frightened. It was already on their minds, and they thought what would bring Gloria comfort was a chaplain. It seemed like such a straightforward and obvious answer. Why did I not think of it myself? Confronted by her fear, I had panicked because I had no

medical solutions. – Two of our hospital chaplains came, and they each spent some hours with Gloria. Each time I walked past her room and glanced through the window, I saw her lying in her bed with a chaplain seated nearby, their hands folded on their lap in that peaceful way they do. Gloria died that night, sooner than any of us had expected. I believe the chaplains gave her what she needed – that which I couldn't give her – and I don't think she died frightened. – I like to think that Gloria's fear became something else. If you are lucky, I believe that is what happens. Your fear of death becomes an impetus to find comfort. Your fear of losing your hard-fought independence becomes the momentum you need in order to stand on your feet again. Your fear of becoming the reason your family must experience grief gives you the strength to seek out truths that it may be painful to hear."

I wonder what Dr Abbey would have heard had she listened to the conversations the chaplains had with Gloria – did they perhaps pray Psalms with her? We don't know, but I know I would have done so, because I have experienced it myself – what Dr Abbey describes in the vague sentence: "I like to think that Gloria's fear became something else." In conversation and in prayer we can help each other move through fear to a place of peace and hope. And it is not so dependent on what the chaplain says, but on what he or she encourages the patient to say, to pray, to express in earnest conversation with God – and the Psalms give us all the words we need to do that with.

The psalms are human words addressed to God and yet they are God's Word to us – the creative Word that recreates broken people, lost people, guilty people, doubting people into trusting people – in my mind's eye, in my imagination I can already see these people, and I have seen them in our congregations, people that know, in spite of all the trouble they are in, that they belong to God, that they can trust God. People that get involved in congregational and communal life for reasons far beyond their own interests. They have moved away from the old and widespread belief in blind fate and dumb chance, the idols and powers of markets and stock-exchanges – they no longer believe that this world, filled with methods of brutal exploitation, humiliation and pain, is the only possible world – they no longer believe that there is anything in this old world that is unavoidable, like child mortality, aids, the bitter injustice of poverty and linked to that the terrible tragedy of systemic violence that spawns domestic and gender based violence. They have been recreated and reoriented towards a new world that is in the making, called the Kingdom of God (promised by God) and bit by little bit they plough the fields and plant and tend the seeds of this new world in which the Shalom (peace) of God will reign at last. I see them here and there and I believe my eyes – as my ears hear them praying the Psalms that do the creative, reorienting work in them.

But enough of trying to explain how praying the Psalms can take us from despair to **hope**, from mistrust to **faith** and from death to **life**. Let us allow the Psalms to do this to us – because explaining the Psalms is probably as effective and useful as talking about a meal prepared by a Three Star Michelin Chef. To really appreciate the cooking you need to eat the meal – to really know in your heart and your body, what the Psalms can do for you, you need to pray them.

## Orientation

In your small groups take some time to remember specific instances in your lives where you felt oriented – everything was going well, God was close to you and your faith was strong. Enjoy this memory and tell each other about it. Pray **Psalm 8** together (responsively if you like, verse by verse) to establish that memory in your heart.

- <sup>1</sup> O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.
- <sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.
- <sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;
- <sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?
- <sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.
- <sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,
- <sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
- <sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
- <sup>9</sup> O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## Disorientation

Now tell each other about a time you felt disoriented, when your life was falling apart and hope seemed lost – listen carefully to each other and remember we're not here to "fix" the emotions or get rid of them somehow – let them come to full expression. Praying **Psalm 13** may be of help in finding words to do this.

- <sup>1</sup> How long, O Lord? Will you forget me for ever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?
- <sup>2</sup> How long must I bear pain in my soul,  
and have sorrow in my heart all day long?  
How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?
- <sup>3</sup> Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!  
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death,
- <sup>4</sup> and my enemy will say, 'I have prevailed';  
my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.
- <sup>5</sup> But I trusted in your steadfast love;  
my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.
- <sup>6</sup> I will sing to the Lord,  
because he has dealt bountifully with me.

## Reorientation

Perhaps you have had the experience of suddenly or gradually finding yourself re-oriented towards faith, life and hope – but it may be that that is still something you are only hoping for, desperately. If you have experienced such instances of relief, resuscitation, new hope to face the difficult world, tell each other about that – if you have not, if you are at present still struggling to keep going or even close to giving up, it may help to go back to Psalms of disorientation, of lamenting, of crying out to God in despair. There are some that really delve deeply into the darkness of our world (Psalm 22 and Psalm 88 especially). Praying a Psalm of Reorientation however, may also give you words to express the hope you are looking for, the courage you need to not give up. I invite you to caringly pray **Psalm 30** with and for each other.

- <sup>1</sup> I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up,  
and did not let my foes rejoice over me.
- <sup>2</sup> O Lord my God, I cried to you for help,  
and you have healed me.
- <sup>3</sup> O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol,  
restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.
- <sup>4</sup> Sing praises to the Lord, O you his faithful ones,  
and give thanks to his holy name.
- <sup>5</sup> For his anger is but for a moment;  
his favour is for a lifetime.  
Weeping may linger for the night,  
but joy comes with the morning.
- <sup>6</sup> As for me, I said in my prosperity,  
'I shall never be moved.'
- <sup>7</sup> By your favour, O Lord,  
you had established me as a strong mountain;  
you hid your face;  
I was dismayed.
- <sup>8</sup> To you, O Lord, I cried,  
and to the Lord I made supplication:
- <sup>9</sup> 'What profit is there in my death,  
if I go down to the Pit?  
Will the dust praise you?  
Will it tell of your faithfulness?'
- <sup>10</sup> Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!  
O Lord, be my helper!
- <sup>11</sup> You have turned my mourning into dancing;  
you have taken off my sackcloth  
and clothed me with joy,
- <sup>12</sup> so that my soul may praise you and not be silent.  
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you for ever.

## Psalm 139

- <sup>1</sup> O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
<sup>2</sup> You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.  
<sup>3</sup> You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
<sup>4</sup> Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O Lord, you know it completely.  
<sup>5</sup> You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
<sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it.  
<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
<sup>8</sup> If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
<sup>9</sup> If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
<sup>10</sup> even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.  
<sup>11</sup> If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night',  
<sup>12</sup> even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.  
<sup>13</sup> For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
<sup>14</sup> I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.  
<sup>15</sup> My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
<sup>16</sup> Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.  
<sup>17</sup> How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!  
<sup>18</sup> I try to count them—they are more than the sand;  
I come to the end—I am still with you.  
<sup>19</sup> O that you would kill the wicked, O God,  
and that the bloodthirsty would depart from me—  
<sup>20</sup> those who speak of you maliciously,  
and lift themselves up against you for evil!  
<sup>21</sup> Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?  
And do I not loathe those who rise up against you?  
<sup>22</sup> I hate them with perfect hatred;  
I count them my enemies.  
<sup>23</sup> Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my thoughts.  
<sup>24</sup> See if there is any wicked way in me,  
and lead me in the way everlasting.

## Psalm 22

- <sup>1</sup> My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?  
Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?
- <sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;  
and by night, but find no rest.
- <sup>3</sup> Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
- <sup>4</sup> In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.
- <sup>5</sup> To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
- <sup>6</sup> But I am a worm, and not human;  
scorned by others, and despised by the people.
- <sup>7</sup> All who see me mock at me;  
they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
- <sup>8</sup> 'Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver—  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'
- <sup>9</sup> Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.
- <sup>10</sup> On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.
- <sup>11</sup> Do not be far from me,  
for trouble is near  
and there is no one to help.
- <sup>12</sup> Many bulls encircle me,  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
- <sup>13</sup> they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- <sup>14</sup> I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;  
my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;
- <sup>15</sup> my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,  
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;  
you lay me in the dust of death.
- <sup>16</sup> For dogs are all around me;  
a company of evildoers encircles me.  
My hands and feet have shrivelled;
- <sup>17</sup> I can count all my bones.  
They stare and gloat over me;
- <sup>18</sup> they divide my clothes among themselves,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- <sup>19</sup> But you, O Lord, do not be far away!  
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
- <sup>20</sup> Deliver my soul from the sword,  
my life from the power of the dog!
- <sup>21</sup> Save me from the mouth of the lion!  
From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
- <sup>22</sup> I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
- <sup>23</sup> You who fear the Lord, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

- <sup>24</sup> For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.
- <sup>25</sup> From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
- <sup>26</sup> The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the Lord.  
May your hearts live for ever!
- <sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord;  
and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.
- <sup>28</sup> For dominion belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations.
- <sup>29</sup> To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,  
and I shall live for him.
- <sup>30</sup> Posterity will serve him;  
future generations will be told about the Lord,
- <sup>31</sup> and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
saying that he has done it.

### **Psalm 88**

- <sup>1</sup> O Lord, God of my salvation,  
when, at night, I cry out in your presence,
- <sup>2</sup> let my prayer come before you;  
incline your ear to my cry.
- <sup>3</sup> For my soul is full of troubles,  
and my life draws near to Sheol.
- <sup>4</sup> I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;  
I am like those who have no help,
- <sup>5</sup> like those forsaken among the dead,  
like the slain that lie in the grave,  
like those whom you remember no more,  
for they are cut off from your hand.
- <sup>6</sup> You have put me in the depths of the Pit,  
in the regions dark and deep.
- <sup>7</sup> Your wrath lies heavy upon me,  
and you overwhelm me with all your waves.
- <sup>8</sup> You have caused my companions to shun me;  
you have made me a thing of horror to them.  
I am shut in so that I cannot escape;
- <sup>9</sup> my eye grows dim through sorrow.  
Every day I call on you, O Lord;  
I spread out my hands to you.
- <sup>10</sup> Do you work wonders for the dead?  
Do the shades rise up to praise you?
- <sup>11</sup> Is your steadfast love declared in the grave,  
or your faithfulness in Abaddon?
- <sup>12</sup> Are your wonders known in the darkness,  
or your saving help in the land of forgetfulness?
- <sup>13</sup> But I, O Lord, cry out to you;

- in the morning my prayer comes before you.
- 14** O Lord, why do you cast me off?  
Why do you hide your face from me?
- 15** Wretched and close to death from my youth up,  
I suffer your terrors; I am desperate.
- 16** Your wrath has swept over me;  
your dread assaults destroy me.
- 17** They surround me like a flood all day long;  
from all sides they close in on me.
- 18** You have caused friend and neighbour to shun me;  
my companions are in darkness.

### **Psalm 103**

- 1** Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and all that is within me,  
bless his holy name.
- 2** Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
and do not forget all his benefits—
- 3** who forgives all your iniquity,  
who heals all your diseases,
- 4** who redeems your life from the Pit,  
who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
- 5** who satisfies you with good as long as you live  
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- 6** The Lord works vindication  
and justice for all who are oppressed.
- 7** He made known his ways to Moses,  
his acts to the people of Israel.
- 8** The Lord is merciful and gracious,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- 9** He will not always accuse,  
nor will he keep his anger for ever.
- 10** He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
nor repay us according to our iniquities.
- 11** For as the heavens are high above the earth,  
so great is his steadfast love towards those who fear him;
- 12** as far as the east is from the west,  
so far he removes our transgressions from us.
- 13** As a father has compassion for his children,  
so the Lord has compassion for those who fear him.
- 14** For he knows how we were made;  
he remembers that we are dust.
- 15** As for mortals, their days are like grass;  
they flourish like a flower of the field;
- 16** for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.
- 17** But the steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting  
on those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children's children,
- 18** to those who keep his covenant  
and remember to do his commandments.
- 19** The Lord has established his throne in the heavens,  
and his kingdom rules over all.

<sup>20</sup> Bless the Lord, O you his angels,  
you mighty ones who do his bidding,  
obedient to his spoken word.

<sup>21</sup> Bless the Lord, all his hosts,  
his ministers that do his will.

<sup>22</sup> Bless the Lord, all his works,  
in all places of his dominion.

Bless the Lord, O my soul.

### **Psalm 46**

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup> The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the Lord;  
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup> 'Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth.'

<sup>11</sup> The Lord of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.