

Two weeks ago I chose this Psalm as the scripture for today. Now, I'm wondering if God didn't select His Word for today. Read Psalm 20.

“The Lord answer you in the day of trouble”

I was thinking of the recent flooding in near Baton Rouge, Louisiana: **Epic; nearly biblical** - a 1-in-1,000-year flood - 30 inches of rain in 15 hours! 30,000 people have had to be rescued, most likely losing home and belongings. But they were rescued.

“The Lord answer you in the day of trouble”

I was thinking about this week's earthquake in Italy – hundreds of lives lost – hundreds more hospitalized – 3 small towns leveled. One woman screamed, after hearing her two grandsons were dead, “God, you have taken them all away.”

“The Lord answer you in the day of trouble”

Then, last Friday, horrible, devastating news about the death of our senior pastor Larry DeLong.

“The Lord answer you in the day of trouble”

Yes, we want answers, and they may not be there!

I don't want to be reminded that there may be a day of trouble. What I want is some good news. I want to know God's peace; I want to know God's

grace; I want to know God's unbounding love; I want to know healing for all of us.

Maybe not realistic. We've all had our day of trouble, and then some. Is there any good news? Near the end of the Psalm we read, "but we shall rise and stand upright." Is that our future – to know God's love and grace enough that we will rise and stand up straight; we will feel God's care and a sense of pride...self-respect for our church family.

Two different worlds confront each other in this psalm. The world we live in has a bottom-line mentality – it seeks quantifiable results, verifiable outcomes, proof of success or failure. In our world we do all that we can possibly do, but our experiences, our days of trouble, show us how terrifying and transient this world is.

Yet, we live by faith, not by sight. We live **not** by outward appearances, but by new ways of interpreting and understanding God's world. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, writing from prison before he was executed by the Nazi regime in WWII, wrote that 'faith is suffering in this world like Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane...' When we suffer as Christ suffered, he writes, "we throw ourselves into the arms of God." Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are throwing ourselves into the arms of God, for we are suffering individually and collectively.

There is risk involved in our faith.**Faith is believing in things we don't see...But, but...**

What we see and believe are the obvious signs of strength in our faith, things we are proud of and boast about; A God that sends his people out to help people suffering; A God who is rock-like, immovable in strength; A God who is very-present and attending to our stability; A God who listens for our cries; A God who cares enough to send us Jesus Christ, his one and only Son, to die on the Cross so we might be saved. A God who showers us in abundance.

Maybe not perfect, but a pretty strong God nonetheless!**Christians are proud people!**

The other world is mysterious - things that happen to us are not quantifiable - proofs are hard to come by. It is a world where God proves to be a reality; this is how the community sees itself and remembers the saving deeds of God. In this mysterious world, in the face of days of trouble God continually enabled his people to rise, to stand upright – to know his endless, merciful love.

God gives the flood victims in Louisiana, the earthquake survivors in Italy, and you and me at this very moment, God gives us the strength of faith

which holds us in his love, holds us in community. God has done this throughout history, **to help his people rise above the day of trouble.**

Some scholars believe that Psalm 20 was most likely used as a liturgy in a worship service before a king and when his warriors went off to war.

“Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God.”

Pride is a sense of one’s own proper dignity or value; self-respect. Pride is the satisfaction or pleasure we take in an achievement or possession or an association, **i.e. our relationship with God.**

However, there is the flip side to pride; we call it arrogance or haughtiness, where our conduct looks down on others. If there is too much pride conceit creeps in, egos get inflated, behaviors lack respect for others.

We may be proud Christians but we don’t have all the answers.

This psalm seems militaristic with words like, **victory, chariots and horses.** However, the psalm is a prayer for God’s help and saving acts. The Psalm is about a worshipping community that doesn’t lose their faith. They pray for their ruler; that God would look with favor upon his offerings and sacrifices, just as we pray for Larry, Valerie, Seth and Sadie, that God, would “answer in the day of trouble.”

We, the community, become the vital link with God and with those who suffer. We, the community, desire everyone's bond with God to be secure; to be strong; so that they can rely on their faith to provide direction and meaning in their lives. The worshipping community has **trust (takes pride)** in the name of the Lord our God; they understand it isn't their strength but through calling on the name of the Lord they depend upon God. Here we find answers.

There's a new attitude in the second part of the psalm; a new certitude about believing in God's ability to save and protect. "Now I know, that the Lord saves his anointed!" This expression of confidence leads the psalmist to exclaim, "Our trust (our pride) is in the name of the Lord our God." We rely on the power of God in these times; there is no other name. Faithful people confess the purposes of God are powerful.

A technological society, such as ours, is more inclined to look for quantifiable results, but we, the faith community know better. It's not "chariots or horses" that we take pride in, but it is in the name of the Lord our God; our association with God, our reliance upon God, our walking by faith, not by sight – that is how we find answers.

Karl Barth, the great Swiss theologian, said that in prayer, the proper position before God is one of need, and the proper speech before God is an

asking from God for that which we ourselves cannot do. In humility we pray for God to do that which we cannot do for ourselves, like Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Lord, remove this cup from me; yet, not my will but yours be done” (Luke 22:42 b,c).

We conclude that we can only depend on God for our lives; we leave the results to the will of God, “...not my will but yours be done.” We don’t lie down and do nothing, but we make our faith paramount. Faith is the primary thing in our lives; this relationship you and I have with God. And in that relationship we can trust God to provide us with answers.

And when God answers our prayers, as this psalm most assuredly states, then the community responds gratefully. This is Old Testament theology; where we meet the mystery of God’s presence in public worship with God’s provision of salvation to God’s people; **an assurance we don’t get anywhere else**. It is not so foolish pride to have confidence in your faith; in your relationship with God. **Amen.**