



**Lenten Reflection for Tuesday, March 22st**

Ann Mellow

You can listen to the reading and reflection by clicking [here](#).

**Psalm 25**

*To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul;  
my God, I put my trust in you;\*  
let me not be humiliated;  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.  
Let none who look to you be put to shame,\*  
let the treacherous be disappointed in their schemes.  
Show me your ways, O Lord,\*  
and teach me your paths.  
Lead me in your truth and teach me,\*  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
in you have I trusted all the day long.  
Remember, O Lord, your compassion and love,\*  
for they are from everlasting.  
Remember not the sins of my youth  
or my transgressions,\*  
remember me according to your love,  
and for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.  
Gracious and upright is the Lord;\*  
therefore he teaches sinners in his way.  
He guides the humble in doing right\*  
and teaches his way to the lowly.*

*All the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness\*  
to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.  
For your name's sake, O Lord,\*  
forgive my sin, for it is great.  
Who are they who fear the Lord?\*  
he will teach them in the way that they should choose.  
They shall dwell in prosperity,\*  
and their offspring shall inherit the land.  
My eyes are ever looking to the Lord,\*  
for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.  
Turn to me and have pity on me,\*  
for I am left alone and in misery.  
The sorrows of my heart have increased;\*  
bring me out of my troubles.  
Protect my life and deliver me;\*  
let me not be put to shame, for I have trusted in you.  
Deliver Israel, O God,\*  
out of all his troubles.*

Now that I am in the sixth decade of my life, I know I have forgotten many of “the sins of my youth” mentioned in this psalm. But others can still haunt me, visiting me from time-to-time like unexpected ghosts. At those moments I can fall into a dark place of remembered shame and self-loathing. Was that really me?

Memories of our less-than-best-selves can be this way. As the old saying goes, we are sometimes our harshest judge. We can get spiritually and emotionally stuck. As the psalmist writes here, “I am left alone and in misery.”

I love this psalm for two reasons.

First, because it just comes right out and admits that we all “miss the mark” on a regular basis, as Mother Sarah would say. “Forgive my sin for it is great.” There. It’s been said. Out loud. I am not perfect. A lot. I try. I fail. Sometimes spectacularly.

And then it offers a way forward: we can have faith that God loves us (even when we don’t love ourselves), we can ask for God’s love and compassion, and we can renew our relationship with God. For the singer sings, “Remember me according to your love” for “all the paths of the Lord are love and faithfulness to those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.”

My mom once explained to me as a child that hell is not a place filled with fire and flames and there is no red devil. Rather, hell is separation from God; that feeling of being “alone and in misery.” But because God always hears us and knows our true heart, he is ever with us and we are never really alone. God is always happy when we turn our face to him, regardless of what we have done. God is always and everywhere there to release us from loneliness and misery into connection and light.

Lent is a time when we rightfully take stock of our transgressions and sins, and the many ways we “miss the mark.” And it is also a time when we anticipate a new life, a resurrection. It is a time once again, like our psalmist, to turn our face towards God, and not away.



*Ann Mellow has worshiped at Holy Apostles for five years. You can often find her recruiting folks for coffee hour! She and her husband, Peter, live in Ditmas Park.*