



# 2024 Lent Reflections

## Week 5

*"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them from all their troubles" - Psalm 34:17*

Who are the righteous?

Righteous is a word that gets a bad rap, self-righteous immediately springs to mind, as well as pharisaical and smug and sanctimonious. But righteous, like many words, has kind of lost its real meaning over time. It actually means morally upright, noble and virtuous.

It's interesting that this psalm says 'when the righteous cry for help' not 'when the perfect cry for help.' I guess it's because 'perfect' people don't ask for help because they don't think they need any.

So being righteous requires a healthy self awareness and knowledge that we are poor and in great need of God. It requires the humility to often cry out and ask God for help and then we find that the troubles that He rescues us from are our own pride and self-reliance, our own hard heartedness and haughtiness, our own desire to control and dominate. In other words our own rejection of Him and idolising of ourselves which is the path to ruin and death.

The next part of the Psalm says 'The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.' God says numerous times throughout scripture that He is close to all those who suffer. I think of the poor, the weak, the vulnerable, children, widows, orphans, all those who have been wronged and who suffer through no fault of their own and I keep thinking of the burning injustice of it and how in these situations we often cry out 'Help me, Lord' and 'How long, O Lord?'

This Psalm, 34:17 is echoed by the beatitude 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice for they will be satisfied' (Matthew 5:6). In some translations 'justice' is replaced with 'righteousness.'

The righteous then, those who strive to live a morally upright life and who hold themselves to a high standard of honour and nobility in thought, word and deed out of love for God, cry out to Him in times of grief, desolation, hopelessness and devastation and He hears them. He already knows of course, He sees the battles and He sees our hearts and He knows, intimately and profoundly, the deep struggle of humanity and truly He hears the cries of those beloved righteous ones. He bends low and is right there and He answers.

And how does He answer? By smiting our enemies and destroying those who have dared to hurt us and scattering the ones who have chosen to do evil things of course! No, He doesn't do that, well maybe sometimes but mostly He sends us His loving consolation, an interior knowledge that despite the pain and sorrow now, through faithfulness and perseverance all will be set right in the end. He reminds us again and again through His Word and through the words and kind deeds of friends and helpers He sends along the way that we are not alone, that He sees and He knows and that all the injustices that we want to set straight, all the wrongs we want to right and all the battles that we want to fight have already been fought and won.

I hear Him saying 'So trust, little one, let me take that burden from your shoulders, let me pick you up and carry you when you are overwhelmed with the heaviness and sinfulness of this world. Turn your face to me and let me love you as I have from the beginning and will forever!'

~ Sara Moore

*Sara is from southern NSW with her husband, Damian and their five children. Apart from her faith and family, Sara's great loves are literature, history, art and making her home a beautiful and restful place for her family and friends.*



*Joshua, Commanding the Sun to Stand Still Upon Gibeon - John Martin*