

## **Meditation on Psalm 19**

A Reflection by Rick Glassco

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One of the striking features of the Holy Bible is how often words written thousands of years ago jump off the page as we read them or hear them, as they apply uncannily to our current lives.

I was struck by the words of the portion of Psalm 19 that was read during our virtual Palm Sunday service. This psalm is part of the Palm Sunday liturgy every year, but listen as its opening words speak to our lives this very day: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am in trouble; my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat and my belly. For my life is wasted with grief, and my years with sighing." What an apt description of someone consumed by a COVID-19 fever or struggling for breath! The words apply as well to our national sorrow, mourning for the thousands of sick and dying, and for the millions of unemployed Americans and citizens of every country who are facing staggering economic hardships. I thank God that none of my family have contracted the virus as far as I know, but I also know that almost every victim had a family, who are grieving now, and I feel a spiritual bond with them.

I was struck even more forcefully by the next verse, which describes the situation in which we all are finding ourselves: "I have become a reproach to all my enemies and even to my neighbors, a dismay to those of my acquaintance; when they see me in the street they avoid me." On the occasions when Sarah and I stroll around our neighborhood to escape the confines of our house and to enjoy the spring weather, we are indeed avoided by our neighbors and acquaintances, and we avoid them. Formerly, it was considered rude to cross a street to avoid meeting an acquaintance; now it is considered rude *not* to! Our separation from other people pains us all greatly, forcing us to realize afresh how much we really are part of many interconnected communities.

It wasn't part of the psalm, but here's a phrase from Isaiah, also in last Sunday's Palm Sunday liturgy, that was eerily relevant: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." We are learning in a drastic way what it feels like for everyone to turn to his or her own way, with minimal physical contact. It's lonely, unsettling, and uncomfortable. It's fortunate for us that we are able to maintain contact via telephone and Internet--millions of sufferers around the world do not have that capability, nor did the writers of the psalms or the prophets!

However, one resource is accessible to all of us, and that is God. As is often the case, the psalmist ends with confidence in God: "But as for me, I have trusted in you, O Lord. I have said, 'You are my God. My times are in your hand.'" May we all trust in God, acknowledging that our times are in God's hands.