

There are 150 Psalms (poetic hymns) in the book we call the Psalms. Psalm 30 is a clear example of a thanksgiving song, which tells the story of going into the trouble and coming out of the trouble. The speaker has been delivered from a trouble that is not concretely described or defined. It's an experience of life-reorientation, a new lease on life, following a time of lament and loss, a grace-filled story of deliverance to recite over and over and share with the community.

**SHEOL:** The world Sheol is unique to the Hebrew Bible, but the concept of the grave or underworld is well known in the ancient Near East (Egyptian & Mesopotamian mythology). Like the Mesopotamians, the Israelites thought of the underworld as a very inhospitable place from which no one returns, there is no light there, and the inhabitants each eat clay or mud and drink unclean water. In the Bible death is its land personified as greedy and never satisfied, seeking to shepherd all human beings. Death and the afterlife were a shadowy image of the former living self, trapped in a land of no return.

**THE PIT:** death was associated with burial and the decomposition of the body in an earthen grave, or "pit" – from which there was no return, only a moving on to the inhospitable, inescapable hopeless end of existence of the underworld (Sheol).

**SACKCLOTH:** (Hebrew שַׂק *saq*) is a coarsely woven fabric, usually made of goat's hair. It was worn as a token of mourning by the Israelites. It was also a sign of submission (1 Kings 20:31-32), or of grief and self-humiliation (2 Kings 19:1), and was occasionally worn by the Prophets. It is often associated with ashes.

Mark is one of the four gospels, most likely the first written down, which tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Written by a follower of Jesus it's composed more as a catechism, an invitation to faith, than as an "objective" historical account. It repeatedly lifts up the good news (gospel) that the forces of death that seek to destroy human life are overcome by the resurrection life of Jesus through God – a life we too can know through faith.

August 18, 2019

## Psalm 30

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- <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 favor 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 favor, 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 forever.

## Mark 5:21-43

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

- <sup>21</sup> When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and

he was by the sea.<sup>22</sup> Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet<sup>23</sup> and begged him repeatedly, “My little DAUGHTER is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.”<sup>24</sup> So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed [Jesus] and pressed in on him.<sup>25</sup> Now there was a woman who had been SUFFERING FROM HEMORRHAGES for twelve years.<sup>26</sup> She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse.<sup>27</sup> She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and *touched his cloak*,<sup>28</sup> for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.”<sup>29</sup> Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.<sup>30</sup> Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?”<sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘*Who touched me?*’”<sup>32</sup> He looked all around to see who had done it.<sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.<sup>34</sup> He said to her, “DAUGHTER, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

<sup>35</sup> While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your DAUGHTER is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?”<sup>36</sup> But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”<sup>37</sup> He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.<sup>38</sup> When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.<sup>39</sup> When [Jesus] had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”<sup>40</sup> And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.<sup>41</sup> He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!”<sup>42</sup> And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.<sup>43</sup> He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

**DAUGHTER:** Notice how this term is used 3 times. The 2<sup>nd</sup> of which is a radical identification of a “sinful” woman (because of her diseased state) as the daughter of Jesus – a full member of the family of God.

**SUFFERING FROM HEMORRHAGES:** The Israelites – and most ancient people – believed that the “life force” (that which indicated life or held it) was in the blood. We tend to think of it as the soul (from the Greeks), when we say that someone’s soul has left the body indicating death. Anything associated with blood for the Israelites was thus associated with life and death. Bleeding – uncontrolled – in any way, even regular menstruation, was considered ab-normal, touching the sacred area of life and death. Bleeding was in a way a slow death...the losing of the life force. So this bleeding woman, menstruating for 12+ years was not only sick and suffering, but also deemed unclean or “unrighteous” (not how God desires, or “sinful”). She’s dying physically, spiritually and socially.

***touched his cloak:*** The Israelites believed that the notion of “unclean-ness” was transmitted also by touch. You were forbidden to touch unclean things (like dead bodies, pork, lepers, menstruating women). In doing so you would be contaminated, becoming unclean. Hence unclean (or sick) people (such as menstruating women) were required to stay, or live, outside the camp (or society) until they were made well.

#### QUESTIONS FOR THE PRACTICE OF EXAMEN & CONTEMPLATION

- **What word, phrase or image grabs your attention?**
- **How do these texts intersect or touch your life?**
- **These two texts talk of God giving a new lease on life. How has God given you such resurrection life? How do you need God’s love to bring life where there is death today?**