

Hello everyone! And welcome to our Wednesday Word devotion for today, August 26, 2020. Thank you so much for tuning in, and taking this time out of your day to focus on God and focus on your faith.

The thing that I keep reminding myself of these days is that God is truly with us, in all things and through all things. Even when stuff seems really overwhelming or heartbreaking or impossible, God is with us. God is steadfast in love and faithful to God's promises. So today I want to lean into that reminder - I need the words of a good trust psalm to help in remembering God's faithfulness and love through and with and among all things.

So today we're going to read Psalm 31, a powerful psalm written by King David. These words help us to remember that even in the midst of suffering that feels like way too much to carry, God is steadfast in God's love. God hears our cries and delivers us. God is our refuge, our fortress, our strength, and our hope.

In you, O Lord, I seek refuge;
do not let me ever be put to shame;
in your righteousness deliver me.

2 Incline your ear to me;
rescue me speedily.

Be a rock of refuge for me,
a strong fortress to save me.

3 You are indeed my rock and my fortress;
for your name's sake lead me and guide me,

4 take me out of the net that is hidden for me,
for you are my refuge.

5 Into your hand I commit my spirit;
you have redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God.

6 You hate[a] those who pay regard to worthless idols,
but I trust in the Lord.

7 I will exult and rejoice in your steadfast love,
because you have seen my affliction;
you have taken heed of my adversities,

8 and have not delivered me into the hand of the enemy;
you have set my feet in a broad place.

9 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress;
my eye wastes away from grief,
my soul and body also.

10 For my life is spent with sorrow,
and my years with sighing;

my strength fails because of my misery,
and my bones waste away.

11 I am the scorn of all my adversaries,
a horror to my neighbors,
an object of dread to my acquaintances;
those who see me in the street flee from me.
12 I have passed out of mind like one who is dead;
I have become like a broken vessel.
13 For I hear the whispering of many—
terror all around!—
as they scheme together against me,
as they plot to take my life.

14 But I trust in you, O Lord;
I say, "You are my God."
15 My times are in your hand;
deliver me from the hand of my enemies and persecutors.
16 Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love.
17 Do not let me be put to shame, O Lord,
for I call on you;
let the wicked be put to shame;
let them go dumbfounded to Sheol.
18 Let the lying lips be stilled
that speak insolently against the righteous
with pride and contempt.

19 O how abundant is your goodness
that you have laid up for those who fear you,
and accomplished for those who take refuge in you,
in the sight of everyone!
20 In the shelter of your presence you hide them
from human plots;
you hold them safe under your shelter
from contentious tongues.

21 Blessed be the Lord,
for he has wondrously shown his steadfast love to me
when I was beset as a city under siege.
22 I had said in my alarm,
"I am driven far from your sight."
But you heard my supplications

when I cried out to you for help.

23 Love the Lord, all you his saints.

The Lord preserves the faithful,
but abundantly repays the one who acts haughtily.

24 Be strong, and let your heart take courage,
all you who wait for the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

And now please join me in a word of prayer:

Lord God, our rock, our fortress, our sure Creator of life and love, we praise you for your steadfast love. When everything seems difficult, unbearable, heartbreaking or just simply too much, we know we can always rely on you, and for that we give you such thanks. Thank you for our ability to lift up our prayers, and cast our burdens and sorrows on you - we know that you hear us and help us and make these burdens lighter. Thank you for the gift of Jesus Christ, who knew what it is to be human, whose life gives us hope for what is yet to come.

God, we pray for all teachers and school staff and administrators today, O Lord - for the love they have for our children, the desire they have to nurture and teach, and help them, we give you thanks. We pray for their safety, their health, for the well-being in every sense for all students, teachers, staff, everyone involved in the academic world. We lift the burdens of these difficult choices and daily health risks to you, and pray for an easing of these struggles.

We pray for all who are suffering from illness. We lift to you all caregivers, all people who love and tend to people who are sick. Watching someone we love fight an illness or disease is heartbreaking on so many levels O God, and we need the promises of new life and care from you to help us bear that burden. Help us to find some sense of peace and comfort and care amidst the pains and struggles. And for all who are actively battling illnesses, God we pray that you will ease their suffering. May the holy power of your promises and the steadfastness of your love bring healing in abundance.

We pray for all people who are suffering due to the systemic racism and violence against black and brown folks in our country. We pray for the healing of Jacob Blake, we pray that all your created people, O God, will be able to live without fear of death by the hands of another person. For all the ways our neighbors of color are hurting, and have been systemically excluded, we are truly sorry and humbly repent. May we lean on the power of your Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to come alongside us as we love and serve our neighbors in tangible ways, stronger than before.

We pray for all the ways we and our neighbors are negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, O God. For the job losses, increased workloads, the inability to see loved ones, for the sacrifices we have to make to keep our neighbors alive, we lift these challenges to you, O Lord. We lift to you all healthcare workers, researchers, everyone working to bring this pandemic to an end and restore health to our communities. May they be strengthened for the

work ahead, and find rest and support both in you and here on earth. May all people have enough food to eat, water to drink, shelter to keep warm and safe, and loving relationships to tend their hearts, minds, and spirits.

Holy God, we lift these and all the prayers on our hearts and minds to you. We give you thanks for hearing us, for your active work in our world, and in the promises of new life that bring us hope anew every single day. In your Son Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Thanks so much again for tuning in! Go in peace, dear friends. Amen.