

Today's devotion was written by Rev. Becki Verbridge, Interim Pastor at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Elyria.

Take a Bible and open to the very center. Unless your Bible has extensive notes and maps in the back, you'll find yourself somewhere in the Book of Psalms. I've always found this a helpful metaphor. At the heart of the Bible is a book that expresses the heart of God's people as they sing and pray during various seasons of life.

The psalms - a collection of 150 lyrical poems written by multiple authors - comprised the ancient hymnal of God's people. The poetry was often set to music – but not always. Different types of psalms were written to communicate different feels and thoughts regarding a psalmist's situation. Sometimes the author is crying out to God in a difficult circumstance (lament). Sometimes the author is simply offering adoration (praise). Sometimes the author is expressing gratitude for deliverance or God's provision (thanksgiving). There are other psalms to: pilgrim psalms (songs of ascent) that were used on pilgrimages to Jerusalem during the three annual festivals, wisdom psalms, royal psalms (referring to Israel's king or messiah), victory psalms, law psalms, and so on.

Throughout its many pages, the psalms point to the greatness of God, affirm God's faithfulness to us in times of trouble, and remind us of the absolute centrality of God's words. As the psalms present a clear picture of God's love and guidance, the response of praise and worship are always evident. This amazing book offers us glimpse after glimpse of hearts devoted to God, humble hearts coming before God in repentance, and lives changed through encounters with God.

Now, if you take the Book of Psalms and open it to its very center, you'll find today's reading, Psalm 75:

We give thanks to you, O God; we give thanks; your name is near. People tell of your wondrous deeds. At the set time that I appoint I will judge with equity. When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady. Selah I say to the boastful, "Do not boast," and to the wicked, "Do not lift up your horn; do not lift up your horn on high, or speak with insolent neck." For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up; but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed; he will pour a draught from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs. But I will rejoice forever; I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. All the horns of the wicked I will cut off, but the horns of the righteous shall be exalted. (Psalms 75:1-10 NRSV)

As I spend time with this psalm, the particular verse that speaks to me is: *"When the earth totters, with all its inhabitants, it is I who keep its pillars steady" (Psalm 75:3)*. The New International Version translation of this verse is: *"When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm."*

You see, there has been a lot of "tottering" and "quaking" in my personal life these past week's. My husband's recently diagnosed chronic lymphocytic leukemia seems to have ratcheted up a few notches. He is in the midst of testing to determine whether the "chronic" has become "acute" and/or if treatment is now needed. And, as if that weren't enough, the large law firm my daughter has worked at for the past seven years permanently laid off half of their support staff last week (with less than one day's notice), part of the economic ripple effect of the pandemic. So, "tottering" and "quaking" fit my life right now.

However, what speaks to me even more deeply in this verse is the reminder that: *"it is I who keep its pillars steady."* Although I may be off balance right now, God is present, undergirding me even as I shake a bit. What a good word to refocus perspective in the midst of difficult times: *"When the earth goes topsy-turvy and nobody knows which end is up, I nail it all down, I put everything in place again" (Psalm 75:3, The Message)*.

I am not the only one going through a difficult time right now, many of you are too. You may be experiencing a health challenge, employment challenge, financial challenge, relationship challenge, etc. Then there are the societal challenges we are all experiencing. You may feel the ground beneath your feet shifting, making it hard to find your footing.

The good word from today's psalm is that even in the midst of unsettling, unnerving, destabilizing circumstances, God's support remains constant. God will continue to hold us up. Thanks be to the One who will put everything in place again!

Pastor Becki

<https://youtu.be/5UvBH9IPU1I> "How Firm a Foundation" performed by Norton Hall Band