

Every journey has its highs and lows. Yesterday's psalmist was on a high, having stood within the gates of Jerusalem.

The situation reflected in today's psalm is very different. Along with his fellow pilgrims, or more likely on behalf of them, the psalmist cries out, "We have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud." Insult appears to have been added to injury. They have arrived at a very low point indeed.

It is likely this psalm originated in exile, in a situation akin to that lamented in Ps 137.1-3, in which the reason the Jews are being mocked is because they are *not* able to go to Jerusalem to worship their God. Not only are they captives but Jerusalem has been sacked and the temple destroyed. In the eyes of the Babylonians their God is powerless to help them, their trust in him is folly. Or perhaps the context is similar to the one Nehemiah found himself in when he returned from exile to set about rebuilding Jerusalem's walls (see Neh 2.19; 4.2-3). That it was incorporated into the Psalms of Ascent is a reminder that there will always be those who pour contempt on Christians, scorning their faith and worship. Typically, as the psalmist concludes, they are the proud and those who are at ease; that is, those who either arrogantly deny God's existence or do not recognise their dependence upon him. When they scorn those who worship and put their faith in God, they display their contempt for God himself.

But note how the psalmist responds. In contrast to their arrogance, he is humble. Instead of retaliating in anger or seeking vengeance, he lifts up his eyes, acknowledging the LORD as king of creation. Yesterday we were reminded that David's throne is in Jerusalem (Ps 122.5); today's psalm reminds us that YHWH's throne is in the heavens.

His approach is that of a servant, or a maidservant, acknowledging their total dependence upon their master. Every good thing comes from his hand. It is not their place, let alone right, to be impatient or demanding. Thus the psalmist affirms he will keep looking, and waiting, "till he has mercy upon us" (v. 2c). Paul calls this "having the mind of Christ" (see Phil 2.5-11).

To ponder

How do you respond to those who mock your faith and worship?

To pray

Heavenly Father, I worship you as my creator, and your son Jesus as my Lord and saviour. Please fill me with your Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, that I may always conduct myself as your obedient servant, and look to your hand alone. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

