



Lent reflection for March 12, 2025

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Psalms 17: 1-14

*Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry;
give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit.
From you let my vindication come;
let your eyes see the right.*

*If you try my heart, if you visit me by night,
if you test me, you will find no wickedness in me;
my mouth does not transgress.
As for what others do, by the word of your lips
I have avoided the ways of the violent.
My steps have held fast to your paths;
my feet have not slipped.
I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me, hear my words.
Wondrously show your steadfast love,
O saviour of those who seek refuge
from their adversaries at your right hand.*

*Guard me as the apple of the eye;
hide me in the shadow of your wings,
from the wicked who despoil me,
my deadly enemies who surround me.
They close their hearts to pity;
with their mouths they speak arrogantly.
They track me down; [\[a\]](#) now they surround me;
they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.
They are like a lion eager to tear,
like a young lion lurking in ambush.
Rise up, O Lord, confront them, overthrow them!
By your sword deliver my life from the wicked,
from mortals—by your hand, O Lord—
from mortals whose portion in life is in this world.*

Today's Reflection is from Rich Garr:

This passage had me thinking of the 1993 classic "A Bronx Tale". In the film Sonny the mob boss explains that he governs like Machiavelli- by fear, not love. "Fear lasts longer than love," he says. And of course he says this- he's a mob boss... so chaos ensues. Despite the respect he seems to have in the neighborhood, folks knew that his so-called respect was built on fear. The

drama makes for a good movie, and even helps explain our own messy world. In our real world- and in the movie- it's a tempting proposition to lead by fear instead of love. To grab power when you can... consolidate it... exploit the weak. I think this often works in the business world. And it might work well for individuals focused on power or profit. It works well if you've made the decision to be a mob boss, for instance (just know that you have a good chance of getting shot in the back of the head!).

There's drama in this Psalm reading, too: the wicked "dwelling solely in this world" are "young lions" waiting to ambush us. Christian tradition teaches that faith, love, and strong communities can counter this. There is real danger in this earthly world, and we all need protections. Though good leaders might seem hard to find, we do know they exist. At the very least, they are certainly present in our own church community.

But this Psalm pleads loyalty and humility to a powerful heavenly Lord. He is no mere human. And He is not a state, a business, or a corporation. The loyalty in this reading is directed at an all mighty being. Scary things are mentioned, but they seem to be no match for this God.

The writer of this Psalm [whom the internet says is likely King David!?] begs almost pathetically for God's support, and pledges unending support. But it's not pathetic, because he is speaking to a power that reaches beyond our world. It's something that can dispel fear. Fear is acknowledged, but it seems reduced to a tool or an obstacle. In my mind, those who wield fear like a weapon are ultimately vulnerable. After some contemplation, this reading seems to depict a definite "good" vs. "evil." It makes me want to be on the side with the true power- the one with a foot in the spiritual realm. There seems to be more sustenance there. From the sound of it, that side with God on it can help us wherever we might be headed.



Rich is a proud Cleveland-born Brooklynite of 20 years. Broadly considered a collage artist, his affinity for layered histories sometimes take the form of quirky walks and memorials. He takes commissions and teaches classes between time divided amongst his Gowanus art studio, small mighty family, and wonderful sidewalk wanderings.