



## Lent reflection for April 12, 2025

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### Psalm 140: 1-13

*Deliver me, O Lord, from evildoers;  
protect me from those who are violent,  
who plan evil things in their minds  
and stir up wars continually.  
They make their tongue sharp as a snake's,  
and under their lips is the venom of vipers. Selah*

*Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked;  
protect me from the violent  
who have planned my downfall.  
The arrogant have hidden a trap for me,  
and with cords they have spread a net;  
along the road they have set snares for me. Selah  
I say to the Lord, 'You are my God;  
give ear, O Lord, to the voice of my supplications.'  
O Lord, my Lord, my strong deliverer,  
you have covered my head in the day of battle.  
Do not grant, O Lord, the desires of the wicked;  
do not further their evil plot. Selah*

*Those who surround me lift up their heads;  
let the mischief of their lips overwhelm them!  
Let burning coals fall on them!  
Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise!  
Do not let the slanderer be established in the land;  
let evil speedily hunt down the violent!*

*I know that the Lord maintains the cause of the needy,  
and executes justice for the poor.  
Surely the righteous shall give thanks to your name;  
the upright shall live in your presence.*

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### Today's reflection is from Thomas Cannell:

I'm a person who doesn't have a strong sense of what people mean when they talk about God. So when I read the Psalms, I am looking to learn about the God who the Psalmist is talking to. In the first part of Psalm 140, the author is asking God for protection from violence. "Guard me, O Lord, from the hands of the wicked; protect me from the violent." So this is a God who you can call upon to intervene and protect you.

If you have met that God, I would like to hear about it from you. But I have not met that God in my life.

Now, in the second part of Psalm 140, the author turns from asking for protection from violence to asking that God hunts down and mutilates the wicked ones. "Let burning coals fall on them!", they write, "Let them be flung into pits, no more to rise!" So now we are looking eye to eye with something that is very human, which is the rage that many of us, maybe all of us, feel when we are frightened and have been treated badly, or so it seems.

These days a lot of parents in this part of the world encourage their children to express their feelings, no matter what the feelings are. I am one of those parents. But as kids get older, it's better if they come to understand that you shouldn't actually tell everyone about your violent feelings, because that is called a threat, and a threat can get you into big trouble. Let's say the author of this psalm was in middle school, or, later on, working in an office, and they wrote this little note about how their enemies should be burned with coals, and so forth and somehow the teacher or the managers finds it. That psalmist is going to be in some kind of trouble.

So then, who do we talk to about this anger that comes up in us? I'm reminded of a quote that was important to Mister Rogers, who is a person who is important to me, although my children no longer want to watch the show. One of his mentors told him, "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone."

So now I see the God in this Psalm that I do know, which is the God you can talk to, the God who protects you from being alone, and who leads you to hold on to people you can trust. God, during Lent may I speak to you about what is true in my heart, no matter what it is, and may I look and see the people who can hear it. Amen.



Thomas Cannell lives with his wife and three kids in Prospect Park South. He is a nurse with a specialty in diabetes management.