

I can't speak for you, but this has been a roller coaster of a week.

Emotions have been running high. Social media posts move between anger and despair. And, believe it or not, it's not all been about the Supreme Court!

Life around Redeemer this week made me feel exhausted and overwhelmed. A stranger in a strange land. A pilgrim unable to see the road ahead.

Then I read Psalm 124.

I read the psalm and remembered that I wasn't alone.

I re-read the psalm and realized that God is, was, and will always be on my side because I am God's beloved child.

I read the psalm again and gave thanks.

I gave thanks because, God help us, the week could have been worse. It wasn't, because God helped us.

That's what Christians do. We give thanks and take the next step, even if you aren't sure where you are going. We take the next step patiently, cautiously, but never, never alone. We take the next step even when we are in pain, even when we're not sure we'll ever walk again. The next step comes because God is with us in the hands and arms and prayers of the community.

The psalmist reminds us that there were some pretty awful things happening to God's people. It is likely that this liturgical song reminds the faithful of the Babylonian exile. Having the best of the Jewish people carted off as slaves to a foreign land could have destroyed them. But, God was on their side. They were not obliterated. They were not assimilated. Eventually, they were restored to the land of their ancestors.

No one is going to say things were good. However, it wasn't the disaster it could have been. They had food to eat. They had each other. They were able to share the stories of their faith and the practice of it. Taken from Jerusalem, they became Jerusalem. They believed they survived because the Lord was present with them, just as he'd been in the Temple.

As a Christian, we might feel like we are in Babylon. It's not the first time. An American theologian wrote about this in 1973. William Stringfellow set forth a list of demonic tactics used by the powers and principalities he saw operating in this country. They were:

- The denial of truth
- Doublespeak and overtalk
- Secrecy and boasts of expertise
- Surveillance and harassment
- Exaggeration and deception
- Cursing and conjuring
- Usurpation and absorption
- Diversion and demoralization

So, what was happening in this country in 1973 to make Mr. Stringfellow come forth with his prophetic words?

- Richard Nixon began his second term in office.
- The Watergate burglaries occur.
- The Nixon Tapes reveal the famous 18 ½ minute gap.
- Vice President Agnew resigns
- Watergate hearings begin

Twenty-five years ago, there was great angst and gnashing of teeth. I remember. It was all on television for all to see. My Captain Kangaroo world was pushed aside for the likes of John Dean and John Mitchell. I learned a new definition for the word plumber. Thanks to prophets like attorney William Stringfellow, the tenacity of journalists Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward, and other brave souls willing to tell the truth to power, the country stood.

If it had not been that the Lord was on our side, let the faithful now say...

Once again, we seem to be in the snare of the fowler. Once again, we are asked to believe that the Lord who is present whether one believes it or not, will break the snare. The demonic cannot stand when God's presence manifests itself in the bravery of embattled women and the tenacity of those who choose to speak truth to power.

To seek and serve Christ in all persons, Christians pray that God opens our eyes and shows us what we do not easily find.

To uphold the dignity of every person, Christians repent of the times we have not.

We must remember that we are the Body of Christ. We are the ones called to heal as our Savior did. We are given the spiritual gifts needed in the chaos of today. And, we have the obligation to do so.

In a society that feels like death, William Stringfellow urges us to live humanly. In the midst of chaos, he urges us to celebrate the Word of God.

“In the midst of babel: confront the noise and verbiage and falsehood of death with the truth and potency and efficacy of the word of God.”

“Know the Word, teach the Word, nurture the Word, preach the Word, defend the Word, incarnate the Word, do the Word, live the Word.”

Take your faith outside these walls.

Remind those who are angry, or hopeless, or despondent:

Our help is in the Name of the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.

Amen.

Stringfellow, William. *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*. Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers. 1973