

Lectio Divina: Have Mercy on me, God



Image: King David Playing the Harp by Gerard van Honthorst, 1622 [Centraal Museum, Utrecht, Netherlands]

Lectio Divina – Listening to God’s Word with our hearts

“And the word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us”

In Imaginative Contemplation we pray with the Scriptures, allowing Christ in the Scriptures to speak to us through our imagination. In Lectio Divina we pray with the Scriptures by dwelling on God’s word by listening with our heart. In Imaginative Contemplation, Jesus’ words, actions, teaching and relationships with people become familiar to us when we enter into the Scripture passage using our imagination. In Lectio Divina, God’s word becomes familiar to us by listening with our hearts and dwelling on His words. Listening with our hearts is something we do automatically in everyday life when we for example dwell on the beauty of nature or listening to someone we love or recall a poignant memory.

Lectio Divina or divine reading has four parts: reading, repeating, responding and resting.

- Reading:** Begin by reading the Scripture Passage slowly until a word or a phrase resonates with you. Then stop for the moment.
- Repeating:** Dwell on the words you have chosen. Repeat them again and again as though God is saying them to you. Try not to analyse them, just let them speak to you. Savour the words.
- Responding:** Allow God's heart to speak to your heart. He wants to be close to you so ask yourself what this invitation could mean. Speak to God with your heart. Be open to what he is trying to reveal to you. Share with God whatever is coming into your heart and mind.
- Resting:** Rest in the embrace and love of God. It is God's response to us. Your whole being is focussed on God so dwell in the moment. When you feel ready, move on.

As you listen to the following passage, note which parts move you but don't analyse anything. Then when you are ready, **read, repeat, respond and rest** and when you have dwelt on the words that initially resonated with you, continue on reading the passage and repeat the process.

Prayer

We acknowledge we are in the presence of God so let us say:

Direct O Lord and guide and influence all that is happening in my mind and heart during this time of prayer: all my moods and feelings, my memories and imaginings; my hopes and desires; may all be directed and influenced to your greater glory, praise and service and to my growth in your Spirit.
Amen

Let the Spirit enter our hearts and enlighten our minds so that we have the humility and courage to ask God for his compassion and forgiveness.

Introduction to Psalm 50

Psalm 50 is a hymn of repentance by King David, the greatest of Israel's kings when he fell into serious sin as explained in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12. In short, David had Uriah killed in battle after he slept with his wife, Bathsheba which resulted in an illegitimate pregnancy. David then brought Bathsheba into the palace as his wife. In response, God sent the prophet Nathan to challenge David which resulted in David confessing his sins to God, David blames himself for his sin and does not defend his

actions. He shows absolute humility over his sin and appeals to God for his mercy and love, knowing that he can be forgiven.

This is the best-known and most-cited expression of confession and shows us how to approach God in our sorrow. The right spirit when we know we have sinned is one of humility and repentance, without making excuses or blaming others for what we have done. Thus we can be confident that God will forgive those who sincerely seek that mercy (Hebrews 4:15–16).

Psalm 50

1. Have mercy on me, God in your kindness
In you compassion blot out my offence.
O wash me more and more from my guilt
and cleanse me from my sin.
2. A pure heart create for me, O God,
put a steadfast spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence,
nor deprive me of your holy spirit.
3. Give me again the joy of your help;
with a spirit of fervour sustain me,
that I may teach transgressors your ways
and sinners may return to you.

Questions for Reflection

1. What is the Psalm saying to you?
2. What word, sentence or phrase most caught your attention?
3. In verse one of the Psalm, David feels that he knows God well enough to ask for his mercy and blot out his sins. He knows that only God's love will wipe away his sin. Do you have the same sentiment; that God is a loving God, who loves us unconditionally and will wipe away our sin, no matter what we have done or how far we have strayed (cf. The Prodigal Son)? Do you feel better when you have laid down your burdens at the feet of God?
4. In the second verse, David asks God for a pure heart since the sin in his heart had brought him nothing but guilt, grief, and remorse and would like the assurance that God will not cast him away.

Have you ever felt a separation from God? How did it make you feel? Did you actively seek reconciliation?

5. In the third verse, David asks for joy which his sin deprived him of and wants to feel restored in God's love. Have you ever felt a lack of joy because you would like forgiveness? Does the Sacrament of Reconciliation make you feel restored in God's love?
6. In this Psalm, David knows that he can trust in God's goodness. Do you put your trust and dependence on God knowing that you cannot achieve anything without his love and compassion? When God has forgiven you, are you compelled to do the same for others?
7. What do you think God is saying to you in this Psalm? What do you want to say to God?

Prayer for 3rd Sunday in Lent

<https://onlineministries.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/Lent/Daily-prayers-02.html>

My loving Lord,
it's so hard to love the world sometimes
and to love it the way Jesus did seems impossible.
Help me to be inspired by his love and
guided by his example.
Most of all, I want to accept that I can't do it alone,
and that trying is an arrogance of self-centeredness.
I need you, dear God, to give me support in this journey.
Show me how to unlock my heart
so that I am less selfish.
Let me be less fearful of the pain and darkness
that will be transformed by you into Easter joy.

Scripture texts: from the Jerusalem Bible 1966 by Dartington Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd