

Waiting for the Lord

By [Steve Pankey](#)

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The psalm appointed for Sunday, despite my reservations expressed on [Monday](#), is quite a piece of liturgical theology. If you look it up in your handy-dandy study Bible (rather than the BCP), you'll find that it is given both a title and a style heading. My *HarperCollins Study Bible* calls Psalm 130 "Waiting for Divine Redemption" and places it among several other psalms in the style of "A Song of Ascents."

Concerning the style, a note for Psalm 120 reads, "*A Song of Ascents*, the superscription to each psalm in the collection Pss 120-134. Most of the psalms are brief, often reflecting concerns of and images from the family and agricultural life of the common people. The meaning of the superscription is debated. It may refer to an ascending style of poetic form. More likely, it has some reference to the ascent of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem and/or the sanctuary there.

These psalms may have been sung on such pilgrimages." (p918)

How many of us haven't come to worship on Sunday morning, after a week of getting beat up at work, running ragged with the kids, eating crappy drive-thru dinners, and barely getting enough sleep to function, totally in need of God's presence in our lives? How many of us can't relate with the community as they cry out to God, "Out of the depths have I called to you, O LORD; LORD, hear my voice; * let your ears consider well the voice of my supplication." Or to put it in more accessible language, "Are you there God? It's me, Steve."

The more I read these texts for Sunday, the more I'm convinced that the underlying theme is a phrase hidden deep in a particularly awful piece of liturgy called "Eucharistic Prayer C" in our 1979 Book of Common Prayer. A bad theology of Creation and an odd need to highlight humanity's ability to conquer space travel aside, there is one line that always strikes me when I'm celebrating this prayer. It is right near the end of Prayer C and it reads, "Lord God of our Fathers: God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: Open our eyes to see your hand at work in the world about us." (BCP, p372)

Adam had his eyes opened, but to Satan's lies rather than God's handiwork. The psalmist, like a night watchman, is straining to see God on the horizon of his life.

Paul, in the midst of great hardship, is earnestly striving to help the Corinthians see God at work. Finally, the Gospel lesson is all about those who should see God in Christ and don't and the amazing things that happen to those who do. Even the collect asks God to open our mind's eye to see God's goodness.

The psalmist is waiting for the Lord, not in a passive sort of way, but as an active watcher, eyes wide open, straining to see God at work in the world and in the community of the faithful. Might we have our eyes opened in the same way.

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