

Devotion from the past ... 2002

Read [Psalm 143](#)

Petty Pity

Petty pity purposely pursues primarily perfectionist pedagogues. Say that ten times but not before scheduling an appointment with a chiropractor who adjusts tongues. The caveat of that tongue twister? We who educate in Lutheran ministries are sometimes prone to self-pity.

Truth be told, we may feel justified in pitying ourselves. Compare parking lot activities at your place of ministry to verse three of Psalm 143: "***The enemy pursues me, he crushes me to the ground; he makes me dwell in darkness like those long dead.***" If only we could eavesdrop on the conversations of that mobile mob, we might . . . give up our ministry!

Before we totter closer to the brink of self-pity, we need to consider how David handled those moments of betrayal, slander, and connivery. He plainly states his situation. In those spear and slingshot days, his situation was dire and potentially deadly. Yet in Psalm 143, we don't see David pleading his innocence. Instead, David taps into God's mercy—something far more dependable than one's own good reputation or record.

David uses phrases like "***I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done***" and "***Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love.***" Next, David asks God to reveal His will and for guidance from the Holy Spirit.

David's Psalm 143 is a model prayer for all of us who serve. His entire prayer is based on his relationship with God—or, rather, God's relationship with him. He is bold to ask but humble in his approach.

We could not approach God without Jesus' work on our behalf. The dirty, arrogant sinner is not allowed in God's presence. But the sinner cleansed by the blood of Jesus, shed on the cross, may approach the Father with the same innocence and expectation of a four-year-old approaching a loving dad. The implication for us is that we're free to replace pity with prayer.

God never promised us a rose-garden ministry just because we serve in a Lutheran congregation. When some outside influence isn't messing up our ministry, we're often quite effective in creating messes of our own. And as these messes occur, the temptation is to blame others or zero in on our own inadequacies. In short, we may end up pitying ourselves because of others or because we've discovered that we're like the little engine that couldn't.

Our relationship with God—for Jesus' sake—comforts and sustains us. Talking over serious situations normally brings relief. Talking over situations with the Creator of the Universe takes us to the highest level possible and enables us to confront problems with the confidence that only God provides. Remember David and Psalm 143 when you pray in troubled times. And remember this too:

Prayer provides a palpable panacea for pesky problems, perfectly preempting paltry pity.

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To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Phil. 4:20)