

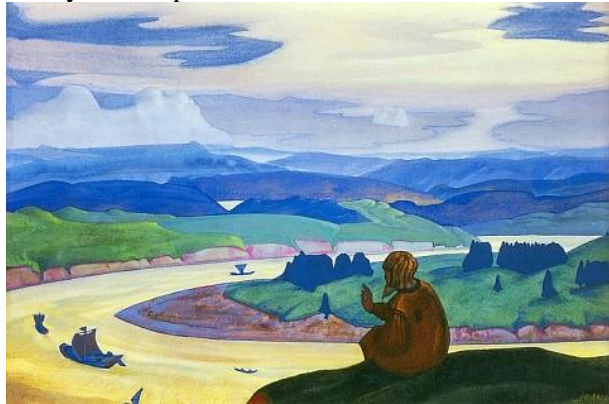
By: Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow is Vice President of the American Baptist Churches of New York State Board of Missions.

On Psalm 92

How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep! The dullard cannot know, the stupid cannot understand this: though the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction forever. (Psalm 92:3)

The Psalmist is a poet. S/he speaks from the heart, observes the cultural surroundings from his/her world view. S/he believes in the faithfulness and love of God, the *deep thoughts* of God, despite what the surrounding culture suggests. As people of faith we believe beyond what we see. We have to. If our life is good and we only see the good of life we miss the call to seek justice for those robbed of it, we miss the call to show mercy to those who are struggling, we miss the call to reach out and comfort those who have great losses, we miss the call to visit the prisoner, feed the hungry, to love the neighbor who craves to be seen, and to love and seek to understand our enemy. In short, we miss the call to serve God in whatever way God is present to us.



As people of faith we must believe beyond what we see. We cannot know what goes on inside a person's mind, inside a person's home; the secrets they keep for fear of judgment or recrimination. Their secret fears and secret hopes; fears so profound we dare not speak them out loud for fear of activating their existence - as if we were God and could speak things into being - and hopes so fantastic that we fear people would have the best time laughing at our expense. We don't know the minds of even those who live in our own homes, much less the mind of God.

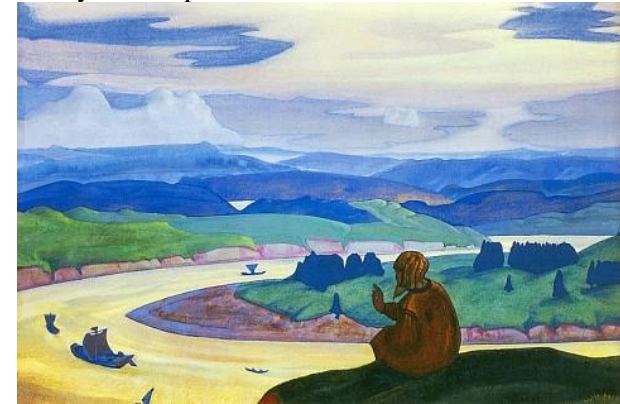
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But the poet, the Psalmist, s/he stretches the boundaries of that which we do not see. The Psalmist dares to plead with God to *doom the evildoers to destruction forever*, knowing only too well that: 1) that is God's decision not ours and 2) it is also God's judgment who the evildoers really are! We may, in fact, realize later on and all too sadly after the words are written and the thoughts spoken, that the evildoer is him/herself - and perhaps even you and me.

And it is at that point that we pray for the faith to believe beyond what we see. And we pray with a humble heart for God's forgiveness and reconciliation. We thank God with a grateful heart for God's mercy even when we ourselves have not been merciful, we thank God for God's justice even when we ourselves have perpetrated our own injustice against our neighbor, and we pray for the humility to admit and confess our evil to a God who is just and merciful and loving and steadfast even when we fail; and we thank God that our sins are not held against us forever.

The Psalmist prays that the righteous will flourish and grow strong (92:12) and that the wicked will perish and be scattered; (92:9) even as the poet sees that *the wicked sprout like grass and all evildoers flourish* (92:7). The psalmist believes in what s/he does not see.

As people of faith we must believe beyond what we see. We must believe in a God who *is upright and righteous; and as steady and reliable as a rock.* (92:15) As people of faith we must believe in a just and merciful God whose kingdom will be made manifest in *God's* time, through *God's* means, in spite of the wickedness of humankind.

Let us not miss the call to show mercy to those who are struggling, to reach out and comfort those who have great losses, to visit the prisoner, feed the hungry, love our neighbor who cries to be seen, and to love and seek to understand our enemy. Let us not miss the call to serve God in whatever way God presents him/herself to us. As people of faith we must believe beyond what we can see.

Amen

Rev. Wendy Depew Partelow

Image: Procopius the Righteous Praying by Nicholas Roerich, 1874-1947. From **Art in the Christian Tradition**, a project of the Vanderbilt Divinity Library, Nashville, TN.
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