

Good Friday News: A Poem

David Gambrell, 2008

Psalm 22. To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.
with excerpts from *The New York Times*, March 21, 2008 (Good Friday)

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
in shaky English, the woman expressed reluctance,
and questioned how she could be sure he would keep his word

Why are you so far from helping me,
from the words of my groaning?
"I think people like to moan sometimes
for the sake of it," he said
"I don't know why they bother, sometimes—nobody listens"

O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;
"no one on the outside can understand
the pain, sweat and tears"

and by night, but find no rest.
"I sleep three hours a day," he said,
his eyes rimmed with red

Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.
nuns chant it
scruffy young men with painted faces shout it
indeed, half the town seems to have gone hoarse this week
calling out his name
he remains revered

In you our ancestors trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.
"you are fighting for our rights"

To you they cried, and were saved;
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.
"we just kept pushing through"
"it's an unbelievable feeling"

But I am a worm, and not human;
"I have no authority, no power to say 'Shut up!'"

scorned by others, and despised by the people.
when millions of noncitizens live
in a kind of legal no-man's land,
increasingly fearful of seeking the law's protection

All who see me mock at me;
what he described as a "ruthless, irrational,
arrogant, foolish and self-righteous comment"

they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;
at one point, she turned away from a reporter,
pursed her lips and shook her head no

*"Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"*
"they have all lived in a world of dreams," he said

*Yet it was you who took me from the womb;
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.*
"I want to move back there,
I have so many childhood memories"

*On you I was cast from my birth,
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.*
"I refuse to sacrifice my children"

Do not be far from me, for trouble is near
"there was at least one kidnapping a day," he said
the streets in some areas were lined with roadside bombs

and there is no one to help.
"all my friends are scattered"

*Many bulls encircle me,
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;*
disintegrating marriages, financial problems,

sick children and post-traumatic stress
fall on their shoulders

*they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.*

"I want sex," he said on the recording
"one or two times. that's all.
you'll get your green card.
you won't have to see me anymore"

*I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;*
"all of the things you're familiar with, they're gone,"
she said of her former home. "it's all rubble now"

*my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;*
"judging from the arid cycles of a thousand years ago,
the droughts of a warmer future will become more prolonged
and even harsher"

my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,
population density has placed enormous pressure
on increasingly scarce water resources
prepare for worse

and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
a mother of three, suffered from a rare form of cancer
that burrowed through her sinuses and nasal cavities

you lay me in the dust of death.
a court had refused her request
to receive a lethal dose of barbiturates

For dogs are all around me;
officials were taking the threats "seriously"

a company of evildoers encircles me
the three mortar rounds, which killed a Yemeni guard
and wounded 18 people, including 13 girls,

appeared to have been fired from the roof of a nearby building

My hands and feet have shriveled;
"we're still dealing with this paralysis"

I can count all my bones.
the size of the specimen's hip joint,
the shape and strength of the wide thigh bone,
and other characteristics

They stare and gloat over me;
"even if you have loose clothing on,
they are going to see things
that we are not supposed to let them see"

they divide my clothes among themselves,
"I was mad when I found out they were tearing down my home"

and for my clothing they cast lots
"it's a gamble.
we don't know how to take a terrible neighborhood
and make it nice while keeping the same people here"

But you, O LORD, do not be far away!
O my help, come quickly to my aid!
"I thought I had no choice that night," he said
"I pray for everything"

Deliver my soul from the sword,
my life from the power of the dog!
"I just know there is more to life than this war"

Save me from the mouth of the lion!
China accused him of masterminding the uprising
and called him "a devil with a human face"

From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.
"but it was a turning point because thenceforward
there was nothing else I wanted to do"

*I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
"returning to the same place at the same time
makes the friendship deeper," she said
"the thought of it keeps me going"*

*You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
"one hundred times, thousand times I have repeated this,"
he told reporters Thursday. "it is my mantra"*

*For he did not despise or abhor
the affliction of the afflicted;
a grim cheerless wasteland,
with gray buildings and gray, disheveled residents.
and not just routinely miserable, but deeply miserable,
a "showpiece of quiet desperation"*

*he did not hide his face from me,
but heard when I cried to him.
"I'm part marriage counselor,
part drug and alcohol counselor,
part suicide-prevention counselor.
it's an emotional roller coaster"*

*From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.
the complex rhythms and plethora of instruments
make for a joyous concert, but one that serves
as a serious reminder of the 2.4 million Ugandan children
who have been orphaned by civil war, poverty, and AIDS*

*The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
in a historically arid region with uncertain food supplies,
they successfully tapped their centuries of experience
with irrigation, soil conservation, and water management*

*those who seek him shall praise the LORD.
May your hearts live forever!*

he knew that Evan's heart was singing

*All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD;*

"we are trying to find common ground"

*and all the families of the nations
shall worship before him.*

"for the first time in my adult life,
I am proud of my country"

*For dominion belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.*

after a nine-month political crisis
had prompted speculations that the country might split

*To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,*

models of elaborate wooden synagogues
and photographs of Jewish cemeteries
with intricately carved gravestones

and I shall live for him

"I promised my dad before he died
I was going to fulfill my dream"

Posterity will serve him;

"good things sometimes take a long time"

future generations will be told about the Lord,

"I am very much hopeful," he said

*and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,
if there is a heaven, I bet it's a pretty cool place*

saying that he has done it.