

Psalms 139 and 143

*Thou compassest my path and my lying down and art acquainted with all my ways
Ps139.3 (KJV)*

*Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust.
Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God. Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.
Ps 143. 8 and 10 (NRSV)*

Both these psalms have helped me in my journey of faith to grow closer to God. Both still have the capacity to make my spine tingle when I think about the words.

Psalm 139 was suggested to me when I was in a dark place after someone dear to me had died. The psalm speaks of how God has made us and knows us inside out – he will look after us. It is a wonderful passage of how deeply God does know us and will care for us. Even if we have drifted away from God and are perhaps ignoring Him, He still sees us and will be there for us.

Verses from Psalm 143 are set as the opening canticle for Evening Prayer in Lent. Sometimes in the evening when we are tired and it is dark outside things can seem worse than they really are so it is good to be reminded that life will be better in the morning and God's love is steadfast.

One Lent I was suffering from a crisis of self-confidence. I thought that I was not much good at anything and in particular my fear of heights had got hold and when skiing the fear had taken over. I had resolved that it would be my last week of skiing. One evening as I was reading this psalm these two verses spoke to me. God was telling me to trust Him. He would show me the level path and He would show me the way. His loving kindness would be with me. The next day I set out with this in my head and trusted God. I managed to relax and my skiing improved. It was not to be my last week of skiing. I love the mountains and walking, cycling and skiing in them you get to see them so much better. But while I suffered from a fear of heights I could not enjoy them. I now cope with almost any heights and believe that God is walking the path with me. This carried through beyond my skiing and knowing God's love for me expressed through both these psalms has given me a belief in myself. However, I also know that while God will show me the way it is up to me to follow and take some responsibility.

I use both these psalms to help me when life feels a bit difficult and as we come into Lent I shall look forward to re-visiting Psalm 143 in the context of Evening Prayer.

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