



Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.

(PSALM 123:2)

STRUCTURE

- v. 1-2** We lift up our eyes to the Lord.
- v. 3-4** Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we have had enough of contempt.

AT A GLANCE

PART OF A WHOLE

Psalm 123, part of the first group of the *Psalms of Ascent* (120-134), was sung as the pilgrims journeyed up to Jerusalem, looking up to the Lord.

"MERCY"

(v. 2-3) In both the Old and New Testaments, this word is central to the Scriptures' "vocabulary of salvation," denoting favor and pity.

DIG DEEPER

Psalm 124 responds to this lament with the reminder (perhaps a rebuke) that had the Lord not been with His people, they would have been destroyed.

CHRIST IS HERE

Throughout Jesus' life, people lifted up their eyes to Him and cried, "Lord, have mercy!" and He answered with compassion, even dying in our place to deliver us from every foe.



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As the pilgrims travel up to Jerusalem for the various festivals of the Jewish liturgical calendar, they “lift up” their eyes to their God, enthroned in the heavens. The intimacy of this expression of hope and obedience is emphasized with domestic metaphors. God’s people look to Him as a servant looks to his master and a maidservant to her mistress. This brief psalm, however, is not a psalm of praise, but of lament. The faithful look to the Lord their God “till He has mercy upon us” (v.2). At this point, the psalmist shifts from speaking of God in the third person to directly addressing Him with anguished cries for deliverance: “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us!” (v.3). The people implore God to intervene, to save, to deliver. God’s people have had “more than enough” (v.3) of contempt and scorn, the ridicule of their enemies. Those who hate them are “at ease” and “proud” (v.4). This is a common description of the wicked in the Old Testament: they are at ease, sitting in luxurious exploitation of their fellow man, and they are proud, setting themselves even against God Himself.



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USE IN THE CHURCH

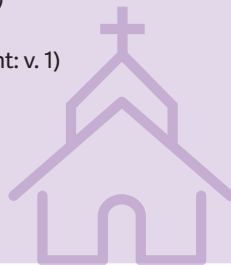
Antiphon: v. 1b (“O You who are enthroned in the heavens, have mercy upon us”)

In the Daily Office: Tuesdays at Vespers;
Vespers for a Martyr

At the Divine Service:

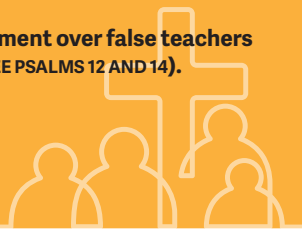
One-Year:
Tract for Lent 3 (v. 1–3a)

Three-Year:
Psalm for Proper 9B (ant: v. 1)



SPIRITUAL CARE

- When going to church.
- When persecuted by the proud.
- Against false worship.
- Against rebellion.
- Lament over false teachers (SEE PSALMS 12 AND 14).



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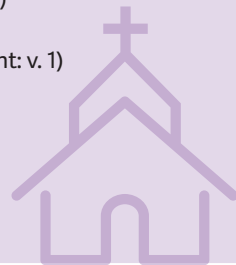
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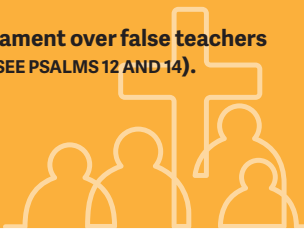
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PSALM
123

PSALM PRAYER

O God in heaven, to You we lift our eyes and pray that You would silence the scorn and contempt of the proud and give us Your pardon and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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