

Psalm 40

The Message

40 ¹⁻³ I waited and waited and waited for GOD.

At last he looked; finally he listened.

He lifted me out of the ditch,

pulled me from deep mud.

He stood me up on a solid rock

to make sure I wouldn't slip.

He taught me how to sing the latest God-song,

a praise-song to our God.

More and more people are seeing this:

they enter the mystery,

abandoning themselves to GOD.

⁴⁻⁵ Blessed are you who give yourselves over to GOD,

turn your backs on the world's "sure thing,"

ignore what the world worships;

The world's a huge stockpile

of GOD-wonders and God-thoughts.

Nothing and no one

compares to you!

I start talking about you, telling what I know,

and quickly run out of words.

Neither numbers nor words

account for you.

⁶ Doing something for you, bringing something to you—

that's not what you're after.

Being religious, acting pious—

that's not what you're asking for.

You've opened my ears

so I can listen.

⁷⁻⁸ So I answered, "I'm coming.

I read in your letter what you wrote about me,
And I'm coming to the party
you're throwing for me."

That's when God's Word entered my life,
became part of my very being.

⁹⁻¹⁰ I've preached you to the whole congregation,
I've kept back nothing, GOD—you know that.

I didn't keep the news of your ways
a secret, didn't keep it to myself.
I told it all, how dependable you are, how thorough.
I didn't hold back pieces of love and truth
For myself alone. I told it all,
let the congregation know the whole story.

¹¹⁻¹² Now GOD, don't hold out on me,
don't hold back your passion.

Your love and truth
are all that keeps me together.
When troubles ganged up on me,
a mob of sins past counting,
I was so swamped by guilt
I couldn't see my way clear.
More guilt in my heart than hair on my head,
so heavy the guilt that my heart gave out.

¹³⁻¹⁵ Soften up, GOD, and intervene;
hurry and get me some help,
So those who are trying to kidnap my soul
will be embarrassed and lose face,
So anyone who gets a kick out of making me miserable
will be heckled and disgraced,
So those who pray for my ruin
will be booed and jeered without mercy.

16-17 But all who are hunting for you—
oh, let them sing and be happy.
Let those who know what you're all about
tell the world you're great and not quitting.
And me? I'm a mess. I'm nothing and have nothing:
make something of me.
You can do it; you've got what it takes—
but God, don't put it off.

Hymns for Psalm 40 < Hymns for Psalms The United Methodist Hymnal 73: **○**
Worship the King 380: There's Within My Heart a Melody 690: The Day Thou
Gavest, Lord, Is Ended

Thanksgiving and Plea. Some commentators are confident that this is two psalms: 1-11 and 13-17, linked by an insert at verse 12. I prefer the “spiritual autobiography” theory, maybe in three sections: 1-3, 4-10, and 11-17. Verses 6-8 might ring bells for you.

Waiting patiently for the Lord is not inertia!

Chapter 10 of the Letter to the Hebrews picks up on this psalm's message that animal sacrifices are no substitute for self-sacrifice: Christ's self-offering is the turning point in human/divine history.