

Foreword

As Huub Oosterhuis says in his preface to "150 psalms free" :
"The psalms are songs about deliverance from slavery and humiliation, fear and emptiness. About hope in a 'good and wide country', a better world. That great story that still exists and works, resonates".

I have tried to find out which of the many beautiful texts that Oosterhuis has re-translated for us, resonate with people who want to think as Vincent Depaul thought. Who try to do what Vincent Depaul did. After all, 'I-will-be-there' is not someone far away. It is someone who is engraved in the skin of the Lord, of Jesus, but also in our skin. Who 'cries out against wrongdoers, man-eaters, scoundrels and violators: save those who have no defence!'

I hope and expect that we can recognise Vincent Depaul and ourselves in the words that have been collected here.

And then finally that we may say with Psalm 23:

Let it remain so this happiness
this grace, all the days of my life".

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* The free translation of the psalms by Huub Oosterhuis might seem a little strange and may be difficult to understand. But: let the words and sentences enter your mind and your heart and you will appreciate the way he put the psalms in a modern language.

Following Vincent de Paul in the words of psalms

Psalm 1

Good is that you consider good words:
Love your neighbour who is like you
the refugee, the poor, do them justice.
Imprint them on the heart of your mind,
those words,
say them out loud.

Psalm 9

Bring them to reason,
the rulers of this world:
that above all there is one little person,
one little man.

Psalm 10

To simple men
it belongs to them,
this earth.

Psalm 15

Do good
lend your money loyally, You say.
Ask no interest -
never take a bribe.
Do good, do not falter.
Blessed be thy name.
I will be-there-for you

And do not falter.

Psalm 18

Friends he gives his friendship.
Who is pure in heart
he treats also as such
but from evil-doers He turns away.
If we are bowed down, He will straighten our backs
he does not look at the eyes of the wicked.

You ignite the light in my lamp
you turn darkness into light.
With you I storm a horde
with you I leap over a wall.

Your right hand pushes me up
your lips encourage me.
With large steps I go
and do not sprain my ankles.

Psalm 22

God of Jacob, it is said of you
that you see the humiliated - what do you say?
'Quenched is the hunger of the poor'?
I hold you to that.

Psalm 23

You have already set the table - my enemies
do not know what they see :
That you wash my feet, anoint them with balm.
Pour me a drink, you say

I shall not be in need of anything.

Let it remain so, this happiness
this grace, all the days of my life.

Psalm 24

Who is the Eternal, the Shining One?
It is he who fights for justice
It is the God of the poor, the one who is strong.

Gates, lift up your heads,
here he comes, the God of the poor,
the strong one, the Eternal, the shining one.

Psalm 37

Be not jealous of the wicked,
the wretched, envy them not.
They wither away like clumps of grass.

Trust Him, who is God-I will be here for you-.
And do what must be done today :
save those who have no defence.

Psalm 40

I hoped that ' I-will' shall come.
And there he was
and bent over me
and heard me.

And there he is, bending over me
over me and hears

me cry, pulls me up
out of the abyss of my crying.

Psalm 41

Before me stood a poor woman in rags
emaciated, she asked me for money,
that she would need for one night ...
I gave enough for two.

And now I am praised everywhere
for my beneficence:
The Lord has seen it with pleasure.
and says "he who saves one saves the whole world".

The truth is
I feel ashamed and guilty
to live in a universe
of so much glittering wealth
and bitter poverty.

I talk about it with friends and acquaintances.
What am I worried about, they ask.
That's the way the world is, just this world.
And he who is poor still has hands
And a woman like that can -
There is much laughter.

And even my boy, who eats my bread, laughs along.
What else? Lord', whom I call
my God-I-will-be-there,
what about the future this world?

Will your word about justice
and mercy
work on our conscience

and bring a change in our stream of thoughts
and make us quiet
and awake ?

Psalm 45

In a lost world
in a world to win

strange among strangers
homeless with the displaced

equipped with a word
that will resist the powers.

May there be hands
that carry you and caress you.

Blessed are you for saying yes
here now - come what may come

Psalm 68

Oh God who art risen
blessed are you, the living tree of light
with you is the way of deliberation,
you are the way to conquer death,
you drag us back to life,
the light of day, God our liberator.

Psalm 69

You deliver slaves

Not the smoke of sacrificial animals in your nose

but the blossoming of voices in your ears.
Not the throats of murderers
but the hushed mouths of the poor
sing :
you liberator of slaves
who loosens the shackles of your loved ones
who builds cities for them
and for their children -

That we will live there
with refugees and strangers together

You who liberate the slaves
wherever people
are violated –

He would bind up their wounds,
light up their eyes,
he would seek the desperate:
he will seek us and find us.

Psalm 76

I was looking for another way.
I went down into the desert,
Became a voice coming out of the fire:
'Learn to set one another free.'
I created a way of saying words
that can be understood and done:
Bread and justice for the poor,
water for the thirsty.
I spoke to them in all languages,
they are written in the sky:
Friendship, compassion and faithfulness.
I think they can. I am waiting.

Psalm 81

A voice that was the voice of God
the voice of the God of Jacob
God liberator -,

he cried, shouted, cried and sang:
'Do not bow down to strange gods
who will suck you dry.

I am your future, I will pull you up
wherever people are violated -
He would bandage their wounds,

light up their their eyes,

he would seek the desperate:
He will seek us and find us.

they are written in the sky:
Friendship, compassion and faithfulness.
I think they can. I am waiting.

Psalm 84

People wherever they are born,
do not know what drives them,
go on a journey to you.
Across empty land,
across black waters, through forests,
over the ridge, over the top of the mountains,
blindly they go.

And then one day,
there they are.

May we be here? You may.
They pitch their tents
among your cedars, under your oaks

lie stretched out in high-waving grass – blissfully happy.

Psalm 99

He did not want to be become king, enthroned in light,
supreme being, threefold holy.

He became king,
for the sake of human rights.

To proclaim
the right of the weakest,
to establish the right
of the least of men.

Psalm 104

Oh water that flows alive
that feeds the grass, makes bread sprout,
wine swelling in the grapes.

Teach me to dare to drink wine
that soothes the heart,
bake bread and distribute it
to all the hungry people of the world.

Psalm 112

You would like to be happy:
firm, cheerful, upright,
good work, good living, some money,
to be liked by others,
find your great love,
have children, healthy, beautiful.
You would like that - who wouldn't?
Do you also want to be good, reliable,
faithful, just, compassionate ?

Psalm 128

Man, woman, born here,
but you too, stranger, outcast,
girl smuggled in,
sold to the pimp

with as many as you are :
you are all blessed.

Psalm 139 A

Are you the only one before whose eyes
my nakedness is not hidden?
Can you help it, if no one else,
that I have no light, no warmth,
that I am not beautiful, not much,
that no spring springs from my depth
that I have only this face,
no other.
I am seen by you, without shame, taken,
by no other person?
Would that not be far too true?

Do you know me? Who am I?
Do you know me better than I do?

Psalm 146

The eternal words of love and peace
from you, only you, and you again.

That you will be
who you said you would be:
Bread for the hungry

light for the blind,
for refugees refuge everywhere.
As you said: I will.

Let me sing, let us sing
of unblemished landscape
and no child lost anymore -
Scourge and scum are past
all things will be new
with gentle light charged every battery,
salt and honey, bread and wine in every home
and the bells sound justice.

Psalm 149

Who carried me
on eagles' wings

Who cast me
into space
and when I fell, screaming
sheltered me
with your wings
and lifted me up again

until I could fly
under my own power.
you earn your bread
Women, heavy as grapes -
your daughters swaying palms
your sons olive branches
around your table.

Count your blessings - what is happiness?

May it be and last
Here in the land where you live
In towns, villages and hamlets

to the far corners of this world.

For your neighbours and your neighbourhood
sing peace
For your children and their loved ones

Peace on earth, now.

Psalm 133

That's how it feels, being with
many, safe -
dew descends
from high mountains
in the morning sun.

You know each other
you know to whom you belong
blessed are you
this is how the new world
that is to come.