

Devotional—day 5
"Save the People"

EPISCOPAL HYMN #496

When wilt thou save the people?
O God of mercy, when?
Not kings and lords, but nations;
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
Flowers of thy heart, O God, are they;
Let them not pass, like weeds, away,
Their heritage a sunless day:
God save the people!

Shall crime bring crime for ever,
Strength aiding still the strong?
Is it thy will, O Father,
That man shall toil for wrong?
"No," say thy mountains; "No," thy skies;
Man's clouded sun shall brightly rise,
And songs be heard instead of sighs:
God save the people!

When wilt thou save the people?
O God of mercy, when?
The people, Lord, the people,
Not thrones and crowns, but men!
God save the people; thine they are,
Thy children, as thy angels fair:
From vice, oppression, and despair,
God save the people! Amen.

- Ebenezer Elliott, 1831

Psalms 28:8-9

8 GOD is all strength for his people,
ample refuge for his chosen leader;

**9 Save your people
and bless your heritage.**

Care for them;
carry them like a good shepherd.

Isaiah 40:6-8 (NIV)

6 A voice says, "Cry out."
And I said, "What shall I cry?"

**"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field.**

**7 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
because the breath of the LORD blows on them.**

Surely the people are grass.

**8 The grass withers and the flowers fall,
but the word of our God stands forever."**

1 Peter 1:23-2:3 (NIV)

23 For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. **24 For,**

"All men are like grass,
and all their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,

25 but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. **2** Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, **3** now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

Ebenezer Elliott (1781-1849)

Ebenezer was born at New Foundry, Masbrough, Rotherham, England on March 17, 1781 and was the son of an extreme Calvinist who ran a small iron foundry. He was raised in a very religious atmosphere and was said to have memorized much of the Bible. From the age of 16 until 38 he worked in the family business. After it failed, leaving him bankrupt, he moved to Sheffield and became a very successful Iron Dealer.



Outside his work he was very involved in politics and his poetry reflected the politics and social conditions of the day. He set up an Anti-Corn League in Sheffield to fight the Corn Laws which had priced bread out of the range of poor people (a loaf cost on average the same as a day's wage for most people) and led to hunger and suffering. Wars with France and America had prevented the import of cheap grain and the price of corn rose at a very rapid rate, from 43 shillings per quarter in 1792 to 126 shillings per quarter in 1812. Parliament (which consisted of 90% Farmers/Landowners) passed laws (the Corn Laws) fixing the price of corn at 80 shillings per quarter which led to riots and mobs.

In response, Elliott wrote a series of strongly-worded rhymes and poems which were spoken from thousands of platforms at Anti-Corn Law Meetings across the country. Ebenezer Elliot became known as "The Poet of the Poor." Eventually, he came to the attention of Dr Southey, Poet Laureate and the Poet Wordsworth, lifting him out of relative obscurity as a poet and into national acclaim.

The "Corn Law Rhymes" were first printed and published in 1831. His most famous and best-known poem is "Peoples' Anthem" (aka "When Wilt Thou Save the People?").

Time for personal reflection (day 5):

“Save the People” was also known as “The Peoples’ Anthem” during the era in which it was written. In what circumstances/situations could this hymn still be used as “The Peoples’ Anthem” today?

Under what circumstances have I found myself saying a paraphrased version of this hymn (*i.e.* When will you save me? Oh God, when?)?

When and how has God saved me in times of hardship and despair?

When God saved me from times of hardship and despair, how did I feel? How did I respond?

How can I personally share the hope of God’s strength with those that I may meet this summer who are in the pits of despair and suffering?

What will I personally need to do to retain the hope I have in God’s strength during the hardships of a long summer tour?

Time for personal reflection...

In order to keep my joy as hardship, suffering, and despair arise during the summer, I will...