

## Good Friday News: A Poem

David Gambrell, 2008

*Psalm 22. To the leader: according to The Deer of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.*  
with excerpts from *The New York Times*, March 21, 2008 (Good Friday)

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*  
in shaky English, the woman expressed reluctance,  
and questioned how she could be sure he would keep his word

*Why are you so far from helping me,*  
*from the words of my groaning?*  
"I think people like to moan sometimes  
for the sake of it," he said  
"I don't know why they bother, sometimes—nobody listens"

*O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer;*  
"no one on the outside can understand  
the pain, sweat and tears"

*and by night, but find no rest.*  
"I sleep three hours a day," he said,  
his eyes rimmed with red

*Yet you are holy,*  
*enthroned on the praises of Israel.*  
nuns chant it  
scruffy young men with painted faces shout it  
indeed, half the town seems to have gone hoarse this week  
calling out his name  
he remains revered

*In you our ancestors trusted;*  
*they trusted, and you delivered them.*  
"you are fighting for our rights"

*To you they cried, and were saved;*  
*in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.*  
"we just kept pushing through"  
"it's an unbelievable feeling"

*But I am a worm, and not human;*  
"I have no authority, no power to say 'Shut up!'"

*scorned by others, and despised by the people.*  
when millions of noncitizens live  
in a kind of legal no-man's land,  
increasingly fearful of seeking the law's protection

*All who see me mock at me;*  
what he described as a "ruthless, irrational,  
arrogant, foolish and self-righteous comment"

*they make mouths at me, they shake their heads;*  
at one point, she turned away from a reporter,  
pursed her lips and shook her head no

*"Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver—  
let him rescue the one in whom he delights!"*  
"they have all lived in a world of dreams," he said

*Yet it was you who took me from the womb;  
you kept me safe on my mother's breast.*  
"I want to move back there,  
I have so many childhood memories"

*On you I was cast from my birth,  
and since my mother bore me you have been my God.*  
"I refuse to sacrifice my children"

*Do not be far from me, for trouble is near*  
"there was at least one kidnapping a day," he said  
the streets in some areas were lined with roadside bombs

*and there is no one to help.*  
"all my friends are scattered"

*Many bulls encircle me,  
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;*  
disintegrating marriages, financial problems,

sick children and post-traumatic stress  
fall on their shoulders

*they open wide their mouths at me,  
like a ravening and roaring lion.*

"I want sex," he said on the recording  
"one or two times. that's all.  
you'll get your green card.  
you won't have to see me anymore"

*I am poured out like water,  
and all my bones are out of joint;*  
"all of the things you're familiar with, they're gone,"  
she said of her former home. "it's all rubble now"

*my heart is like wax;  
it is melted within my breast;*  
"judging from the arid cycles of a thousand years ago,  
the droughts of a warmer future will become more prolonged  
and even harsher"

*my mouth is dried up like a potsherd,*  
population density has placed enormous pressure  
on increasingly scarce water resources  
prepare for worse

*and my tongue sticks to my jaws;*  
a mother of three, suffered from a rare form of cancer  
that burrowed through her sinuses and nasal cavities

*you lay me in the dust of death.*  
a court had refused her request  
to receive a lethal dose of barbiturates

*For dogs are all around me;*  
officials were taking the threats "seriously"

*a company of evildoers encircles me*  
the three mortar rounds, which killed a Yemeni guard  
and wounded 18 people, including 13 girls,

appeared to have been fired from the roof of a nearby building

*My hands and feet have shriveled;*  
"we're still dealing with this paralysis"

*I can count all my bones.*  
the size of the specimen's hip joint,  
the shape and strength of the wide thigh bone,  
and other characteristics

*They stare and gloat over me;*  
"even if you have loose clothing on,  
they are going to see things  
that we are not supposed to let them see"

*they divide my clothes among themselves,*  
"I was mad when I found out they were tearing down my home"

*and for my clothing they cast lots*  
"it's a gamble.  
we don't know how to take a terrible neighborhood  
and make it nice while keeping the same people here"

*But you, O LORD, do not be far away!*  
*O my help, come quickly to my aid!*  
"I thought I had no choice that night," he said  
"I pray for everything"

*Deliver my soul from the sword,*  
*my life from the power of the dog!*  
"I just know there is more to life than this war"

*Save me from the mouth of the lion!*  
China accused him of masterminding the uprising  
and called him "a devil with a human face"

*From the horns of the wild oxen you have rescued me.*  
"but it was a turning point because thenceforward  
there was nothing else I wanted to do"

*I will tell of your name to my brothers and sisters;  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:  
"returning to the same place at the same time  
makes the friendship deeper," she said  
"the thought of it keeps me going"*

*You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him;  
stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!  
"one hundred times, thousand times I have repeated this,"  
he told reporters Thursday. "it is my mantra"*

*For he did not despise or abhor  
the affliction of the afflicted;  
a grim cheerless wasteland,  
with gray buildings and gray, disheveled residents.  
and not just routinely miserable, but deeply miserable,  
a "showpiece of quiet desperation"*

*he did not hide his face from me,  
but heard when I cried to him.  
"I'm part marriage counselor,  
part drug and alcohol counselor,  
part suicide-prevention counselor.  
it's an emotional roller coaster"*

*From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.  
the complex rhythms and plethora of instruments  
make for a joyous concert, but one that serves  
as a serious reminder of the 2.4 million Ugandan children  
who have been orphaned by civil war, poverty, and AIDS*

*The poor shall eat and be satisfied;  
in a historically arid region with uncertain food supplies,  
they successfully tapped their centuries of experience  
with irrigation, soil conservation, and water management*

*those who seek him shall praise the LORD.  
May your hearts live forever!*

he knew that Evan's heart was singing

*All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the LORD;*

"we are trying to find common ground"

*and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before him.*

"for the first time in my adult life,  
I am proud of my country"

*For dominion belongs to the LORD,  
and he rules over the nations.*

after a nine-month political crisis  
had prompted speculations that the country might split

*To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;  
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,*

models of elaborate wooden synagogues  
and photographs of Jewish cemeteries  
with intricately carved gravestones

*and I shall live for him*

"I promised my dad before he died  
I was going to fulfill my dream"

*Posterity will serve him;*

"good things sometimes take a long time"

*future generations will be told about the Lord,*

"I am very much hopeful," he said

*and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn,  
if there is a heaven, I bet it's a pretty cool place*

*saying that he has done it.*