

Even though princes sit *and* talk against me,  
Your servant meditates on Your statutes.  
Your testimonies also are my delight;  
*They are my counselors.*

*Psalms 119:23-24*



# holding onto our sanity

**W**HENEVER MY DAD thought I was losing my hold on reality—something that occurred with alarming regularity back in the '50s and '60s—he would grab me by the shoulders and say, “get your head screwed on straight.” And no translation was required for that colloquialism.



It is the inherent manner of youth to go a little “wacko” from time to time, to try out new and potentially dangerous thoughts and activities, to rebel just for the sake of rebelling. Thus it is necessary for them to be told from time to time to “get their head out of the clouds” (yet another colloquialism) and return to the real world.

As an adult I am reminded of my dad’s sage reprimand on an almost daily basis. Every morning when I read the news, when I acquaint myself with what is going on in the world outside our 11.68 acres of land, my response is to tell myself to “get my head screwed on straight.”



For I was envious of the arrogant  
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.  
For there are no pains in their death,  
And their body is fat.  
They are not in trouble *as other men*,  
Nor are they plagued like mankind.  
Therefore pride is their necklace;  
The garment of violence covers them.  
Their eye bulges from fatness;  
The imaginations of *their* heart run riot.  
They mock and wickedly speak of  
oppression;  
They speak from on high.  
They have set their mouth against the  
heavens,

## Reflections by the Pond

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### And their tongue parades through the earth.

*Psalms 73:3-9*

Perhaps throughout the world, but especially here in the United States, these are strange and troubling times. For the first time in our history we have elected a black man as president—in the abstract, at least, a laudable and mature milestone. Yet we have also for the first time elected to this, the highest office in the land, someone who doesn’t much like who we are as a nation—someone who takes issue not just with our character and habits, but with the very root and substance that undergirds us: our Constitution.

Moving sideways from the presidency, we have the very same senators and congressional members who purposely and purposefully orchestrated our current abysmal fiscal situation, now reprimanding the rest of us for our profligate ways. Adding insult to injury, these authors of our demise have the temerity to deem themselves the wise and august adjudicators who will now rescue us from this unfortunate happenstance.

Meanwhile, there are those who think it is perfectly all right—even appropriate—that a \$100 million, 13-story Islamic community center and mosque be included in the rebuilding on and immediately around the site of the September 11th attack in New York City. This building would be used to teach

hatred for and incite violence against this country, and would be situated in the shadow of the Twin Towers—would be, that is, if those towers (and more than 2,500 lives) had not been destroyed on September 11, 2001 by radical Islamists.



Behold, these are the wicked;  
And always at ease, they have increased  
in wealth.  
Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure  
And washed my hands in innocence;  
For I have been stricken all day long  
And chastened every morning.

*Psalms 73:12-14*

We live in an insane world in an insane time—a time in which good is reviled and evil is celebrated. And sometimes when we read and hear about what is going on out there, it feels as if our brain-box is getting twisted around like the little girl’s in *The Exorcist*.

What we need is to get our head screwed on straight.

How do we do that? How do we reorient ourselves from the deluge of misinformation, deceit, hypocrisy and evil unremittingly spewed forth every day? How do we hold onto our sanity in an insane world?

When I pondered to understand this,  
It was troublesome in my sight

Until I came into the sanctuary of God;  
*Then* I perceived their end.

*Psalms 73:16-17*

Those who have set their feet on The Rock may get buffeted from time to time, but they will not fall. Those who rely on the intimate, indwelling Spirit may occasionally get dispirited, but they will not despair. And those who find their joy and meaning in God's sanctuary—wherever that may be for them—know that evil will not triumph, and our peace will be found in the nearness of the Lord.

Whom have I in heaven *but* You?  
And besides You, I desire nothing on earth.  
My flesh and my heart may fail,  
But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.  
For, behold, those who are far from You will perish;  
You have destroyed all those who are unfaithful to You.  
But as for me, the nearness of God is my good;  
I have made the Lord God my refuge,  
That I may tell of all Your works.

*Psalms 73:25-28*