

Read Lamentations 3:16-42

I don't like spiders. I've had a few run-ins with them over the years, as I'm sure you have too.

There have been the numerous spiders lurking in the car – including the huge huntsman that crawled out from behind the sun visor and down the inside of the windscreen of my old VW Kombi as I was driving (fortunately, for some reason I had a lump of four-by-two within arm's reach ...).

There was the morning I was getting dressed in the morning, and I felt a strange tickling sensation inside my trouser leg. I happened to be facing the mirror, and watched in horror as a huntsman crawled out of the bottom of my trouser leg, across my foot, and away under the wardrobe!

There was also the white-tailed spider that bit my ankle when we were on Norfolk Island, giving me a blood infection that ended up putting me in hospital on an antibiotic drip.

And then there was Shelob, as I called her (I say "her" because I understand it is generally the adult female spider who weaves the webs, while the males are drinking beer in front of the TV). Do you remember Shelob, that awful giant spider from *Lord of the Rings*, who has her lair in Torech Ungol beneath Cirith Ungol? Shelob didn't bite me or scare me in any way. In fact, I never actually saw her in person. But I did meet her web. She spun a web in our driveway from the corner post of the veranda across to the radio aerial on my car. It was invisible in the early morning light, and so as I went to get into the car, I walked straight into it. It took me ages to get all the cobwebs off me. I got a stick and cleared the web, and off I went to work. The next morning – same thing again. And the next. And the next!

Each morning, as I once more I braved this passage of doom, I reflected on how persistent the spider was (and how slow a learner I am). Did I not walk through this web yesterday? Did I not, in fact, do the same thing the day before? And the day before that? Did I not on each of these occasions do such damage to the web that I was sure that it would not be there the next time I passed that way? How many times must Shelob and I re-play this game before she gives up?

And then I read that spiders often re-spin their entire web each day!

It struck me that like God this is.

Not that God throws sticky and unpleasant obstacles in my way each day; but that each day God patiently and faithfully re-spins his web of grace. As I blunder along through life I daily break the web, by failing to live up to the high standards of God's expectations. But God patiently forgives me and re-makes the web. I can never make a hole so big that he will not repair it; there will never come a morning when I find he has given up and gone away. Of this, the Bible assures me, time and again – most precious in this passage, the only bright light in the otherwise quite dark book of Lamentations:

*The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases;
his mercies never come to an end;
they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.* (Lamentations 3:22-23).

In these challenging times, I trust you will know each day a fresh dose of the love and mercy of God.