

Lenten Devotional March 6, 2022

Scripture

Psalm 42

1 As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

2 My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

4 These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

5 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

My soul is cast down within me;
therefore I remember you
from the land of Jordan and of Hermon,
from Mount Mizar.

7 Deep calls to deep
at the thunder of your cataracts;
all your waves and your billows
have gone over me.

8 By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,
and at night his song is with me,
a prayer to the God of my life.

9 I say to God, my rock,
“Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because the enemy oppresses me?”

10 As with a deadly wound in my body,
my adversaries taunt me,
while they say to me continually,
“Where is your God?”

11 Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Devotional

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Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Psalm 42 is one of my favorite psalms. It's a psalm of longing, asking for God's help amid the bad stuff of life. The psalmist is remembering all the hope that God brings, even as the psalmist is in the midst of their despair.

We live in a world where toxic positivity is a thing. People tell us "Hey! Don't be sad, because . . ." and list a million reasons why. On the other hand, we also live in a world where people tend to dwell too much in the bad. And to be fair, the last several years have brought us more sorrow than reasons to leap for joy. What I like most about this psalm is that it doesn't tell us to disregard the bad. The psalmist is experiencing something that is clearly not good. However, whatever bad the psalmist is experiencing, they are also remembering the good things, the parties and processions the community held in celebration of God.

In *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, the first in the Narnia series by C. S Lewis, Mr. Tumnus tells Lucy that "It is winter in Narnia and has been for ever so long . . . always winter but never Christmas."

Now, pardon me for mixing up my seasons, but this quote seems ever so appropriate. Lent sometimes feels like a long winter. Many of us have given up something: meat or sweets or coffee. Sometimes we promise to do more of something: smile at neighbors or spend time volunteering. Lent is a time of mourning and sacrifice. We have not yet gotten to the joy of the Resurrection, the joy of Easter morning.

However, like the psalmist of Psalm 42, even amidst the bleakness of the season, hope ever prevails. Our trust and our love in God are always there. We don't need to feel joyful all the time, but in those bad moments, it helps to have something to hold onto. To help us remember that bad days don't last forever, and that good days are coming.

Prayer

Loving and Gracious God,
Sometimes we feel so dry, so thirsty.
We become preoccupied with our bad days, forgetting your presence always.
Where can we find you? When can we gather in worship again? Where do we find refuge?
Help us remember that you are present, right with us, right now.
Remind us to turn toward you, to open our hearts and minds to your loving presence.
Help us remember the good times, even as we experience bad days.
Amen