

Lenten Devotional March 19, 2023

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

The Rev. Dr. Rick Willhite '86

Reading Psalm 42, I'm reminded of a chilly October morning twenty-four years ago. I was on retreat near the end of a year that seemed marked by a series of relational and professional failures. I'd made mistakes. There had been too, in that year, an uncanny number of deaths, one after another, among people I knew. So much seemed to be ending. Trying to imagine the future was peering into midnight fog. I was hollowed out, empty. Awakening from a broken sleep, I left my bed at sunrise and went for a solitary walk. I walked up a country road and through a gate into a fallow field filled with end-of-season goldenrod. I laid down and closed my eyes, exhausted at 8:15 a.m.

A single goldenrod stem arched over the withered grasses where I lay. When I opened my eyes, I noticed a drowsy bumblebee slowly beginning to stir in the warming light of the rising sun. Minutes passed as I watched the bee while near and far around me, crickets began to sing. The lives of these, their whole world, would end quite soon with the coming freeze and snows of winter. The bumblebee began to probe for nectar as the crickets sang, out of a knowing deeper than thought, beyond vision or words or imagination. I remembered in those moments, perhaps for the first time, that my heart too, knew something; had always known, in the space between beats, what the crickets knew.

It sustains me still. *Selah.*

Prayer

Dear God, whose grace unfolds in every moment, open our hearts to your loving presence, ever before us in this moment too. May it be so. Amen.