

Lenten Devotional February 24, 2023

Scripture

Psalm 43

- 1 *Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause
against an ungodly people;
from those who are deceitful and unjust
deliver me!*
- 2 *For you are the God in whom I take refuge;
why have you cast me off?
Why must I walk about mournfully
because of the oppression of the enemy?*
- 3 *O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.*
- 4 *Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.*
- 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.*

Devotion

The Rev. Anthony R.C. Hita '13

Approaching my 30s, my life underwent a radical shift, disrupting the trajectory I'd followed for 12 years. Career changes, a long-distance move, and the end of my marriage plunged me into a self-induced crisis, prompting an uncharacteristic detachment from the communal worship I'd faithfully embraced for three decades.

Two years into this tumult, a friend asked me to preside at his church. Despite feeling unworthy, I accepted. Standing on the chancel after a two-year hiatus, I choked on my words and fought back tears as I recited words I had spoken hundreds of times before. I sensed a stirring in my heart saying, "When you're done feeling sorry for yourself, get up, there's still work to do."

I wish I could say that all my problems vanished after presiding over that service. They didn't. Yet, this experience exposed me to a different facet of God. Raised perceiving God as a benevolent but demanding taskmaster, I discovered Jesus instead patiently waiting on me without the condemnation I had feared. To paraphrase John Wesley, I shifted from the faith of a servant to the faith of a son.

I realized that God's love is not a fixed place but a transformative process—not a state of being, but a dynamic journey of becoming through which you learn to know the One who already knows you, reaching out when you pull away, and opening up when you draw near.

Many without realizing it see God as the Ancient Taskmaster, a distant Sky Father noting our total depravity from a distant throne. But I met God as a patient friend, present during tearful nights and long days. God desires our faithfulness but also welcomes our anger, failure, angst, and pain. Jesus wants to be with us in both mountain highs and rock bottoms.

Prayer

Thank you, Lord, for accepting us as we are, but never leaving us there. You who give ear to our joys and our pains, as we walk through this journey of life, deepen our understanding and open our hearts to know you in new and surprising ways. Amen.