

Lenten Devotional February 18, 2024

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.*

Devotion

The Rev. Dr. Rick Willhite '86

Psalm 42 is a hymn of longing. Arising from the poverty of spirit that Jesus called "blessed" (Matt 5:3), this psalm is an empathic prayer in company with all who have turned to God in longing and felt a distance. Psalm 42 should be read by candlelight.

The psalmist has been there: longing for divine consolation but before an unfelt presence of God that can seem like an absence. Better times held light and music, but this person stands in a moment when ache is immediate and deep. Their ache stood alongside hope and trust. Ache, hope and trust together: moments in the darkness. Strident voices ask, "Where is your God?" And sometimes, the harshest voices taunt from within. Doubt and trust can dwell alike in a heart that knows its many moments.

The best counsel comes from those who have been there. The Psalmist made a pause; a pause long enough to acknowledge and become intimate with the longing of a moment. They acknowledged all their heart moments without judgment. They listened to the longing, becoming intimate with it. This is not an easy thing to ask, nor is it self-indulgent. Pause with the longing and be drawn near our tender shared humanity. Longing is what unites us most. The pause can also clear a space. It can make room for the new. Pause, we are counseled by one who knew. The longing may become a prayer; a song to sing in the night.

Prayer

You know us so well, Loving God. It's true: our hearts know many moments. At times we're lost in distraction. Gather us before you as we pause in the longings of our hearts. May we hear your song above the noise of our busy and longing world. May we hear your song of Grace and possibility and live as instruments of your peace. Amen.