
Where has God Gone in Your Life?

Scripture Reading: Psalm 42

Introduction:

- Along with the reading from Psalm 42 this morning, I would like you to turn in your bibles to Psalm 43 and read along with me.

- Do you remember a really special worship service? One we might call a “mountain top worship service?”
 - I remember several, but there are a few that really stick out in my mind
 - I remember going to the gospel meeting at Bakerville and Larry Sanders preaching a lesson on us getting up and being active in our faith.
 - I wanted to get up and shout AMEN at everything he said and every scripture he read, It was a mountain top moment for me.
 - I also remember the first time I worshipped with this congregation.
 - I felt honored to preach here and I had a sense if I never preached another sermon, the Lord had called me to preach here that day and preach that sermon on unity
 - Folks, it was a mountain top experience

- All of the mountain top experiences have something in common
 - I was sure that I was in the presence of God.

- Worship was good NOT because it was entertaining or emotional, but because of the spirit of the Lord
 - His grace
 - His Mercy
 - And His majesty surrounded the assembly of His saints worshipping Him

- In our reading from God’s Word this morning we can understand that the psalmist remembers mountain top experiences
 - They were celebrations!
 - He led groups of people to the worship singing songs of thanks
 - They marching up the hill singing songs of joy
 - They were on their way to God’s House and those were special times

- But the psalmist is singing a different song in our reading
 - Today in our reading his heart is broken because worship isn’t much of a celebration
 - He’s on the mountain top and for some reason he doesn’t know where God is

DISCUSSION

- ❖ We always want mountain top experiences to last – but they don’t

- ❖ Just as you can remember really special worship services...
 - Maybe you also know about times of worship that seem routine and stale

- Maybe you can even remember days you didn't bother to worship because for some reason or another you just didn't have it in you.
 - Not that you were lazy or you wanted to do something else
 - No – You felt numb and cold inside
 - No matter how loud you sang
 - No matter how upbeat or encouraging the singing was
 - No matter if the preaching was better than usual
 - Something was missing
 - You felt like a deer...
 - Panting for water
 - And unable to find a trickle of a stream to quench your thirst.

❖ That's the way the psalmist describes it.

- He is dry and parched
- He longs to be near God but instead of the mountain top—He finds himself in the desert
- No songs of praise come from his lips
 - His swollen red eyes see no sign of God's face
 - He is only blinded by the sun
 - And there's not even an edifying voice of a fellow worshipper speaking a psalm, hymn, or spiritual song to spur him on to love and good works

❖ While in the desert he faces a question about God

- “So, where is your God?”
 - Why do you think He abandoned you like this?

- Maybe it was something you did?
- Maybe there is some unresolved sin or pride in your life?
- What is God trying to teach you through all this suffering?
- How is it that you feel as if you've fallen out of favor with God?
- If you don't feel close to God, then who moved?

❖ I want us to concentrate on that last question for a moment

- “If you don't feel close to God, then who moved?”
 - If you were to ask the psalmist at this point in his writing, you might be surprised at his answer.
 - He would most likely say, “It seems to me that God moved.”
- The psalmist feels abandoned and forgotten and that things just don't seem fair
 - Being forgotten is one of the worst feelings in the world and rejection can hurt worse than punishment
 - Being forgotten means being alone –defenseless
 - Being forgotten means losing stability and security
 - And through those feelings of being forgotten and abandoned we begin to feel as if all things in life are unfair
- The psalmist just wants to know why God has thrown him aside
 - He's lost in the darkness and his enemies have taken advantage of him
 - He feels shame and embarrassment
- He has praised God like an adoring child praises his father
 - Confident in the Father's goodness and boasting that the Father can do anything
 - And then in the moment he is needed the most
 - The Father isn't there

- And the child is abandoned
- Now all the praise and boasting about the Father becomes embarrassment for him

❖ Are any of us thirsty for the presence of God in our lives?

- This Psalm is for the thirsty, parched souls who long for God
 - Those who long to be immersed in His rescuing, merciful grace
 - It's for all who will accept God through Jesus Christ into their lives and be quenched

❖ The chorus as it appears in the scriptures doesn't appear in our contemporary song

- But maybe you'll remember it from now on.
- It's chorus admits to the sadness and despair we feel.
- It starts off with a little self-talk...
 - "Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me?"
 - As I read this to you look to your Bibles and read it along with me.
 - Can you feel the despair in his song?
 - Despair is a vicious thing!
 - It's an auto-immune disorder of the soul
 - It attacks your soul and then turns your soul against you for feeling sad

❖ But the chorus caves into HOPE

- “Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God.”
 - The thirsty soul in the desert decides to become a pilgrim
 - He call for God to send him light form His mountain to lead him out of darkness
 - He calls for God to bring him to the source of his true joy
 - Like the deer that is going to sniff out the source of water
 - He will trace it back to the head waters and his hope is that his thirst will be quenched

- ❖ Being a pilgrim means accepting the wilderness
 - But settling for nothing on the journey except the deep, quenching waters of God
 - That’s why we need this song
 - To send us on our journey...
 - A journey for a relationship with God
 - A journey for a better relationship with God
 - A journey back to God
 - Too many people settle for the poison of the wilderness
 - “Feeling better has become more important to us than finding God”
 - Our feelings and man’ traditions have overtaken the importance of our spiritual state
 - We need to be searching every day for God to play the most important role in our daily lives

- ❖ In John 4:1-26, Jesus spoke to a thirsty woman in the wilderness

- She felt far from God and so it isn't strange that she ask, "Where is God?"
- She'd heard from her family that God is in His Holy mountain
 - But she'd heard from her enemies that God lives in a big house in Jerusalem
 - Where is God?

❖ Folks, she's thirsty...

- Jesus isn't surprised by the fact that she's had five husbands and the man she's with now is not her husband
- Like many of us who long for God
 - She's turned to other people to satisfy only what God can satisfy
 - Only God can quench her thirst
 - So when Jesus speaks of living water – deep water – that not only satisfies thirst but taps a spring of gushing water into their soul—SHE WANTS IT!!

❖ **John 3:16-17**, ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

❖ **Matthew 27:35-36**, ³⁵ Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "*They divided My garments among them,*

*and for My clothing they cast lots.”*³⁶ Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there.³⁷ And they put up over His head the accusation written against Him: THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

- ❖ **Matthew 27: 45-50**, “⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶ And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” that is, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*”⁴⁷ Some of those who stood there, when they heard *that*, said, “This Man is calling for Elijah!”⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran and took a sponge, filled *it* with sour wine and put *it* on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink. ⁴⁹ The rest said, “Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to save Him.”⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.”
- ❖ **Matthew 28:1-8**, “¹ Now after the Sabbath, as the first *day* of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb. ² And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. ³ His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead *men*.⁵ But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. ⁷ And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you.” ⁸ So they went out quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring His disciples word.”
- ❖ Thousands of people are sitting in church pews today, maybe for the once a year they attend a worship service.

- I’m glad that this takes place

- I'm glad because it may be that one time is all it takes to make people remember the sacrifice of God through Jesus Christ
- I'm glad because maybe just maybe those people will thirst for God through hearing of the sacrifice of Christ
- I'm glad because maybe just maybe those people will see the importance of celebrating and remembering the sacrifice of the Lord every single day of their lives
- I'm glad because maybe just maybe those folks will be taught what the scriptures teach about assembling with the saints on the 1st day of the week
- I'm glad because maybe they are sitting in a worship service and taking an active part and now they realize what it means to have that thirst quenched.

Do you thirst this morning?

Are you stuck in the wilderness of the world?

I invite you this morning to join the pilgrim journey

There is a beam of light we're heading for – It leads directly to God

Because God is the source of kindness and joy and there is deep water there to wash over us and soak us and cleanse us

On that journey we sing the song left to us by the sons of Korah...

“Why are you so discouraged? Why are you so sad? Put your hope in God!”

Put your life, your everything in the hands of God through Jesus Christ this day.

If you are not a baptized believer come today and be washed

If you are a wayward child of God come today and be cleansed.

Come now as we stand and sing!