

A Reflection from Leisa on Psalm 42 and this week's Gospel Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Psalm 42 is the prayerful lament of a musician who longs to return to Jerusalem to serve God at the Temple. The tone of the Psalm suggests captivity and permanent separation from his homeland. The Psalmist faces taunts of 'Where is your God?' from those around him. He senses abandonment and discouragement deep down in his soul. But he comes back to God's faithfulness and trusts God to help him.

In the ancient world many worshipped gods made of gold, silver, wood and stone – idols that did not have life. In contrast the Psalmist believes and trusts in a living God who is able to satisfy his longing. Worship is a natural outpouring of our longing for God and an essential aspect of deepening our relationship with God.

Have you had days like the psalmist, wondering where God is in all of the turmoil, waiting patiently for the opportunity to re-connect with the world and with the worship - the church fellowship, as well as the building; not sure when that will be or if it is the right time, the right place, or if it's right for you?

- When have you experienced a longing for God?
- Can you recall a worship experience where you felt very close to God?
- Where was it?
- Why was it special for you?

Or, if there is not an experience that comes readily to mind, then perhaps this week you could take time each day to read and reflect on Psalm 42. Read it slowly and use it as a prompt for to shape your prayers. Talk to God about your personal longing to be with him and for his Spirit to be at work, afresh in your life – for your worship to be experienced in new and unexpected ways.

Just like the psalmist, we too long today to be fully restored to our life with God and others. Restored to our families, to our churches, to one another; to those things familiar. For the world to be restored to God's perfect plan of justice, mercy and peace, for us all.

And yet as we begin to restore some of the everyday patterns in our lives; we will find that our lives will be both restored and re-storied, into both familiar and new patterns of everyday living. Patience, is a virtue, - my husband has loads - or so he says! It is patience which could be seen as one of the powerful messages found in this week's parable from Matthew's gospel. The householder holds back from dramatic and destructive intervention to save as much as possible of the harvest. Until the harvest comes, it is nearly impossible to discern the wheat from the weeds and the tares.

In our time of waiting, we do not yet know what miracles the grace of God might accomplish through our patience. In patience, we are refined, as we wait to go back to patterns and rhythms of our lives that are not yet fully known. What might we learn in our time of waiting about ourselves, others and God? What are the wheat and tares, in the waiting room of our lives today? And so, as God's people gather around the world - on-line, in church buildings, in Zoom Rooms, in both now familiar and changed places of worship - I pray for our story with God to be remembered, rejoiced in and re-written. We stand at this next 'coronavirus

crossroads' – waiting to sow the goodness of God, afresh into the fields of our lives and the world around us.

We pray, Jesus, maker of tables and teller of stories, create in us a new imagination, we pray. Invoke in us greater celebration. And grant to us new language with which to sow your eternal Word into a world, longing for justice, truth and freedom, that we know can only be found in the goodness of God and the saving grace of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord. **Amen**

Psalm 42

As a deer longs for a stream of cool water,
so I long for you, O God.

² I thirst for you, the living God.

When can I go and worship in your presence?

³ Day and night I cry,
and tears are my only food;

all the time my enemies ask me,
“Where is your God?”

⁴ My heart breaks when I remember the past,
when I went with the crowds to the house of God
and led them as they walked along,
a happy crowd, singing and shouting praise to God.

⁵ Why am I so sad?

Why am I so troubled?

I will put my hope in God,
and once again I will praise him,
my saviour and my God.

⁶⁻⁷ Here in exile my heart is breaking,
and so I turn my thoughts to him.

He has sent waves of sorrow over my soul;
chaos roars at me like a flood,
like waterfalls thundering down to the Jordan
from Mount Hermon and Mount Mizar.

⁸ May the LORD show his constant love during the day,
so that I may have a song at night,
a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹ To God, my defender, I say,
“Why have you forgotten me?

Why must I go on suffering
from the cruelty of my enemies?”

¹⁰ I am crushed by their insults,
as they keep on asking me,
“Where is your God?”

¹¹ Why am I so sad?

Why am I so troubled?

I will put my hope in God,
and once again I will praise him,
my saviour and my God.

(GNT)

