

Thirsty For God

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 02 January 2022

Preacher: Pastor Cal Morrison

- [0 : 0 0] A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, you are my God, I earnestly seek you.
- My soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.
- Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live, in your name I will lift up my hands.
- My soul will be satisfied, as with fat and rich food, my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. When I remember you upon my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night.
- For you have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy. My soul clings to you, your right hand upholds me.
- [1 : 1 6] But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down in the depths of the earth. They shall be given over to the power of the sword. They shall be a portion for jackals.
- But the king shall rejoice in God. All who swear by him shall exalt. For the mouths of liars will be stopped.
- God, we thank you for your word. We do not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.
- And so we thank you. We pray that you would bless the reading of your word this morning. Well, there is a little monument on a boggy hill.
- And the moorland's about seven miles south of Straven. It's basically the middle of nowhere. It's in the picture there, if you can see that. It's called Ochen Gellich Monument.
- [2 : 1 8] Surrounded by trees. It's only reached through some unforgiving, boggy terrain. And with health and fitness on our sides, when I was in my twenties, a group of us went to visit this monument.
- We attempted to visit this monument. We failed to visit this monument. There was a guy with us who had too much hair product in. He had to turn back early on account of the flies that covered his hair.
- There was a girl who panicked as she sunk into the bog, knee-deep. We had to pull her out. And we all had to use a fallen tree to navigate our way back.
- Save us getting lost. We got back to the car without ever seeing this monument. A proverb comes to mind. Zeal is no good without knowledge.
- He who hurries his footsteps misses the mark. Now, I did return a couple more times myself, and I found the proper way to get there, where only the last 500 meters was actually rough.
- [3 : 2 3] But even then, it's a long walk, and it's not something you want to do with your nice shoes on. This monument was erected and occasioned by a sermon by the Reverend William Logan on 6th of July, 1834.
- The monument was placed there to mark the site of a conventicle, a secret meeting place of the covenanters in the mid-1600s.

This was a precursor to the Scottish Reformation. Christianity basically made a covenant, refusing to accept the king's claim as being the supreme head of the church.

And because of this, they were put out of their buildings and forbidden from holding religious gatherings. No, you're not allowed to do church. And if found doing so, they faced being arrested, maybe tortured, or even executed.

Yet believers would gather. They would gather in their hundreds, in their thousands, in remote places like this, to pray together, to hear God's words preached, at the risk of their very lives.

[4 : 37] Certainly the risk of their nice shoes. It wasn't convenient, it wasn't comfortable, to get to a Sunday service in those days. It required sneaking over unforgiving terrain in the middle of nowhere, in all weathers, with great consequence I've caught.

There wasn't a building out there. There wasn't a path. There wasn't central heating. Last week we read from Zechariah's prophecy in Luke about the one who would deliver us from our enemies so that we might serve him without fear.

And I'm not denying that there are risks at times to gathering as worshippers. There certainly was risks for the covenanters. And I'm not denying that there are reasons for fear at times.

Threats are real then and now. But the idea of this is that a day is coming when we will be able to serve him without fear.

And this suggests that we, this suggests not that we cannot or shouldn't serve him when fear is present. But rather, the history of Christianity is that believers have always gathered as worshippers, whether or not under threat or in fear.

[5 : 57] And so it's not whether or not we should gather, it's whether or not we do so in fear. The hope and promise that we looked at last week in Zechariah's prophecy is that one day we will, without fear of threat of any kind, be able to serve him.

I thank God we're not in the days of the covenanters. I thank God we don't need to go out there to that place again. We don't need to rescue people from the bog, rescue people from flies on their heads.

We don't need to be out there in the freezing cold, gathering in secret. There are people throughout the world that are doing that right now. Christians in this world who are having to meet in secret.

And I thank God that we don't need to. But we gather. Whether or not there is fear, we gather.

Whether or not there is fear, we worship. We serve him. What does that mean for the years that we've just been through? I don't think there will be any monuments to visit that mark the church's desire.

[7 : 08] in the past couple of years. And that is the church's desire when it has warmth, buildings, and legal protections.

The question that comes from Psalm 63 is, how thirsty are we for God? Myself included. How thirsty really are we for God?

How earnestly do we seek him? You see, that's the one thing that was especially noted about the covenanters, that they were earnest. They could say in the wilderness with real conviction, Oh God, you are my God.

Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. You see, I thought this psalm would be appropriate this morning, looking at the year ahead and all the uncertainties.

Whatever the circumstances may be, we might find God to be in the midst of it all. And I pray that we might find him to be more satisfying than anything else that we might look for in this life.

[8 : 16] Psalm 63 was written by King David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. Now, immediately you must think to yourself, a king does not belong in the wilderness.

What's David doing in the wilderness? It wasn't a holiday. King David, the greatest king in Israel's history, in the wilderness, on the run.

He was on the run. There was only a couple of times recorded when David was on the run in the wilderness of Judah. The time when King Saul sought to kill him.

And then much later on, when his own son, Absalom, sought to take the throne and kill his father and kill everyone else with him who would challenge or threaten him.

You see, this psalm was likely written when Absalom, King David's son, tried to kill King David. Tried to kill his own dad for the throne. Verse 11, David refers to himself as the king, which he wouldn't have done before succeeding Saul.

[9 : 18] So this is most likely the time when Absalom committed treason. You can read about it in 2 Samuel, chapters 15 to 18.

It's an excellent account. Despite his downfalls, you really see a wise and godly David. And those who followed him into the wilderness are generously taken care of.

They both speak of those who faint in the wilderness to drink. And the people being hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness. And while the people thirst and faint in the dry land where there's no water, here is King David, their king.

And he has something else on his heart. Something else on his mind. Not food, not water. Not even fear or threat. He's got God on his mind.

You see, when David got word of the threat to his throne and his life, the hearts of the men of Israel had turned to Absalom. He left his throne, and he left the tabernacle behind.

[10 : 19] Then some of his loyal servants brought the Ark of the Covenant to him. But he said no. He ordered them to take it back. He fully trusted God. He was a man full of faith.

A man after God's own heart. And this is what he said. He said, Carry the Ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back and let me see both it and its dwelling place.

And if he says, I have no pleasure in you, behold, here I am. Let him do to me what he seems good to him. This is the setting for this psalm that we're in this morning.

This is the situation David was in. He wasn't having a good time. Leaving his palace, his throne, his honor, his city, the tabernacle, the Ark, the dwelling place of God, on the run in the dry and weary land, hunted by his own son, who sought his life.

Is that your situation this morning? Maybe you're having a bad day. Maybe you had a bad year.

[11 : 28] Maybe the outlook for the future doesn't look great. I don't think that's to be celebrated. I don't think that's something that we ought to want for ourselves.

But it's something that we can find comfort in the Scripture from when we look at someone like King David. If you feel like you're having a bad day, or even a rough season, if you feel like you're in a dry and weary wilderness, let the words of David give you some encouragement and perspective.

Theologian Derek Kidner, an excellent theologian, he gives a wonderful outline for this psalm. Verses 1 to 4, he says are, What a wonderful way to split it up.

You see, we all long for something, don't we? God has made us this way. God has made us with desires and passions, longings. We're all meant to find our satisfaction in Him.

We all long for God, even if we don't know that it's God that we long for. We all long for God. All people long for God, but they don't all seek God.

[12 : 50] If God doesn't transform our hearts to believe in Jesus, then no one seeks God. Most people seek after the goodness of God, goodness from God, all the blessings of God, but without God Himself.

But the truth is, wherever we stand, we all long for something. We're all made to desire God. John Piper says, God is most glorified in you when you are most satisfied in Him.

We're all made to desire God because God, and God alone, is the only one who can truly satisfy us. You see, health just doesn't do it. Wealth cannot do it.

We won't find true satisfaction in food, or in water, or in clothes, or money, or possessions, or health, or jobs, or relationships, or any of these temporary things. Man does not live by bread alone.

God has made us to love Him above all else because only in Him will we find satisfaction that doesn't fail because God doesn't fail. God is the source of all goodness and glory.

[13 : 58] He's the creator of all beauty and joy. He's the author of all life and love. Where else are you going to find your satisfaction? What temporary thing on this earth can quench your thirst when eternity has been placed in our hearts?

So when we find ourselves distant, we all do. We all go through this. Find ourselves distant or in a weary wilderness. We shouldn't think that God has abandoned us.

We shouldn't think that God doesn't love us. We shouldn't think that God is not in control. What we are meant to think is this psalm. What we are meant to say is, God, you are my God.

Not just any God. You are my God. What we are meant to do is earnestly seek God. Earnestly I seek you. What we are meant to see is where our heart's desire truly is.

All too often we look in the wrong places for things to satisfy us. And when David's people, King David's people, are looking for shelter, safety, food and water, all good things, all the kind of things that you want to look for when you're out in the desert, but David is seeking something greater.

[15 : 14] He's looking to God. David's mind is not on the home comforts, and he had some home comforts. He knew more than anyone else.

What he left behind was greater comfort, greater warmth, greater pleasure than any of the rest of them. But what he missed the most was God. You ever feel like you miss God?

You ever feel like when you're lying in your warm bed or when you're eating a hot meal or whatever? This just doesn't do it. This doesn't do it. I need to go back for more, more, more.

David's priority was God. His heart was longing for God's dwelling place, God's presence, God's sanctuary, God's glory.

His soul was parched before his lips were. His priority was God because he knew that everything else good in his life was from God. See, that's a true thing.

[16 : 16] All these things that we enjoy and we're meant to enjoy, the good things, they come from God. Without God, we would have none of this. God is the source of it all.

Jesus put it this way and we just sung it. Seek first the kingdom of God. Don't worry about things. God knows what you need. God really does know what you need.

Don't worry. Ask God. Bring all your requests to God. He will never tire of you asking for him. And to do that, we must seek him.

Listen to the motive behind David's desire for God. He has looked upon him in the sanctuary, beholding his power and glory. He knows God. He has experienced God.

He is drawing on his relationship and his experience of God. Previously, God made a covenant with David through the prophet Nathan. When David wanted to build a house for God, instead, God said that he would build a house for David.

[17 : 23] God has been with him wherever he went and cut off all his enemies. God said that he would make David's name great and they would establish the kingdom of his offspring forever.

We know who that is. Surely that's going to make David confident. Even in the wilderness, he's confident of the covenant God made with him because he knows God says something, he's going to do it.

Promises of God never fail. God does not fail. It doesn't matter if we're in the desert. It doesn't matter if we're in the grave. God does not fail. We know that the offspring of David, whose throne and kingdom is forever.

We know that that is Jesus. He's the forever king. He's the forever king who has a forever kingdom. His kingdom is the one we are meant to seek. Seek first the kingdom of God.

Colossians 1.13 says, He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved son. Another motive for David is God's steadfast love.

[18 : 34] Thanks for singing that song. I'd never heard that song before, but about his love being better than life. There's no greater love than the steadfast love of God. David goes as far as saying the love of God is better than life.

Now I need to ask myself, is this what I think about the love of God? Do we think like this?

You see, one thing I'm coming to realize, I never imagined that I could have the capacity to love someone as much as the love that I have for my boys. You know that when you get married, and you know that when you have children.

A love that you never knew you could have. These two boys of mine, Levi and Ezra, have stolen my heart. But the love in relationships, both between husband and wife and between father and son, those things are supposed to reveal to us something about God.

You see, David, our David, not King David, David has a little phrase that I love. It's a reminder of a truth from the Bible.

[19 : 46] He always says this, God is not a father that if you ask him for bread, he would give you a rock. I love that. He's not. I know that I would give my son anything he asks.

I'm wrapped around his finger. How much more is God going to bless you? When he does so before you ask, how much more when you do ask?

Do you not owe your entire salvation to him before you even asked for it? Did he not come before any of us turned toward him? He showed his love for us and that while we were still sinners, he sent his son to die for us.

How much more when we ask him as our heavenly father? does God not delight to pour out his grace and mercy and blessings on us?

Of course he does. If you love to give to someone, if you love someone, imagine what the love of God is like. I don't think that there is a shred of possibility that we could ever overestimate the love of God.

[20 : 57] Truly, King David says the love of God is better than life. You see, God's love is the reason you exist. God's love is the reason that you breathe.

God's love is the reason that his beloved son, his perfect son, who pleased God perfectly, came to earth, lived as a servant, obeyed the law completely, took on false accusations, and was nailed to the cross and put his glory and power aside to die at the hands of sinners to forgive and reconcile you and me to God.

His love is the reason for him defeating sin on the cross and rising from the grave to defeat death. His love is the reason that he would give any of us eternal life. That is God's love for you, God's love for me, the reason you're forgiven, the reason you have a new heart, the reason that you have eternal life by his death is because he loves you.

If you're going to the new year thinking about anything, know the love of God for you. It's greater than you could ever estimate. God is most clearly revealed in Jesus and his love is most clearly seen on Jesus on the cross.

Do you want to know that love? Don't you want to know a love that's worth trading your life for? Remember, Jesus said that the greatest love that a man, the greatest love is that a man would lay down his life for his friend.

[22 : 31] That's talking about someone proving their love for another. But even more than that, David is saying that even the love that we receive from God is worth trading our life for. His love is better than life.

I don't know if you know that, but God's love is better than life. Sure, we've all come to know that. But sometimes we need reminded, myself included. David is saying this, remember, the love of God is greater than life.

It's not just any life. It's not because he had a poor life. This is the king, the life of a great king, one of the greatest kings that ever lived. He would trade his life for the love of God.

Oh, that we would truly know the love of God and that we would truly desire him. You see, it would be easy for David to lay down and worry.

He was in the wilderness. He was exposed to all manner of danger from weather, from wild beasts, from a rebellious, bloodthirsty son with an army. How many reasons does David need to be depressed?

[23 : 42] How little are the things in comparison that we worry about when we lay down at night? It would be easy for David to worry when he lays down or when he sits on watch, but instead, his mind is on God.

He's remembering. He's meditating. Oh God, you are my God. You're my God. And when you are my God, what shall I fear? God, your steadfast love is better than life.

I don't care for this. I will leave the throne. I will leave the palace. I will leave the sanctuary behind because your love is better than any of this. Your love is better than life.

I will remember all that you've done and all of who you are. My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. Do you know who upholds you?

Even when you don't realize it, it's God. I will bless you as long as I live. In your name, I lift up my hands. See, this is like Jacob who would not let go of God until he blessed him.

[24 : 49] David clings to his God who he knows is the source of satisfaction. David clings to the one whose grip is tighter and whose hold is firmer.

Friends, cling to God. Know that like a child who holds his father's hand, that child is holding on. The child doesn't realize that the father's grip is much firmer and surer.

You see, I love how this is the way that Bill signs off his messages in his mighty grip. God has got a hold of you. Jesus said in John 10 that no one can snatch away any of his sheep out of his hand.

Jesus has got you. David says, when I remember you upon my bed, meditate on you in the watches of the night. I think this has probably been the case for David all along since he was a wee boy.

Even when he was only watching over sheep in the night, I reckon this is the same heart of the boy who God chose to be king. That while out in the fields watching over sheep, he was remembering God.

[26 : 03] he was meditating upon God in the watches of the night. His heart and mind were ever on God. There are many things that keep us awake at night, many things that can occupy our minds during the day, but which of those things can truly satisfy us?

Which worry can add even a minute or second to your life? You see, when God is our desire, we will find God to be our delight.

When we find God to be our delight, we will truly be satisfied. David was confident in the covenant God made with him. David was confident in the relationship that he had with God.

He was confident in who God was, not in his own ability to please God, not in his own ability to gain the favor of God.

He was confident in the character of God. David was confident so that this threat to David didn't cause his faith to waver.

[27 : 11] I will not be shaken. It was in the psalm before, wasn't it? He only is my rock and salvation. He's my fortress. I shall not be shaken.

It doesn't matter what comes against you. On God rests my salvation and my glory. My mighty rock, my refuge is God. Psalm 62. He trusted fully that he was not in the hands of his enemies, but he was in the hands of God.

That is where you are. If you read 2 Samuel 15-18 and read this psalm, you'll see that his belief was that his fate was in the hands of God.

It doesn't matter what was going on. It doesn't matter what Absalom was attempting to do, what army was coming against him, what lacking of resources he had in the wilderness.

He was in the hands of God and he trusted that. What happened to him would be the decision of a sovereign God and no one else.

[28 : 16] And he knew that sovereign God to be good and just. He was confident that he knew God and then he would accept whatever came from the hand of God.

Isn't that what Job says? Blessed be the name of God. He gives, he takes away. Blessed be the name of God. Folks, this is where the rubber meets the road.

This is where we exercise faith. This is where we stand on the promises of God. If God is our desire, we will long for him and we will find him.

If God is our delight, we will be satisfied in him. And if God is our defense, we will trust in him no matter the circumstance. Whether or not we come out of the wilderness in this life or whatever this year ahead holds, the outcome will be a million times better if God is our desire and our delight and our defense.

if we are in the wilderness or whatever situation we find ourselves in, may we learn to desire God. May we learn to see that only he can satisfy forever.

[29 : 26] May we know the joy of knowing God and delight in him and enjoying him forever. And may we trust him to be our defense that even in the grave and even before the judgment seat, he will bring us into the kingdom of his beloved son, granting us eternal life in Jesus' name.

You see, it's this time of year that people say, Happy New Year. It's a wish for the year ahead. But may I be so bold to say that when God is our desire, when God is our delight and when God is our defense, whatever the circumstances may be, we will find it to be strangely happier than we can possibly imagine.

Because in God we will truly be satisfied. that's what my prayer is for myself, for us, for this year ahead and beyond.

And to God be glory through Jesus Christ forever and ever. Amen.