

Why are you Hiding, Lord

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Preacher: Malcolm Macdonald

[0 : 00] We're going to sing now to God's praise from Psalm 42. Psalm 42, and from the beginning of the psalm.

Like as the heart for water brooks, in thirst doth pant and pray, so pants my loving soul, O God, that come to thee I may. My soul for God, the living God, that thirst, when shall I near unto thy countenance approach, and in God's sight appear?

My tears have unto me been meet, both in the night and day, while unto me continually, where is thy God, they say, my soul is poured out in me, when this I think upon, because that with the multitude I heretofore hath gone.

With them to God's house I went, with voice of joy and praise, yea, with the multitude that kept the solemn holy days. O why art thou cast down my soul?

Why in me sword is made? Trust God, for I shall praise him yet. His countenance is my need. Like as the heart for water brooks, in thirst doth pant and pray.

[1 : 26] Like as the heart for water brooks, in thirst doth pant and pray.

So pass my longing soul, O God, that come to thee I may.

My soul for God, the living God, doth my heart when shall I near.

But do I countenance approach, and in God's sight appear?

My dear God, my dear God, Shove unto me, even me, O then the night and day, Why love to me continually, Where is thy God to see?

[3 : 07] My soul is cold and housed in me, When is thy God to see?

Because that with the multitude, I am here to fall and glown.

Where then in true cause as I went, With voice of joy and grace, Yea, with the multitude, That kept the solemn holy days, O why art thou cast out my soul?

O why in me so dismayed? Trust God, for I shall praise Him, Yet His hand not in my name.

We can, for a short while, turn to Psalm 10, In the book of Psalms, And we can read again at the beginning of the psalm.

[5 : 06] Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? Someone has said of this psalm, That it's not a psalm that you would ordinarily go to, Unless you were journeying from the first psalm, Through to the end of the psalms.

It is perhaps bearing all the characteristics of what is an imprecatory psalm, and in a sense that is true.

Although in another sense what you see the psalmist deciding for the enemies of God's people is the very thing that the enemies of God's people desired for themselves.

It is nevertheless a psalm that speaks to us of the desire that is in the heart of God's people for God himself.

- [6 : 32] Some time ago I was reading in a book of daily readings an account of, well, an interpretation rather of somebody who was explaining what it was like for God's people when they were missing the presence of God.
- And I used this illustration, and it was based upon a natural event. Probably, I don't know how recent it was, but there is a time in the natural calendar of events when the moon draws close to the earth in its orbit.
- And it arrives at a point in its orbit when it is as close as it could possibly be in the natural calendar of progress.
- In a way, he was amongst many who were desirous of seeing this occurrence, because when it took place on a clear night, the moon would appear as bright in the sky as it ever does.
- And it is seen with a bright shining, a voluminous capacity that is unusual.
- [8 : 14] But as it is on many of these occasions, the night that this took place, the day was a bit like this day that we've enjoyed today.
- It was dark, heavy clouds, so it blocked it from vision, the moon. So he didn't see this natural event.
- Much as they would have liked to have seen it, he couldn't see the moon. It was hidden from view. And yet he knew from others who were geographically placed differently to himself that the moon.
- He knew that the moon did indeed, in its orbit or trajectory, come that close to the earth. But he used this as an illustration to indicate that even though the event was hidden from sight, the moon was still where it usually is, and the earth was still where it usually is.
- There was no change to that, even though he wasn't able to see it. He translated that thought then to the way God is a constant in the experience of God's people.
- [9 : 38] Even though there are times in their experience when they are not able to see God and not able to enjoy fellowship with him.
- My question at the very outset this evening is this. Bearing that thought in mind, where is your God tonight?
- Where is your God tonight? If you are going to answer the question, you must answer it for yourself. Nobody else can answer it for you.
- Where is your God? Is he behind a cloud? Is he hidden from view? Is he someone that you are in constant fellowship with?
- Only you can answer that. The scripture tells us that there are seasons in the experience of God's people when their awareness of where God is changes.
- [10 : 49] Where their sensitivity to the presence of God alters. And things are not the way they would wish them to be.
- And looking at the words of this psalm, we can see that the psalmist is dealing with a situation somewhat similar to that.
- And his question at the very outset of the psalm, he asks twice, why? Why standest thou afar off, O Lord?
- Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? The question why is asked of the Lord, but it is asked in such a way that he is blaming the Lord for not being where he would want them to be.
- Because it is insinuated in the second part of this statement. Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

[12 : 07] It is as if he is saying, this is when I would expect you to be there. This is when I most want you to be, where I can see you.

And yet, I am not seeing you. I am not finding you. And if we were honest, and I'm sure you are honest, but perhaps you're not as willing to unbear your soul publicly to make known how you are with God in the here and now.

How you are in your personal relationship with God, whether you are as aware of him today in your experience as much as you would want to be.

That psalm that we sang to begin with, it's interesting to note when you go through the psalm, how much the psalmist is talking about past experience.

He remembers. He remembers. He reflects upon past experiences. And that suggests that his present experience is not one where he can relate to what was once in his experience in a previous part of his life.

[13 : 41] And sometimes when the Lord's people are in a situation, sometimes of their own making, sometimes a situation over which they have no control, they look for God and they can't find God where they expect to find him.

And sometimes they accuse God. One of the commentators tells a story about a colleague in the ministry who relates his own experience as a 15-year-old boy.

I'm not sure if he was converted then or not. But as a 15-year-old, his father was taken from him by death. And he struggled with that.

His grief knew no bounds. He was alone. He was lonely. And he was fearful. And he went out into the hills and climbed up onto a mountain or a hill and he lifted his eyes to the heavens and cried to God.

And his words to God were, if to God at all, is there anyone there? Is there anyone there?

[15 : 11] God at all? Because in his experience of his lostness or the loss that he was experiencing, he expected God to step in and to give comfort.

And yet that comfort was not forthcoming. And he expected that comfort to come from God. And yet God did not provide that comfort.

And sometimes there is that experience in the life of the Christian. They may not stand on top of a hill and shout to God, is there anyone there?

But they feel that in their heart of hearts. And their thoughts are, I would expect you to be God to me in my grief or in my pain or in my hurt or in my...

whatever it is that comes their way. And there are many things in the experience of the Christian that make them feel like this.

[16 : 26] Now, you may not be like that. And if you're not, well, praise God that you're not. If you're someone and you're constantly on the same plane and you've never lost God, you've never lost sight of God, you've never been aware of a moment when God was not where you expected to find him.

And if that is the case with you, then you must be honest and you must declare that. But if it is different to that, then you cannot hide it.

You cannot pretend that it's other. Because there are people who have this experience of the psalmist, who are asking the question of God, why are you standing so far away from me?

Why are you hiding yourself from me? And the person in that experience may think themselves to be completely alone, may think there's nobody like me.

There's nobody who has experienced this. The Lord's people are constantly aware of God being with them. Well, that is not the experience we find within the scripture.

[17 : 48] So if we go back to that original question, where is your God tonight? And my contention is you can still be a Christian and not be able to say where he is.

you can still be a Christian and not be able to say well, as far as I'm concerned, he is he is in my heart and in my mind and in my soul and he is governing my thoughts.

Now, what I want to say is that that might be your experience. I don't for a moment doubt that the Lord's people have a complete conviction about the theology that the scripture presents to them and that if you ask the question about God, you are able to say with complete certainty and understanding what it means that God is everywhere, that there is no place where God isn't.

You're in full agreement with the psalmist when he goes to Psalm 139 and you read that psalm and that psalm is your psalm. You know that he's in heaven. You know that he's in hell. You know that there's no place in this world where he is not.

And you don't doubt that. But experientially, there may be occasions when you are like this man and you're questioning, well, I would want God to be here but I'm not finding him in this here.

[19 : 27] One of the Puritans wrote a commentary or a book about Psalm 42 which we've just sung but the last verse which we're going to conclude with.

A man called William Bridge and I think the main thrust of this book is to do with the spiritual journey of the believer when they are dealing with depression mainly or spiritual experiences where they are as he puts it himself downcast.

The first chapter really writes in the book is the good man's peace which is a strange beginning for a book that's talking to men and women who are spiritually downcast.

The good man's peace. But his second chapter goes on to talk about what takes away the good man's peace.

What removes the good man's peace. peace. How it may be not taken away but interrupted to use his exact words. The peace of the good man interrupted.

[20 : 52] And I'm sure that the Puritans were as careful as anybody. And he wanted the reader to understand that there are times when things that are urged by right through faith in Jesus Christ.

They are never taken from us but they can be hidden from view. They can be taken from us for a moment, for a time, for an experience of longing being introduced into our lives that we would not otherwise have if things remained as they were.

Some people would say to me and often they do that I am somebody who is normally on a straight. Not too many ups and not too many downs.

They may say that but they don't know me too well. It's not wise for us to present our hearts and our thoughts and our feelings and make it something that other people can explore or consider.

But at the same time if you are just simply the word says you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. And I believe there are many Christians in the world who are constantly struggling with their relationship with God not being as they would wish it to be.

[22 : 44] And the presence of God is something that they yearn to have as a constant that is something that is never ever in any way altered so as to take from them their comfort and to take from them their sense of being his.

when we look at this I'm sorry my thoughts are maybe meandering thoughts but this is the way I was looking at this and preparing this.

When I was thinking of this I was trying to think well what does it mean for the Christian to enter into an experience when the thing that they most value dearly in their Christian experience is the thing that's most under threat.

Their communion with God their fellowship with God their sense of being in God's presence and having his constant ministry through the Spirit when that is taken from them and yet there are times when the Christian will have to endure that very thing for whatever reason sometimes the Christian has to endure what you can call a roller coaster of emotions sometimes they are rejoicing sometimes they are weeping sometimes they are despairing sometimes they are filled full of delight sometimes they have a whole host of different contrasting experiences and they may never know the reason for them at times and when they don't know the reason their instant response is to go to God ask the question why that's the difference between the Christian and the person who's not a

Christian is this a believer who's asking this question the people that he is concerned with that are impacting on his faith the people who are challenging his faith the people who are his enemies the wicked that are numbered there they have no interest in God they have no delight in the fellowship of God they would not miss God if God was to be missed but he does and it may be that you can follow what he is doing here I was thinking when I was reading through the psalm the psalm begins with the man asking the question of God why and then he seems to be transfixed by the wicked did you notice that he starts with God asking God the question why not once but twice and then down to verse 12 he is concerned with the wicked and that itself is it would be strange if it wasn't the truth if it wasn't what is really happening when you're looking for

[26 : 27] God and you're not finding God where does your eye go where do you look what do you look at if you're not finding God you're finding something else that is giving you concern that giving you grief that is giving you more angst in your heart and in your mind and that's what happens with this man but we must remember that that this is something that the Lord's people have Paul the apostle is someone that you would admire as a Christian not only do you believe him to be a man of God you know that he is more than that he is an apostle he is someone that God has given certain gifts you and a certain role within the church of

Christ so he has this place in your affections but he is also someone that you look to who has a real life faith in Christ and who has to endure the same kind of afflictions the same kind of trials and testings that ordinary Christians have to endure we read in the first chapter of 2nd Corinthians we would not he says brethren have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia that we were pressed out of measure above strength insomuch that we despaired even of life but we have the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves but in God which raised the dead who delivered us from so great a death and doth deliver in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us so on just one occasion when Paul is describing to us his own experience but the experience is not the focus of his attention but the

God who is God and sovereign even in that experience coming back to the psalm the psalmist asks the question why not once but twice as I said he asks God but then his attention goes elsewhere but as one of the commentators suggests Dale Ralph Davis the actual question that he asks indicates that the question itself is asked because he does not expect God to treat him like this and is that not part of our problem we have imbibed certain beliefs that make us believe that God does not have a right to allow us to enter into experiences that are not comfortable that are not pleasurable that are not anything other but trials and when he is not with us in a way where we have given him where we describe for ourselves this is how

God is going to be with us in our experience not only do we expect him to be where we would expect him to be but we expect him to be there in a certain way and if he is not there in a certain way we point the finger of blame at him and that's what the psalmist brings to our attention the problem we have we are conditioned as it were by society to believe that because we're good because we're believers because we've been faithful because we haven't put a step wrong that none of these things have arrived to intrude into our experience but where do you find that written where do you find God say such a thing perhaps one of the most the most puzzling books that we have in the scriptures the book of Job puzzling in the sense that there is a declaration made at the outset that this was a man of

God who walked with God who knew the favour of God and who knew the blessing of God on his life and out of the blue as it were God permitted Job to experience grief and we have that most wonderful question oh that I might know oh that I knew where I might find him that I might come even to his seat verse 8 he says behold I go forward but he is not there and backward but I cannot perceive him on the left hand where he doth work but I cannot behold him he hideth himself on the right hand that I cannot see him I'm sure you're familiar with these words does anyone doubt that that is a man of God who's asking that question Job laments that he has lost touch with God he is grieved because

[32:17] God is not where he would expect to find him his communion with God has been affected and worse still God does not explain to him why God doesn't explain to him why read through the psalm and you can't find God coming to him with an explanation an answer to the question why someone one of the commentators says no the question why is not answered but there is a who that comes to the fore and because of the who that comes to the fore the question why becomes redundant we think that God has to provide us with answers well sometimes God does not do that he is not obliged to do that what is it very briefly what is it that we can go to that creates a situation where we cannot find

God many instantly go to the fact of sin in our lives that it is because of our own sin that we are not able to find God and there is no doubt but that sin is at the heart of many of our experiences where we cannot see God sometimes when we sin we sin and we become aware that our sin has offended God and when we become aware of the offense that God is caused to God we can't lift our eyes to look upon God our head our heart is downcast because we have in our own experience no sense of having a right to access to this God we are grief struck we are heart broken because he himself convinces us of sin that is where this conviction of sin comes from it's not there otherwise if it doesn't come from

God it would never be there don't think that because you're a Christian that you automatically from that moment on that you'll be aware of sin and you'll be conscious of sin and you'll be every time you commit sin that you'll know what it is it is God alone the spirit of God that convicts of sin that convinces of our sin that exposes our sin and when he does that we cannot see him until he reveals himself to us but it is not the only time that God hides his face from us sometimes we're a bit like Elijah and this world of ours is a world that causes us consternation causes us grief Elijah when he was face to face with his nemesis Jezebel he fled from her presence he went out into the wilderness he collapsed in a heap wanting death rather than to go on physical tiredness was sufficient to cause that the

Bible tells us that God saw fit to nurture Elijah because he needed to be sustained physically and when physical debility when physical tiredness assails a mental tiredness doesn't follow doesn't take long to follow behind and spiritual tiredness accompanies both and when that happens you are not as aware you are not as conscious of God as you should be there are times when God will hide his face from you in order to give you a longing for himself there are times when God will send leanness upon your soul because you have neglected to care for your soul the way you should and he will teach you that only he can truly sustain you in the way that he can the question for you again to finish off is where is

God in your life tonight in my life tonight are we as conscious of him is he as near to us as we would wish him to be has he hidden his face from us as individuals as a congregation as a generation it may well be that that question is so difficult for us to answer difficult in the sense that we know the answer but we don't want to face up to it and if the answer is difficult then we need to face up to the fact that we have to come to himself to come to us to reveal himself to us you know I know every Christian here is persuaded of the promises of God they are not nullified by our experiences they are not diminished by our experiences whether we are tonight so so that just like the moon was hidden from sight and that person who was wanting to see this natural occurrence and it was blotted from sight just as surely the moon was where it ought to be and

[38 : 36] God is where he is and God has not moved from where he is and God is still faithful to his own but every one of us wants the near presence of God every one of us wants the assurance that he is our God that he is going on with us and we with him and when we have to endure the sorrows of not having that then we need to apply ourselves with his help looking for him and waiting for him to once again presence himself in a discernible way in our lives and in our hearts may may God encourage each one of us wherever we are with him tonight if you're with him and he's with you and you're conscious of it praise his name for that praise his name and ask that that continue if there is a coldness and aloofness on your part or you fear that his hidden fell from you remember that

God is your God still and that you're entitled to come to him as your heavenly father and ask why why have you done this in the hope that he will reveal to you what he is doing and why let us pray Lord help us to understand that you are a God who is not a God afar off but a God who is near at hand may we have that experience of knowing your presence at all times and being able hear our petitions not only on our own behalf on behalf of others some who are tonight perhaps with their hearts heavy and their heads down lift up their heads and fill their heart with the desire that only you can satisfy bless the sick bless the suffering bless those who are grieving and sorrowful even in our own community here this evening watch over as cleansed from sin in

Jesus name we ask it amen our concluding psalm is psalm 42 again this time we're singing in gaelic and the last two verses of the psalm psalm 42 and the last two verses there 60 in sokapjaitozdv■. 3.

■ ogni■ Our tale is about, La Lumpur Leia Abis Les Peyres'm Pel puisqu'il Bebì O This kind the Babylonian I have Jesus reached your landing.

For I will shall■ tasty. My God is his commanded spittany.

[42 : 49] THE NUEV Piano Piano Piano Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.