

Psalm 63

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[0:00] Today's sermon text is Psalm 63. At the conclusion of the reading, I will declare, *This is the word of the Lord.*

And the church, in a joy-filled response to his revelation given to us, will together respond, Thanks be to God. Psalm 63. My soul thirsts for you.

A psalm of David when he was in the wilderness of Judah. O God, you are my God. Earnestly I 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.

[0:57] And 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. But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into 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 exult. For the mouths of liars will be stopped.

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Thanks Jim. Tim and Ruth, thank you for that beautiful time of testimony.

Psalm 63 is one of the most well-loved psalms. And for good reason. One early church father from the 4th century AD wrote that it was decreed and ordained by the primitive church fathers that no day should pass without the public sharing of this psalm.

[2:07] He also observed that the spirit and the soul of the whole book of psalms is contracted into this psalm. And I've really enjoyed meditating on this psalm over the years.

And as you have just heard, so have Christians for quite some time. And to me, what is most stunning about this passage is what we see King David, the main character, do and say in light of his treacherous situation.

After I read this psalm, it's impossible for me to not look in the mirror, back at myself and ask the question, does my soul thirst for God like David's did? And do I find satisfaction in God like David did here in this psalm?

Why or why not? And so today, that's the question I want each of us to be able to answer. Today's question, do I thirst for God and find satisfaction in him?

So today we'll look at David and then look at our own hearts and examine ourselves in light of what we see. So let's pray and then jump into our text.

[3:09] Heavenly Father, would you soften us to your word, to your truth? God, would you give us insight? And would you allow us to glean from this rich passage?

Lord, would you cause our souls to thirst for you and to seek you? Amen. I've got to grab my water. That's not a prop either, considering what's going on in this psalm.

Thirsting. No, I'm serious. It wasn't. It wasn't. I think there's three. I want to emphasize three things today in Psalm 63 that this psalm makes clear about a soul that thirsts for God.

And here's the first. Soul that thirsts for God seeks God. This psalm takes place in a most difficult time in King David's life.

[4:13] He's being hunted by his son, Absalom, who wanted to take the throne in his life. And this story is found in 2 Samuel 17, if you want the full version. The setting of the psalm is in the desert of Judah in the wilderness.

David, our main character, is in a mentally and physically desperate place. He's vulnerable, scared, and without the normal creature comforts of consistent food, shelter, and safety, the essentials. This caused him to feel some certain feelings and emotions. The most obvious, of course, being in a desert would have been his physical thirst and feeling unnourished and weary.

The end of verse 1, Psalm 63 says, As in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So David's in a desert. He's thirsty. He's discouraged. He's weary. And what does he do?

I mean, it's obvious. He grabs an Uber to the local Cumberland Farms, 32-ounce Aquafina, the big one. And while he's at it, maybe one of the hot dogs on the roll thing.

[5:18] Obviously, that's not true. We're tofu dogs. Tofu. Ben, you got me distracted.

Okay. His next best move, we think, would have been to quench his thirst. But his physical thirsting actually led him to make a spiritual connection.

He realized that the thirsting he needed most to quench wasn't physical, but spiritual in nature. Look at verse 1. God, earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you.

My flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there's no water. So he sought God. And he did so earnestly, the text says, denoting that he sought God early in the morning, in the day.

He prioritized his seeking God as a matter of first importance. He sought God to quench his soul's spiritual thirst with the same mental focus and vigor as a man who was stranded in the desert would diligently be seeking water.

[6:30] But why? Well, what David struggled with most in his wilderness trial was a nearness to God that he has previously experienced in the sanctuary in public worship.

That's what he missed. This is what he felt most deprived of and thirsty for. So David's mind began to dwell on his past worship. Let's read verse 2. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

And the sanctuary was the place of the Lord where worshipers gathered. David's earthly place of interaction with God. It contained both the physical elements and rituals surrounding worship and the opportunity to be standing in the Lord's house.

A spiritual connectedness to the Lord in his presence. He missed the fellowship, the connection to God, the communing with God, and seeing God's glory in the sanctuary, knowing more of and encountering God's power and glory.

Verse 2. I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Whereas his body may have been giving him signs of pursuing hydration, his soul beckoned him towards God.

[7:41] His soul thirsted for God. So he sought God. And thoughts of God is what he meditates on in the wilderness, amidst his depravity and despair.

His mind was filled with encouraging, worshipful thoughts, contrary to what may have felt natural to him at that time, which would have been discouragement and frustration, anger, bitterness towards God for allowing him to be in this state.

So in these first two verses, we've seen David seek God by recalling his times past. Recalling what he knew of God and enjoying him again in the wilderness.

He sought God to satisfy his most important thirst, spiritual thirst. Our first point, a soul that thirsts for God seeks God. Do you?

Do you? If not, it's likely because you're seeking things other than God in trying times. You might not be thirsting for God and finding satisfaction in him because you're seeking things other than God in trying times.

[8:49] We must quench our spiritual thirst over physical thirst, just like David did. Every day you and I can and do face difficulty trials in any realm of life.

Home, work, school, parenting, family, social, private, public, in your house, in your car, with your friends, doing your hobbies, the list goes on. As you know, fill in the blank.

Life is full of ups and downs and twists and turns. Good times and not so good times. And these not so good times and difficulties, trials, whatever you want to call them, leave us wanting more, don't they?

And what we don't have or what we feel like has been taken away from us. And they often elicit sinful responses like frustration and anger and bitterness and yelling and grudges and selfishness and pride.

The Bible tells us that as Christians, those who follow Christ are freed from the power of sin. Say, freed from the power of sin.

[9:56] Freed from the power of sin. Right? We aren't free from temptation towards sin or the presence of sin, but we're free to choose not to sin.

Paul says in Galatians 5.1, It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.

I don't know about you, but time after time, the difficulties and trials I faced day after day, simply by existing as a human, produce sinful responses out of me. But I think David's example in Psalm 63 can give us hope.

David sought God. He tended spiritually to his situation. He pursued God and not sin. He quenched his spiritual thirst and not his physical thirst because he saw the link between the two.

But sometimes we fail to see the link between our physical and spiritual situations. I know I do.

Here's a for instance. I told this story here about seven years ago.

[11:06] You know, when Ainsley, my now seven-year-old, was a baby, she despised the car. How do you think I knew this? Yeah, someone said it. Thank you.

She cried. She cried. And she cried. And she cried. Like some parents, kids crying, isn't really my thing.

You know? It's not for me. And what I did was I tried to solve my physical problem with different techniques.

Like the rocking and the singing or the music. Driving faster. Not that fast, but holding her little baby hand.

And guess what happened? I didn't crash. No, someone said, guess what happened? It didn't work. Or it did for a little bit.

[12:13] And then it stopped working. And so I would get really annoyed and impatient. And that was sin. That was a sin response to my physical problem. And it was recurrent.

It was every time we were in the car. And so driving was miserable. But eventually the Lord kindly showed me that there was a deeper spiritual base, spiritual root.

When I tended to my problems spiritually, even though my physical situation didn't change, right? She's still crying. The sinful symptoms went away. And so I dealt with it spiritually by preparing my mind before getting into the car.

I sought God like David did. I prayed. I considered scripture. I chose to be thankful for what I did have instead of grouchy for what was going on. Which, by the way, changes the mood of everyone around you too, doesn't it?

Just like David did. I chose to be joyful and thankful. Psalm 119.11 says, I've hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

[13:16] And that's one piece of, you know, that's something we have we can use, right? The sword of the spirit, right, is the word of God. It's an offensive weapon we have against sin.

And it worked. And I found peace, rest, and joy in the least likely of times, just like David did. But why did it take me weeks and weeks to resolve my sin?

Because I was seeking things other than God in trying times. I wasn't seeing with spiritual eyes. Seeking spiritual solutions to physical problems.

I wasn't fighting spiritually. And so sin was the result. Once I saw my spiritual lack, what my soul thirsted for, God, then even though my physical situation hadn't changed, my attitude and heart did. And so here in Psalm 63, David shows us how to seek God instead of pursuing sin in our trial and difficulty. Let's move on to the second thing we see here in this text. The soul that thirsts for God is satisfied in God.

[14:30] What does David find in reliving the sanctuary moments while in his desolate time? the same things he had found in the past in seeking for God. Verses 3 and 4. 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. Recalling the supreme value of God's steadfast love resulted in his unadulterated praise and eclipsed the weight of his disastrous situation.

It renewed his perspective, didn't it? Your love is better than life. He says, it's more important that I have God's love than it is that I stay alive physically.

Remember, he's being chased unto death. It's more important that I have God's love. He can't go on without God's love. He's gaining courage. He's gaining stamina, perspective.

He chooses a heart of praise rather than a heart that dwells on why he shouldn't be where he is right now or why it isn't right or why God isn't fair or what he could have done differently to avoid being in this situation.

[15:38] Maybe you felt like David did in this desolate and frustrating place. How did you respond? Did you turn towards complaint or praise?

David basked in God's steadfast, covenant, persevering love. He says, my lips shall praise you. The mouth speaks that which overflows from the heart.

Luke writes in his gospel. And how true this is. Both in the good ways and in the bad, huh? David's heart was positioned for praise.

Say, positioned for praise. Positioned for praise. Nice job. Nice job, Theo. Positioned for praise in such a dry, desolate, scary time.

He says, in your name I'll lift up my hands which depicts a heart surrendering, a submission in the midst of great uncertainty. It illustrates full reliance on God's sovereignty even in the chaos of life.

[16:41] Let's read more of our passage starting at verse 5. My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food and 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 sing for joy. The David's thirsting soul is satisfied in the Lord. This is the reason he sought God to satisfy not his physical but his spiritual thirst.

Then he's gone from thirsting for God to being satisfied in God. He says, my soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food.

If you think of the state of David's body at this point he's gone perhaps several days without much water or food to think of how depleted his body is. The satisfaction physically and emotionally that real food and water would have brought him is tremendous.

And he's thinking about physical nourishment but he's not begging God for it. He's using it as an illustration for a spiritual fullness that he's feeling in the Lord. Think about how you feel after eating a big full meal.

[17:53] You're filled to the brim with satisfaction from food, right? And maybe regretting it a little bit sometimes. And this is how he felt minus the regret. Spiritually, he's full to the brim.

Perfect, satisfied, content. And look what it leads to. Verse 6, praise even in the night when I remember you on my bed and meditate on you in the watches of the night, the text says.

He cherishes the night watches. All you Navy guys probably don't cherish the night watch in the same way. But you can.

You can cherish the night watch, can you? He cherishes the night watch despite being exhausted and sleep deprived because of the thirst-quenching satisfaction he receives from God as he communes with him and considers him.

He recalls the help the Lord has been in times past and now in his current situation too. Even though his life's on the line, he sings for joy, text says, because God is protecting and providing for him.

[18:56] And the shadow of your wings is a place of safety and shelter as a bird rests nuzzled under a mother's wing and almost becomes naive to the dangers and what's going on in the outside world.

That's the comfort he felt in this situation tucked under the protective outstretched arm of his heavenly father. So what we see in these verses here is that David cries out to God. He says, I thirst for you. I faint for you. And so he seeks God by recalling in his mind the things of God in light of what he's seen in the past. And look what he finds, a nourishment, a spiritual thirst-quenching satisfaction beyond what a glass of water or a warm meal could have accomplished for him physically.

And though he's still in the wilderness, he's still deprived of food and water, yet he's nourished. He experiences satisfaction, joy, safety, provision, contentment, and of course a heart of worship and praise.

And David wasn't just going through the motions of praise and worship, was he? He was experiencing them in a meaningful and transformative way. So the second thing we've seen today is a soul thirst in God is satisfied in God.

[20:15] But you might not be thirsting for God and satisfied in him if you're regularly being satisfied with something other than God. If we don't seek God and his satisfaction, we develop a bad habit of the same.

But it's a dead end. What's the result of seeking sin or something other than God? Misplaced satisfaction. And any satisfaction apart from God doesn't endure, it's not lasting, and is by its nature sinful.

Sinful satisfaction gives the appearance of fixing our problems, but it actually spins us into cycles of idolatry and dissatisfaction, pushing us further away from God and what is good and truly satisfying. Maybe you resonate with this. I know I do. Choosing sin leads us to choose more sin. It's human nature to pursue pleasurable things.

I mean, come on, who can really eat one cookie? Right? I'm not saying cookies are sinful. It's an illustration. It's hard to eat one cookie. You've got to have more.

[21:33] But more of sin leads us away from finding true satisfaction in God in our difficult situations like David. Is your satisfaction in God or in sin?

Here's some diagnostic questions. What do I praise with my lips? What do I praise in my heart? Is my life overflowing with a deep love for something and not for God himself?

It's good to ask yourself from time to time, what was my satisfaction in today? What was my joy based on? You know, life can be so difficult and frustrating sometimes and I acknowledge that. I feel the same way. But either way, sinful, dead-end, destructive satisfaction leaves you empty and longing for lasting, true satisfaction, doesn't it? Maybe you felt that. And maybe you're pursuing sinful satisfaction in major prolonged seasons of difficulty.

I see you. I see you. And you're so fatigued. And you've been fighting for so long and maybe you don't see an end. I see you. God sees you.

[22:45] God sees you. God sees you. He's the hectic day-to-day ups and downs of life.

It's crazy out there, man. It's so much. It's so difficult. I see you. God sees you.

And if God can bring surpassing peace and joy amidst David's devastating life circumstance, and certainly he can do it in yours. And I'm not trying to make little of your trial.

I'm trying to make much of our God. Amen? But do you believe that he can do it? Do you trust that he can satisfy your soul?

Are you willing to turn from your sin and towards God and push towards endurance in your trial? When we don't seek God and find satisfaction in him, we never will find real satisfaction.

[23:53] And the reality is that we will become, we will be overcome by our life situations. And discouragement, frustration, and negativity will be characteristics of our lives.

That's not what God wants for his people. here's our third observation. A soul that thirsts for God endures through difficulty, endures difficulty through confidence in God.

I think the most important part here is what we see in these next few verses. David seeking God and the thirst quenching satisfaction God brings as a result encourages him to cling to the Lord and endure his trial with confidence in the Lord.

My soul clings to you. Your right hand upholds me. What a strong confidence in God. We can tell from the preceding verses that David had no doubt God would sustain him spiritually in the desert

place, but he also was confident that God would protect his actual life too.

He's recognizing that it is not his strength or his ability by his own means that his soul is held up in this trying time, but David says his soul clings to God and admits that it's God's power.

[25:11] Maybe you've failed because you're using your power and your strength, not God's and his strength and his sovereign will that upholds even David's life and his inability.

So clinging, I'm not talking about clinging like one would to the rocks of a cliff when they've fallen and their last hope is those four fingers. I hope my clinging will hold.

I hope it'll work. That's not the clinging we're talking about. It's clinging like a child who's being held by their parent, held by their parent, clinging tightly, wrapping their arms around their parent's neck out of fear, but being confident that even if their arms were to somehow break loose, it is after all not them, but the parent who's been holding them up and has done so time and time again.

It's not, God, I'm clinging to you. I hope I don't fall. It's God, I'm clinging to you and I know your right hand is holding me. The right hand of God represents his power and might, his sovereignty. His sovereign hand over what? Verses 9 through 11 read this way. It's over evil, but those who seek to destroy my life shall go down to the depths of the earth.

[26:30] They shall be given over to the power of the sword and shall be a portion for jackals, but the king shall rejoice in God. All who swear by him shall exult, for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

Although it hadn't transpired yet, David had full faith that God would prevail over sin and evil. Those who sought to destroy him would be removed from the earth because desiring evil against God's people is an act that begs God's intervention.

Verse 10 is possibly a prophecy on David's part. Indeed, his greatest enemy Saul and Saul's army would not prevail over David. They would fall to the sword. The portion for jackals cast an image of the defeated men laying their bodies dead on the earth becoming food for the animals.

There is no place for evil against God's people. So the sovereign hand of God that David clung to was the same hand that would defeat the enemies that were pursuing David in the wilderness.

And what would David do as a result? Verse 11 says that evil would not triumph, but the king shall rejoice in God. All who swear by him shall exult, for the mouth of liars will be stopped.

[27:45] David's confident that those who are God's people, those who swear by God, declare their allegiance and their commitment to God, they will rejoice. they will exult.

What is evil? The mouth of liars will be stopped. God's people would prevail in victory. What an amazing way for this song to end.

It begins with a desperately pleading David who was physically thirsty and spiritually longing for God and ends with a king who has sought God and becomes satisfied even in the darkest of times. A king rejoicing in victory. A king who was valiantly courageous through his God.

A king who has declared sure victory over his enemies even before it's happened. A king who was sure that God would bring salvation to him and those who swear by God.

[28:47] Friend, do you have faith in this God, in the God of David? As verse 11 says, are you part of the group that has sworn a vow to God?

Have you made a commitment to God? Are you a loyal follower of him? If you are, then you should exult or the NIV says glory in that. Why? Because just as God defeated sin in verse 9 in our story, so also Christ has defeated sin and death through his dying on the cross being resurrected.

Through his death in our place, he paid our debt before a holy God, a price that would cost us our lives. He has paid it to those that would trust in him by faith alone.

This is the Christian gospel, the good news. David's satisfaction was in God's victory over evil and you and I can receive salvation.

Sorry, David's salvation was in God's victory over evil and you and I can receive salvation because Christ has triumphed over evil. If this is a new idea for you, something you want to talk about, I'd love to have a conversation at the service with you.

[30:04] Be my joy. So our third and final point today was that soul that thirsts for God endures difficulty through confidence in God. But why does this all matter?

Why does it matter if I thirst and find satisfaction in God and something other than God? Why is it important that I endure my trials and tribulations through God's strength? Because bringing glory to God is the reason you were created.

That's why you exist. In closing, I want to offer this encouragement. Christian, praise God because through Christ you now have a new purpose in life.

The Bible says if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. It's no longer about you. It's about God. It's about God working through you and in you.

And as Christians we seek to endure life's difficulties in order to bring glory to God. We're not seeking just our own comfort anymore.

[31:23] I'm not seeking what's best for me anymore. I'm seeking what brings glory to God. But we can't do that apart from seeking him and finding satisfaction in him.

Because the alternative like we discussed is choosing sin. And when we choose sin we're making life about us not God. We're studying 1 Corinthians as a church.

We'll be back at it next Sunday. And we're answering the question what is a healthy church? Well, a healthy church amongst other things is one where each member seeks to care for the spiritual needs of the other members.

I care about your spiritual state. I desire to walk with you. To help you endure through that trial. I want you to seek God and find satisfaction in him.

I'm going to care for you and you're going to care for me. Why? So that in the end we along with David will declare with confidence our position and mission as Christians even through despair.

[32:47] The NIV version of the Bible translates Psalm 63 11 this way and it's so beautiful. the king shall rejoice in God all who swear by him shall glory in him.

Church, let's help each other rejoice in God and glory in him. So we'll end with today's question where we started.

Do I thirst for God and find satisfaction in him? While David had the ability as we saw in Psalm 63 to endure his time of difficulty because he sought God and found satisfaction in him.

Will you do the same? I pray that you will and that you will help others here do the same as well.

Pray with me. Heavenly Father we are thankful that you are the God who you are and that you act as you do.

We thank you that you can quench a soul's thirsting. We pray that we would honor you in our seeking our satisfaction and our enduring Lord for your glory and for our good.

[34:09] Amen. Amen.