

# My Soul Thirsts For You

*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: 04 July 2010

Preacher: The Venerable Daniel Gifford

- [ 0 : 00 ] This is a Psalm 63. It's in the green sheet that was handed out to you. It's part of our sermon series on the Psalms, a short series that will go to the end of July.
- And this Psalm 63 is a very powerful and beautiful psalm. It's a psalm that the church historically has seen as very, very important.
- In fact, St. John Chrysostom, sometimes we say the prayer of Chrysostom in our prayer book, was wrote in the end of the 300s that this prayer, this psalm, should be sung every single Sunday or said every Sunday when you are together as a church.
- And there's a reason for that. It's because this psalm, as it says in our sermon series, is a psalm of experiencing God. It talks about what is involved in really knowing God and loving Him.
- It is a psalm that tells us that a true experience of God is not so much what He can give to us, but loving who God is in Himself, in who He is.
- [ 1 : 14 ] And the wonderful thing about this psalm is that it's written from the perspective of somebody who is experiencing God from the inside. He is showing us, David is, what his experience of God is like as he prays.
- And it helps us because we may wonder, well, what does it mean to experience God? Does it mean super spiritual experiences of feeling anointed by God all the time or God speaking to us directly every day about what we do, where we should go?
- Is it psalms where there are spectacular gifts or is it an experience where spectacular gifts are given? And the answer is no. The answer is that experiencing God will involve loving Him for who He is, knowing Him in Himself.
- And we see this in Psalm 63. And let's turn to that in verse 1. David says, O God, You are my God as He begins.
- And that is covenant language. In other words, it's language that the God who created everything has brought David into relationship with Him.
- [ 2 : 29 ] Where He loves David and David loves Him. And that word, my God, is a beautiful expression that David knows God and belongs to Him.
- It means that he is close to God and belongs to Him. And that word, my God, is a beautiful person.
- And in just about every class that Alexander has been in, since he's been in school, he's just finished grade 2, there has been other Alexanders in his classes.
- Just about every one. And so when we have talked about him to other kids or to parents, we have often had to say, My Alexander.
- Or our Alexander. And that phrase that we are using means that he is close to us. That he belongs to us and we belong to him as well.
- [ 3 : 48 ] It is about the closest possible relationship that you have. By calling somebody, My son. Or my wife. My husband. And in the same way, when David says, My God, he means that he belongs to God and God is his God.

And that is what the Holy Spirit teaches us as well. That's what Jesus brings us into. This is the gospel. It says in Romans 8.15, You have received the spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. And so when David says, My God, he has tremendous confidence in that relationship.

And Romans 8 tells us that the relationship that Jesus gives you and me is even closer. It is more intimate and more sure.

He makes us say, Abba, Father. And so David's prayer in Psalm 63 is very much the type of prayers that we pray as those who follow Christ.

[ 4 : 54 ] We say, My God. And so if God is close to David, he is closer to us in Jesus Christ. Now the question comes up, you know, if God is that close to David, why in verse 1 does he go on to say, Earnestly, my soul thirsts for you.

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. It almost sounds as though God is absent.

That he's far away from God. That he doesn't know God and he's sort of feeling after him. But that's not the sense of this at all. David longs for God because he knows God.

Because he has experienced God. And he is personally close to God. It's because God is close to him that he feels God's absence very keenly.

He has experienced God and that's why he seeks him. There is something awful and good about David's situation in the psalm. If we had given you the whole psalm, which we should have, the very, right under Psalm 63, it would have said, a psalm of David who is in the wilderness of Judah.

[ 6 : 15 ] That's how the psalm starts. And we know by that that the only time that David was king and he lived in the wilderness was when his son Absalom rebelled against him and had a number of soldiers at his disposal.

And David had to flee Jerusalem into that wilderness for his life. And Absalom's army of thousands were seeking to kill him during this time.

It was the worst of times. His own son, David's son, was seeking to destroy him. And we know from 2 Samuel that it was a time of great hunger physically and thirst and tiredness for David and his small group of people.

But the good thing about this time is that anything that could distract David from God was stripped away. Everyone and everything that he could count on in this world had let him down.

Yet his relationship with God continued. He still knew that he belonged to God and that God was his God. That's why he starts the psalm in that way. And in that verse 2, he's bringing to us the essence of prayer.

[ 7 : 30 ] It is to long for God because you know him and belong to him. David has met God and that's why he earnestly seeks him in this psalm.

And I think that there is great encouragement here for us because there are many ups and downs in a Christian life. There are many times when you feel far away from God and wonderful times when you are close that your relationship with him is very, very warm.

And what you may sense at times is a keen sense of God's absence and a dissatisfaction with it.

And I think that we should be encouraged that that dissatisfaction is actually a sign that God has touched you. That you experience him. That you want to be in close fellowship with him.

It's like a family member or a friend who may live far away or maybe on an extended business trip or traveling and you miss them precisely because you are close to them.

[ 8 : 37 ] Because you know them and love them. That is why you keenly desire to see them and to know them again. And that's why David says in verse 2 So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary beholding your power and your glory.

You see he's saying I have known God. I have worshipped him together with the people of God. I've experienced God. That's why I earnestly seek him. And we don't know exactly what how David experienced God for him to be able to say I have seen God's power and his glory.

But we know that he would have heard in the sanctuary in the temple he would have heard about God's power and glory in the many acts of rescue. that he would have heard about in God's word in the temple.

And we heard about that in Psalm 136 last week. He also would have seen in the temple God's power and glory in the praises of his people who are gathered together in singing to God worshipping him and obeying him as well.

And he would have known that that people his people were people that God had created for himself. An example of God's power and glory. He also in the temple would have seen symbols of the holiness of God like the tabernacle and his presence as well like the tabernacle and the need for sacrifices for a sinful people.

[ 10 : 06 ] And I think maybe another way he would have seen God's power and glory is in his own repentance. That he asked God to cleanse him and to know that that had happened to know that God had come into his life and allowed him to return to him as an example of God's power and glory in the forgiveness of sins.

So in these and probably many other ways David experienced God in the sanctuary. He had tasted the goodness of the Lord and that is what he hungers and thirsts for as he is living in a forsaken wilderness as a forsaken king.

Now what you couldn't miss last week if you forgot everything about the sermon last week I am hoping you remembered one thing and that is in Psalm 136 the people know that the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

It was said 26 times at least and this is what comes through in David's prayer in verse 3 he says your steadfast love is better than life.

In other words to know your commitment to me God to know your mercy and your goodness poured out on me to know that you love me and will never fail me that is better than anything in this life.

[ 11 : 29 ] And so in God David knows his security and his identity his purpose and his hope. He knows that in all the things that he has experienced of God in his word and in the people that are God's people he has known that God is steadfast in his love and that is forever.

And that's why David prays in verse 3 my lips will praise you so I will bless you as long as you live in your name I will lift up my hands.

You see David here is worshipping God by what he says and by what he does with his hands it's not just at church it's in the wilderness it's his whole life his speech and his actions because he has experienced God he knows who God is and he loves him for who he is.

Now Psalm 63 is critical for the health of our souls this morning and here's where it gets practical for us this morning because verses 1 through 4 have been about David's spiritual appetite you know you can't miss it he hungers and he thirsts for God he seeks God and it makes us think about our own appetite for God a big appetite for God causes us to seek God and thirst for him when in the cycles of our lives we might feel very far from God a poor appetite prevents us from tasting the goodness of God and so the question is how can I develop this and deepen this appetite for God that we see in David's life how do we truly experience God what does that look like well verses 5 through 8 show us what that looks like to truly experience God and he says this in verse 5 David says that my soul will be satisfied with fat and rich food and what he means and my lips will praise you now this teaches us that we should be filled with only the best food for our souls this is what

David is after and the implication is that we would say no to unhealthy spiritual foods that spoil our appetite for the real God our two boys are at the age where they are inevitably very hungry just about 15 to 20 minutes before the actual supper is supposed to take place so and I kind of remember this in my own life you may have remembered it in your life as well but what they want is they want something sweet and they will actually say that so if I offer fruit or bread or cheese or something they'll say no no no I want something sweet and if they're honest they'll say no no I want something that's bad for me for my snack and what do parents say in response they say we want you not to ruin your appetite don't ruin your appetite because why we want as parents for our children to have real food to have an appetite for what is healthy for them will nourish them and keep them strong now sin is like that sweet snack before our actual supper because sin ruins our appetite for God those categories that can be wrong appetites often will involve sex power and money those are the categories that are sort of God's substitutes they don't feed the soul and they don't bring lasting joy but they can be something that we desire above all other things and it may be no accident that these are the things which would have been taken away from David in the wilderness those categories of desire and the psalm calls us to a discipline of saying no to idols saying no to desires that would water down or somehow compromise a deep desire for God himself instead David is saying desire those things which will cause your lips to praise

[ 15 : 42 ] God and bring you joy the kind of joy that permeates this psalm and in fact all of the psalms throughout the book of the psalms in the bible and so there is a discipline here that David is giving to us a discipline of saying yes to real food and no to things that ruin our appetite for God now secondly David teaches us in verses six and seven to remember God very simply meditate on who he is in our prayers and I think this is a crucial thing for us to know when we think about how the psalm affects our prayer life and how we experience God David teaches us that in prayer we bring God's word into our lives and the reason I say that is to remember is to bring the saving work of God in the past into our present this is what we learned about last week in

Psalm 136 to remember is for that incredible power of God for his people to be brought into the people's own personal life and for David he also meditates on God and what he does is he thinks about who God is about what he has experienced of God in God's word and through his people as they've gathered together to worship he meditates on that and he allows it to just become part of him as he lies down in his bed he remembers God's power and his love for him that has been revealed in creation and in God's great acts that are brought out in his word and verse seven is wonderful because he sees as he remembers that God has brought power and goodness into and the saving work into the world that he has brought that power into David's life so he says this he says you have been my help and in the shadow of your wings

I will sing for joy you see he remembers how God has been his help in his own life and this is good in our own prayers as well that we not only meditate on what God has done and to remember his saving work in Jesus Christ and throughout scripture but to know that that work is for you and to remember how that has played out in your life as you pray and to give thanks to God because of the ways that he has been faithful to you in many many ways throughout your journey with him it is very very good for us to remember in prayer and then thirdly in verse 8 David says my soul clings to you literally my soul pursues you and your right hand upholds you and what he's saying there besides saying that we should develop our spiritual appetite for God saying no to those things that would displace

God and besides remembering who God is in his word as we pray he says that he will pursue God he will persevere in his devotion to God no matter what happens in his life and remember he's saying that in the low point in his life David pursues God even when he seems very distant and that's not always easy I think you know that and I know that too in our own lives and that's why it's so wonderful that David says your right hand upholds me as I pursue you as I persevere in my devotion to you you are upholding me and this is what Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit for he is our helper he is the one who keeps us clinging to God pursuing him in all situations and that expression of confidence in God is shown in verses 9 and 10 it's an example of it he writes here that as he's writing he's being pursued by people trying to destroy him but instead of taking justice in his own hands

David's soul pursues God in his prayers as you see there he trusts God for his justice and he leaves that justice with God and he says here's what my role in all of this is and all the troubles that I am going through he says the king in verse 11 shall rejoice in God and he calls everyone else who is listening to his prayer to exalt in God as well to praise him to rejoice in him as well and so David experiences God in this way as the one that he clings to that he perseveres with and there in that he experiences God as being faithful to him and he knows that it is true that's why it is so confident as he finishes up this song so I want to close by saying that David experiences God first of all as he desires God above all other desires and second as he reflects in prayer on God's word who he is and what he has done and finally as he perseveres and his devotion to God and as we close we should know that

[ 21 : 09 ] David loves God simply because of who he is not because of what God does for him or he can get from God and David teaches us it is good to pray for our needs yes it is and that is what something David does but the essence of prayer is something more than that the essence of prayer is delighting in who God is longing for him thirsting for him hungering for him desiring him and this is what it means to experience God it is to love him because of who he is to see him as the best thing in our lives and to desire his good as our own and that way the basis of our love is his supreme loveliness and his worthiness he is the foundation of our lives he is the one we will pursue with everything that we have and so our delight and our pleasures are what we find in him so may the Holy

Spirit direct our prayers to that as we read his word as we meet together may our hearts be directed to take our delight and pleasure in the God that David worshipped and that we know in Jesus Christ Amen Amen Amen Please turn with me to page 30 in your Book of Common Prayer.

This morning for the intercessions we'll say the litany. Some of us find ourselves in a wilderness and so we thirst for God in the same way that David does.

Before we begin the litany, let's say the words from Psalm 63. Repeat after me. O God, you are my God.

O God, you are my God. Earnestly, I seek you. Again. O God, you are my God.

[ 23 : 55 ] Earnestly, I seek you. One more time. O God, you are my God. Earnestly, I seek you.

Again, the litany on page 30. O God, the Father, creator of heaven and earth, have mercy upon us.

O God, the Son, redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us. O God, the Holy Ghost, sanctifier of the faithful, have mercy upon us.

O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God have mercy upon us. O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, three persons and one God have mercy upon us.

Remember not, Lord, our offenses, nor the offenses of our forefathers. Spare us, good Lord. Spare thy people, whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood.

[ 25 : 15 ] From all evil and mischief, from sin, from the crafts and assaults of the devil, from thy wrath and from everlasting condemnation. From all blindness of heart, from pride, vain glory and hypocrisy.

From envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. From all uncleanness in thought, word and deed. And from all the deceits of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

From lightning and tempest, from earthquake, fire, and flood. From plague, pestilence, and famine. From battle and murder, and from sudden death. From all sedition, conspiracy, and rebellion.

From all false doctrine, heresy, and schism. From hardness of heart, and contempt of thy word and commandment. By thy mystery of thy holy incarnation.

By thy holy nativity. By thy baptism, fasting, and temptation. By thine agony and bloody sweat. By thy cross and passion.

[ 26 : 27 ] By thy precious death and burial. By thy glorious resurrection and ascension. By the sending of the Holy Spirit. By the heavenly intercession.

And by the coming again in glory. By the Lord, O Lord. By the Lord, O Lord. In all times of tribulation. In all times of prosperity. In the hour of death. And in the day of judgment.

By the Lord, O Lord. We sinners do beseech thee to hear us, O Lord God. And that it may please thee to rule. And govern thy holy church universal in the right way.

By the holy church, O Lord. To keep and strengthen in the true worship of thee. In wholeness of life. And in devotion to her people. Thy servant Elizabeth, our most gracious queen and governor.

To be her defender and keeper. Giving her the victory over all her enemies. To bless and preserve all the royal family.

[ 27 : 33 ] To give to all bishops, priests, and deacons. True knowledge and understanding of thy word. And that both by their preaching and living. They may set it forth and show it accordingly. With the peace, O Lord.

To send forth labors into thy harvest. To prosper their work by the Holy Spirit. To make thy saving health known unto all nations. And to hasten thy kingdom. With the peace, O Lord.

To bless the people of our country and the commonwealth. And to do those set in authority with grace, wisdom, and understanding. With the peace, O Lord. To bless and guide the judges and magistrates.

Giving them grace to execute justice and to maintain truth. With the peace, O Lord. To bless and keep the queen's forces by sea and land and air.

And to shield them in all dangers and adversities. With the peace, O Lord. To give to all nations unity, peace, and concord. That they may serve thee without fear.

[ 28 : 35 ] With the peace, O Lord. To bless and protect all who serve mankind by their labor and learning. With the peace, O Lord. To preserve all that travel.

All women laboring of child. All sick persons. And young children. And especially in our own parish. St. John's.

We pray for Joan. Beverly. Anne. Isabel. Brian. And Luke. To defend and provide for all widows and orphans.

And all who are desolate and oppressed. We receive the peace, O Lord. To bless and keep all thy people. We receive the peace, O Lord. To give to all thy people an increase of grace.

To hear meekly thy word. And to receive it with pure affection. And to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit. We receive the peace, O Lord. To bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived.

[ 29 : 43 ] We receive the peace, O Lord. To strengthen such as do stand. To encourage the faint-hearted. To raise up those who fall. And to finally beat down Satan under our feet.

We receive the peace, O Lord. To succor, help, and comfort all that are in danger, necessity, and tribulation. We receive the peace, O Lord. To have mercy upon all men.

We receive the peace, O Lord. To give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in due time we may enjoy them. We receive the peace, O Lord.

To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers. And to turn their hearts. We receive the peace, O Lord. To give us true repentance. To forgive us all our sins, negligences, and ignorances.

And to endow us with the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. To amend our lives according to Thy holy word. We beseech thee, O Lord. Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us.

[ 30 : 43 ] Son of God, we beseech thee to hear us. Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world. Have mercy upon us. Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world.

Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world. O Christ, hear us. O Christ, hear us. And one more time. O God, You are my God. O God, You are my God.

Earnestly, I seek You. Earnestly, I seek You. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Amen.