

My Soul Thirsts for You

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- [0 : 0 0] Pray together. Dear God, we thank you that in your mercy you've brought us here this evening. We pray, Lord, that you will open your holy scriptures, Psalm 63, to our hearts.
- Let's inform us to be more like your Son, Christ. We pray all these things in his name. Amen. Please be seated. Well, the World Cup is over.
- I've only got one thing to say about the World Cup. Now that it's finished, and that is, go Canada! Four years from now, that will be our time.
- Four years from now, the red and white will be ruling in Brazil. Okay, let's just take a quick vote here. I reckon this is probably split 50-50 for who is supporting who.
- Who is Netherlands? Who is supporting? Okay, oh, good for me. Okay, who is Spain? Who is Spain? Okay. Okay. Well, you might be a little bit confused if you came to church this morning, because we've kind of done a little switch-a-roony on you.
- [1 : 1 0] Usually we track with the morning service. The morning service this week did Psalm 73. We're doing 63. And last week they did 63, and we did 73. Right? So we're backwards.
- But next week we'll be kind of coordinated again. Okay? So we're going to be... And we'll be doing the Psalms until the end of August. So we're looking at Psalm 63 tonight. It's on the green sheet.
- If you pick up your green sheets, we'll be working off that. And I don't know if you realize, this is a Psalm series about prayer. Right? It's actually looking at the Psalms and helping and having a look at them to see how they can actually form our prayer life.
- So at the bottom of each of these sheets actually is a weekly thing to do over the next week about how this Psalm, right? Psalm 63, can help to form your prayer life. That's why we're giving you these green sheets every week.
- Okay. Now, Psalm 63, on one level, is pretty simple. It's a prayer about thirst and satisfaction.
- [2 : 0 9] Right? It's a prayer about thirst and satisfaction. But the Psalms are about the human heart. And so none of the Psalms are actually that simple. Because we are not simple and our hearts are not simple.
- Here's a very simple part of Psalm 63. Right? It goes like this. Our souls need God like our bodies need water. That's the simple, kind of the simple overview of Psalm 63.
- Our souls, right, what makes us who we are, what's at the very core of our being, our very essence. Our souls, our souls need God like our physical bodies need water.
- Right? No God, no life. No water, no life. That's a very, very simple message. Without God, our souls die. Without water, without liquid, our bodies die.
- Now, already, there's a bit of a cultural disconnect for you guys. Because this Psalm was written in about 1,000 B.C. in a desert in the Middle East. Right? We were told right at the beginning. And Melanie read the background to this Psalm.

[3 : 10] Right? David, David is actually on his way through the desert of Judah. Now, has anyone ever been to the desert of Judea? Rather, Judea? It's a desert. Right? Which means it's really dry and really hot.

It's hot all the time. And 1,000 B.C. didn't just turn on a tap. Right? You had to get a well. And you've had to pull the bucket up from the well. And if you were traveling through the desert and you didn't have enough water and you got to the oasis or the well and the well was dry, you could actually die.

Right? And today we're living in Vancouver, which is not that hot and rains and rains and rains and rains. You get the idea, right? So there's a bit of a cultural disconnect.

A bit of a cultural disconnect. I don't know if you've actually had the chance sometime in your life, it would be a pleasant thing to be really, really thirsty. Right? To be really, really down in the middle of your body, thirsty.

It's like your mouth is filled with sand. It's like your skin's cracking. And I read a story this week about a guy who was in the Utah desert in the middle of summer and he was a fit young guy and he actually even had a water bottle, but he died in about eight hours of thirst.

[4 : 16] Right? So we know that you need your body and water all the time to survive. And what this psalm is saying is that it's that thirst, that kind of insatiable longing for water, that is what our soul has when it looks for God.

It's life support. If you are really, really thirsty, it doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter where you're from, it doesn't matter what language you speak, you cannot reason it away. Right? You cannot reason away your thirst.

You cannot argue through your thirst. You cannot suck up your thirst and think it's going to go away. Right? When you're really, really thirsty, it doesn't matter what you do, the thirst will consume you and take over you and it will make you do crazy things to get water.

Right? It's like a primal thing within us. What the psalm is saying is that is what the human soul is like. Right? That is what the human soul is like. The human soul without God is like our bodies without water.

Right? We will die. Now, just a couple things. When you read with me verse one, we're going to spend just a little bit on verse one. So this is, we're going to read together verse one. This is what it's actually saying. Okay?

[5 : 21] So I'll read for you. You read along silently. I'll read for us. Oh God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you and my flesh faints for you.

As in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Here's the first thing. The Bible tells us this and we get it here in some, in other places and in Psalm 63 we get it.

People are built with a spiritual thirst. Right? Humans are built with a spiritual thirst. It doesn't matter where you are in the world and what culture. Religiosity, if you want to call it that.

Religiosity and humanity goes together. There is something within us which seeks to touch what it's called the transcendent. Something bigger than ourselves. Something that is outside our dimension.

Something which is eternal. Well, Ecclesiastes chapter 2, which is a great, Ecclesiastes is a great book of the Bible, puts it this way. It's a great way of putting it. Humans have eternity on their hearts.

[6 : 24] We have eternity on our hearts. That's the Bible speaking. That is what we are like as people. And it's interesting that a couple hundred years ago, sociologists and anthropologists were saying that as science improves and as technology goes forward, and we kind of figure out all the mysteries which we haven't understood for ages, like what is lightning?

And how does the human body work? And what's down at the cell level of growth? And what's out in space? As that happens, there will be less of a need for religion. Because all those mysteries, that's why actually we have religion.

That's why we have Christianity and other religions. And what's actually happened over this time is there's been more and more interest in spiritual things. So since 1980 till today, in the United States of America, there's been over a hundred new religions formed.

That's from the tax department, right? And I'm not talking about Christian denominations. I'm talking about religions, right? Whatever it may be. And even over the last little while, we've seen a resurgence in things like reincarnation, in Eastern religion, in witchcraft.

Even if you've seen the movie Avatar, and apparently we've all seen it ten times according to the statistics, there's two things you get from Avatar, right? Here's the first thing. Ten foot tall blue people with tails are really quite nice, right?

[7 : 45] That's the first thing you get from Avatar. Here's the second thing, right? Did you get the other thing about the green kind of religion, right? That there's actually this life force in the world, and Sigourney Weaver, I can't remember her character in the movie, she dies and her soul gets sucked into the ground and she lives forever through the ground and stuff.

Right. Now, very, very interesting because the Bible says, you're absolutely right, nature is amazing, but you don't worship a tree, you worship the creator of the tree. Right? And you take care of the tree because the creator says to that, but it's close, but it's not there, isn't it?

But it's all, it's the whole undercurrent of Avatar was this religious thing. Right? This whole religious thing. That's the first thing. People are built with a spiritual thirst. Here's the second thing.

And if you're here tonight and you're not a Christian, I think this might be why you're here tonight. Because you actually want to know, you want to touch the transcendent. You want to actually find out, you've got something in your soul that says there's more to my life than just getting up and working and buying a house and doing that day after day after day.

There's more. I know there's more. I know there's more. In my very being, in my very soul, I know there's more. Right. Now, second thing I'm going to say about verse number one is for me, it's for all of us that are here that follow Jesus, is this.

[9 : 01] Do we actually feel this way? Do we feel this way? The Psalms are God speaking to us how we should speak back to him. This is what David says to God.

Oh God, you are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. And my flesh faints for you. As in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

Do we actually feel that way? I'll be honest. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I don't. In the last 15 minutes we have as we're looking at this Psalm together, I'm going to try to work through what David, how he understands God and why he actually has this thirst and why he can only be satisfied by God and why he has this great appreciation of God.

Why does he actually have this? Why does David feel this way? Here's the first thing. We kind of get the background to the Psalm in that little reading.

Did you actually catch that little reading from 2 Samuel, the background to the Psalm? David is in the desert and here's a little tip. Whenever David goes out in the desert, usually something bad is happening.

[10 : 16] Okay? Someone's chasing him or something and he's out in the desert because, what did it say? His son is trying to kill him. Like there's family problems and there's family problems, right?

Your son trying to... What actually Absalom does, which is one of his sons... David has been king for a while. What Absalom does is he gets around... David's away and he gets kind of in the ears of all the advisors of King David.

And he says, you know, King David is really not that great a king. I should be the king. And he kind of gets them all on his side. And he gets his most trusted advisor to actually come on his side. And he waits for King David to come back.

He's his son. He's his son. And he gets a bunch of people together to murder him. David finds out about it and he has to take off with a few of his closest trusted friends. And he's out in the desert.

That's what this Psalm is written. That's when this Psalm is written. And David is in despair. He's without God. And what does he do? He remembers back to Jerusalem and the sanctuary.

[11 : 18] Right? Read with me from verse 2. 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. And in your name I will lift up my hands. The sanctuary means the tabernacle or the temple in Jerusalem.

It was a symbol in Jerusalem of where God lived with his people. And I think as he looks back at the temple and he thinks about the power and the glory of God, he thinks about all these things.

He thinks about God is amazing and powerful and he's created everything. And not only that, God chose Abraham through nothing Abraham had done, but just because he chose Abraham and blessed Abraham to become the father of the Jewish nation.

And God also made the Jewish nation a huge nation in Egypt. They went to Egypt and they became a huge nation. And not only that, he took the slave nation.

[12 : 22] God took the slave nation of Israel out of Egypt, out of the superpower of the ancient world. He tore them out of Egypt and put them in the promised land where they had to conquer numerous tribes who were powerful and organized and he gave them the promised land.

You see, what David remembers, what David remembers is that the power and the glory of God is focused and directed by his love of his people.

Right? By the steadfast love he has for his people. That's what it says. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. The steadfast love in Hebrew, the original Hebrew, is something called chesed.

Right? Chesed. It's one word. And what it means is a type of love which only God can have for his people. It's unbreakable, it's unconditional, and it's unending.

It's that type of love. That's the love that David understands and he looks at. Right? When he's in the desert and his son is trying to kill him. So, I think the closest thing we kind of see to that type of love in our world is the love of a parent for their child.

[13 : 32] Right? So, I've got three little kids. Love them dearly. Sometimes they drive me crazy. We had our car in the backyard the other day. And my boys were hitting with hockey sticks.

They were hitting gravel against the side of the car. Why are they doing that? I don't know why they're doing that. And, you know, I still love them. I still love them. Maybe for a second. No. I still love them.

I still love them. Right? Let's see. If you go and see that. No. You know, there's this natural love a parent has. We will throw ourselves in front of a train for our kids.

You guys don't even have kids, but you can understand that. Right? You can understand that type of love. Right? There is this love you have for your kids, which is unconditional. It's unending.

It's unbreakable. And you know what? We're sinful. We don't even love perfectly. This is a covenant love that God has for his people, for each one of us.

[14 : 34] The great blessing of the Old Testament that God gives to his people is, I am your God, and you are my people. That is a great blessing of the Old Testament to his people.

That's the first thing. So David understands the great steadfast love of God. That's why he can say this in verse 3. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.

And he's about to die. Right? He's actually about to die. And he says, you know what? Death is nothing. Just don't take yourself from me, God. Because I know you. Death is nothing.

How has he gotten there? Well, just read with me from verse 6. How has he gotten there? He remembers and he meditates on his bed in the middle of the night.

That's what he does. Verse 6. 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.

[15 : 36] What does that mean? I think it goes like this. It starts with the truth of the Bible and it ends up in prayer.

And in between he remembers and he meditates. And I don't think he's just remembered the facts of the Bible so he can write a theological exam at Regent College. That's not what he's talking about. As good as that may be for your Regent College students, you haven't wasted your money, don't worry.

That's not exactly what he's talking about. That's not exactly what he's talking about. I think he's taking the truth of the Bible and he's thinking about it and he's meditating on it. He's turning it over and over and over in his mind.

And he takes the truth of the Bible and he makes it his own. He takes the truth of the Bible and he stamps it upon his soul. He stamps it upon his life and what he loves and what he hates and what he wants in the future and what he wants for his children.

He takes the truth of the Bible and he puts it on his heart and it sets his heart on fire. I think that's what he means when he says he meditates and remembers God in the middle of the night on his bed.

[16 : 43] He takes the truth of the Bible and he makes it his own and it sets his heart on fire. Now, we read verse 1 and I think, why don't I always do that?

Why don't I always seek God with a thirst and seek God earnestly? Here's two things which I think can happen to us. Here's the first one. When we're thirsty, when our souls are thirsty, we drink from the wrong well.

Right? We drink from the wrong well. You know that if you're really thirsty, I'm told, I had to do research this week of being thirsty, so hopefully this is right. If you're really, really thirsty, you'll drink almost anything.

You'll drink a handful of sand. You'll suck a rock. You'll actually lick a bug, I'm told. Now, when I say that, you're all thinking about a particular bug, so I won't put a name on it, but you're all thinking about the type of bug you don't want to lick.

You put weird things in your mouth when you're actually really, really thirsty. Even though we live in a dry and barren land, in many ways in a weary land, we can actually fill that void in our soul with a whole bunch of other things.

[17 : 54] And then we read verse 1 and we think, You are my God. Earnestly I seek you. My soul thirsts for you. My flesh fades for you. But I'm feeling pretty satisfied now, so I don't really know if I feel that way. And I can do that myself.

Spurgeon, a great Baptist preacher, said this when he was looking at Psalm 63. Our misery is we thirst so little for the things of God and so much for the trivial.

That's me. That's me. We can fill the void with, you know, take your pick. We spend money. We accumulate.

We can get any myriad number of different things. But all the time it's like we need the real water of God. And here's the really tragic thing. It's not just disrespectful to God. We actually lose out.

We actually lose out because look at the joy that David has in knowing God. And we fill it up with food and jobs and houses and possibly even vacations and university degrees.

[18 : 58] And we consume trying to fill the hole. And the hole can only be filled by God. That's the real water. That's the real water. Here's the second thing. And I've done this myself thinking about this psalm this week.

I think we make God really convenient. I think we make God really convenient and God that will fit into our lives so that when we read someone, we don't actually see the thirst.

We don't feel the thirst that he has, that David has, because God is just a convenient kind of small God. I'll call this the God of the matchbox, right? Here's the God of the matchbox. I've got a matchbox here.

Surprise, surprise. Here's the God of the matchbox. Small. We carry him with us all the time. Carry him in our pocket. We know he's there. Doesn't really intrude on our lives.

Very convenient. Comes in a small package. And then sometimes, if you're like me, when some tragedy happens in our lives, or something's going wrong or not going the way we want to, we pull out God.

[19 : 55] We open up the matchbox. We kind of say, God, please help me now. If you help me now, I promise I will follow you for the rest of my life.

And then the emergency passes. We say, thanks a lot, God. We put him back in our matchbox. Put the matchbox back in our pocket.

So God will be there the next time we need him. That's me. That's me. You know, that thirst. I had a back injury three years ago.

It was a bad back injury. And it was horrible. I don't want to go through it again, but I've never really felt closer to God than at that time. And it's because that lighting the match, I spent three months like that. I felt very close to God.

I didn't want to be there, but I felt very close to God. I think sometimes we make God very convenient. And then we hear verse one, and we go, I don't really feel that way, but I know God's there when I need him.

[20 : 52] And we lose out. We lose out the joy of knowing God. The end point of Psalm 63 is knowing God as an end in itself.

That's the end point of Psalm 63. It's knowing God as an end point in itself. It's not knowing God so that I can feel great, or knowing God so that I'll have some great experience, or knowing God so that I can win a theological argument, or knowing God so that when I fear, I'll be comforted.

That's a good thing. But what comes first is knowing God as an end in itself. Knowing his character, knowing his goodness, knowing his steadfast love as an end in itself. That's what Psalm 63 is talking about.

The prayer of satisfaction is seeking and knowing God deeply everywhere and all the time. I gave you a Baptist preacher earlier.

I'm going to give you the Westminster Confession of Faith, which is from the Presbyterian Church. Right? This is the best expression of what humanity should be doing.

[22 : 04] Westminster Confession of Faith is a Presbyterian statement of belief. This is what they say. What is the chief end of man? Half of you know this, right? What is it?

To know God and to enjoy him forever. Isn't that great? To know God and to enjoy him forever. Go to the Presbyterians. Now, we have seen how when David was seeking God, the first thing he spoke about was God's steadfast love.

And the power and the glory of God were directed and focused on God's love for his people. His covenant love. His unbreakable, unconditional, unending covenant love.

A thousand years later, the steadfast love of God is focused on a man when God became man in Jesus Christ. Do you realize that?

The steadfast love, the chesed of God in the Old Testament is Jesus Christ. It's the walking, talking, covenant love of God. The steadfast love of God in a man. And God's love is unbreakable and unconditional and unending and it's sacrificial.

[23 : 14] It's sacrificial. That is a true expression of love in the Bible. It's sacrifice. And in the Old Testament, the promises of the Old Testament are, I will be your God and you will be my people.

And that means, when Christ comes, that God says, I will die for you so that you can live. That's what that steadfast love of God means when Christ comes.

Christ dies in our place, takes our punishment, we deserve for our rebellion against God so that we can live. That's what it means. We're going to finish by reading from Ephesians chapter 3.

So if you pick up your blue Bibles, your old blue Bibles, and you turn to page 182 in the second part of the Bible, we're going to read another prayer.

It's a prayer of Paul for the Ephesian church, for his friends in Ephesus. As we go through this, what I want you to see is how similar it is to Psalm 63, but how it's changed because of Jesus.

[24 : 23] Okay, so in Psalm 63, we get the steadfast love of God in our souls, right? The steadfast love of God in our souls satisfies us so that we can say this.

My soul will be satisfied as with rich and fat and rich food and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. After the time of Christ, it's the love of Christ in our souls, or as Paul writes, in our hearts or in our inner being satisfies us so that we can say this today.

My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips. I'm going to read for us from Ephesians 3, verse 14.

This is Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with might through his Spirit in the inner man, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is of breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Will you pray with me? Dear Lord, we pray that in your mercy, when we come before you, we can pray as David prays, that you are our God and that earnestly we seek you, and that our souls thirst for you, that our flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

[26 : 44] Pray, Lord, that in your mercy you will take out of us all those things which we look for to fulfill us besides you. We pray, Lord, that you will give us hearts which see your love for us, your unbreakable, unconditional love for each one of us.

I pray, Lord, that we will meditate and remember you in the middle of the night, and that you will change our hearts by the work of your Spirit so that we will be able to pray this prayer for ourselves.

I pray these things in your Son's name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[27 : 49] Amen. Amen.

Heavenly Father, you have promised through your Son, Jesus Christ, that when we meet in his name and pray according to his mind, Jesus will be among us and hear our prayer.

In your love and mercy, fulfill our deepest thirsts and give us your greatest gift, which is to know you, the only true God, and your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Almighty and everlasting God, the only worker of great marvels, send down upon our bishops and other pastors, and especially the pastors of the evening service, Eric, who has so graciously stepped in while Jim and Aaron are away, and send down on all the congregations committed to their care the spirit of your saving grace, that they may truly please you.

Pour upon them the continual dew of your blessing. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth, justice, and peace proceed, kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace, and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your kingdom may go forward till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love.

[29 : 40] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. And Lord, especially tonight, be with us in all our prayers, and direct our way toward the attainment of salvation, that among the changes and chances of this mortal life, we may always be defended by your gracious help.

Tonight, our soul clings to you, and your right hand upholds us. We think right now of those specifically who are suffering a need or for a specific global concern.

And we hold these things up to you, Lord.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth.

Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may ever be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer and know ourselves surrounded by their witness to your power and your mercy.

[30 : 57] Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. O Lord, our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people. In the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help.

For you are gracious, a lover of souls, and to you we give glory. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As our Savior Christ has taught us, let us pray.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever.

Amen.