

## PSALM 63: 1-8

<sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God, 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.  
<sup>2</sup> So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,  
beholding your power and glory.  
<sup>3</sup> Because your steadfast love is better than life,  
my lips will praise you.  
<sup>4</sup> So I will bless you as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands and call on your name.  
  
<sup>5</sup> My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,  
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips  
<sup>6</sup> when I think of you on my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;  
<sup>7</sup> for you have been my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.  
<sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

How do the scriptures speak to each of us? How does God who is the energy of Love flowing through the universe seeking to penetrate each and every heart, also seeking to communicate to us broken human beings with conflicted hearts that we are? Words spoken, read and sung are what the psalms offer... words that are also prayer.

If you look up Psalm 63 in your bibles, you will find a heading which says that this psalm provides the kind of wording of a prayer in the mouth of King David when he is in the wilderness of Judah. The wilderness is earth and soil, dry and barren, and this represents an inner state of being as much as an external reality. David/the psalmist are in the wilderness. How does this state of being get resolved in them? Reading past verse 8, the psalm concludes with a call for revenge against enemies and for divine restoration of the king. It's a call for God to remember whose side God is on and to act against the people's enemies in time of war and conflict after atrocities have also been committed.

And yet... If we extract verses 1-8, leaving out the heading and the final few verses of revenge, we find a pearl, a pearl of revelatory wisdom with an applicability that transcends time and place. Perhaps it may become a prayer spoken into each of us. The prayer has three parts which are spoken at different points on a journey from need to fulfillment.

First there is intense expression of “fainting”, “thirsting” and “seeking.” There is a longing and a need for God, for healing, for wholeness. Have you ever felt such a need? Clarity as to our need shapes the gift we may receive.

Second, the psalmist does not remain passive in their need. They do something. They enter the sanctuary with others to worship. They seek God not just wait for God to find them. And what do they “behold”? They behold the “power and the glory”. Power is agency and power is possibility for movement and change. Glory is light and the splendour of divine presence. There is also the “steadfast love” of God that is now felt. No longer is the psalmist in an empty desert. They have begun to be watered with the fullness of Love. God has always been there. God is always here. But somehow what we go through disconnects us from the lifegiving wholeness of God, especially in our times of struggle, barrenness and loss.

Third and finally, there is satisfaction. The words of the psalm paint pictures. There is a rich feast with sumptuous food that satisfies richly. We express our delight with “joyful lips.” Even as we are ready to sleep, our mind wanders not with worries, but with thoughts of gratitude for the blessings and meditations of how God’s goodness has borne fruit. Finally, there is a picture of God as a large bird under whose wings we feel safe and joyful. As we fly higher and higher we cling to God more firmly and God’s wing/hand holds us securely.

This threefold movement or journey is one that reminds the psalmist/us, that times where we are in the desert have come, are here presently or will come. Life always has curves to throw our way. The spiritual key is knowing how to navigate them so that we move through them and rediscover the God who is always here. The beauty is that in each round of the movement from need to fulfillment, from distance toward intimacy, the closeness is greater, richer and more profound. We grow in who we become and in who God becomes for us. What a pearl of revelatory wisdom and light hidden in this psalm of longing and revenge!

Such are the pearls we’ll keep seeking as we work meditatively and prayerfully through the psalms.

PRAYER: God of power of glory, God who is steadfast love, God of our longing and need, our thirst... the God we seek, the God who satisfies, the God who keeps us safe, the God who creates peace in us... We need to find you and be found by you at this time of our lives. As much as we can feel safe and secure, healthy and strong, happy and fulfilled, O God, we know that this can change and change all too quickly. Life happens, age

happens, accidents happen, health happens, friends and family change happen. Climate catastrophe and violence and conflict and separation and loss happen. We need to find our way with you, O God, a way where we can find you when we miss you, when you are hidden from us or at a distance. We need to find clarity as to our need, a light shining a path for us to follow and the promise of fulfillment amidst the brokenness and imperfection that life is. Don't abandon us, O God, as we will keep seeking you in the "sanctuary" and in our personal lives... Amen.