

Psalm 42: 1-6

¹ As a deer longs for flowing streams,
so my soul longs for you, O God.

² My soul thirsts for God,
for the living God.

When shall I come and behold
the face of God?

³ My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me continually,
'Where is your God?'

⁴ These things I remember,
as I pour out my soul:
how I went with the throng,
and led them in procession to the house of God,
with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving,
a multitude keeping festival.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise God,
my help ⁶and my God.

When something terrible happens to us or someone we love... When we suffer terrible loss... How do we find language to express the pain, pain that is not visible? This psalm offers some beautiful words, metaphor and poetry, spoken and sung.

1) It expresses poignantly the feeling of loneliness in a person's suffering: "My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, 'Where is your God?'" I am isolated and alone in my pain. Even God seems to have abandoned me. I cannot feel God present with me.

2) But the liquidity of tears is preceded by the liquidity of flowing streams which like a deer seeking fresh water after a long journey is threaded to the imagery of a soul thirsty for God's living, healing presence. By adding the imagery of a flowing stream and a soul-thirst for divine healing presence, the psalm creates a poetic opening for the tears that may be in a person to just flow, freely. Tears are like streams of water and like thirst in the soul. The longing to let them flow must be given freedom and space, permission and encouragement. It is, oh so necessary, for the healing journey to let the tears flow...

3) But the psalm also opens up another step to the healing journey once the full flow of tears has had its season. The present situation of pain must be placed within a past and future, especially a past and future where God has been and may be present again... "These things I remember as I pour out my soul..." times when we have been with others worshipping, celebrating and other good things, times when we are feeling full of thanksgiving for the goodness of life.

And if we have known the goodness and fullness of thanksgiving with others, this can open up hope that our isolation in the pain and loss of the now will be for a time, not forever: ⁵ "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise God, my help ⁶and my God."

PRAYER: We seek your presence, O God. We need your presence, O God. Whether your presence is made vivid to us as an eternal father or mother God we pray to, whether we feel you most alive as an energy flow of love surrounding us and filling up our hearts, whether you are a solid rock upon which we stand or a comforting blanket keeping us warm as we sleep, whether you are reaching out to us through the compassion of a friend or the care of a neighbour... However you come to us, speak to us, touch us, arouse us, O God... We are seeking your presence. Reveal yourself to us anew this day and this time in our life journey... Amen.