

Psalm 42.

- 1 As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
- 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
- 3 My tears have been my food
day and night,
while men say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
- 4 These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go with the multitude,
leading the procession to the house of God,
with shouts of joy and thanksgiving
among the festive throng.
- 5 Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God.

I will put my hope in the living God.

There has been a lot of numbers to think about lately: Numbers are splashed across newspaper headlines, numbers scroll across the bottom of the television screen, and numbers pop up in your social media feed. Numbers detail things like tolls and tallies, dates and delays. Numbers measure market values and expected unemployment rates. Numbers estimate stimulus plans and propose government assistance. Numbers, numbers, and more numbers to think about.

I have a few numbers that I hope will help you in this anxious time. These numbers have helped me over the last few days: 23, 46, 27, and 42. No these aren't lottery picks or some secret code. Lately, I have been spending some time reading through

these psalms as I go to God's Word for the peace and confidence that God gives to his people.

Psalm 23 is a psalm that we all probably know well. What comfort God gives to each one of us in knowing that *the LORD is my shepherd. I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul. And yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death. I will fear no evil. For you are with me. Your rod and your staff they comfort me.* What a beautiful picture God provides for his people, to give us peace and quiet in these restless times.

Psalm 46 is another wonderful example of the peace God provides for his people. *God is our refuge and strength an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea... Be still and know that the Lord is God... The Lord Almighty is with us, the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Psalm 27 is a psalm that I have been directing others to during these last few days. The first few verses are also the theme passage for St. John's School this year, so they are words that my kids know well. *The LORD is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?* In this twenty-seventh psalm, David speaks of wanting to be in God's house, but he is unable. He struggles with the distress that he is facing. In faith he turns to God with his problems, with his fears, with his anxieties; and because he knows his Lord, he is confident that the LORD will hear his prayers and will answer him with goodness and love and the help that he needs. At the end of the psalm, this is his stirring confession and encouragement. *I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.*

That brings us to 42, our psalm for today. One of the interesting things about the psalms is how honestly they portray the prayers of believers. In many of the psalms, the author often bears his soul as he cries out to God about what is troubling him. He voices his inmost thoughts and wonders aloud about why trouble and distress come. He calls out to God with emotional and sometimes messy prayers that take the reader on this roller coaster of emotions. Joy and heartbreak, sorrow and hope, doubt and confidence, all mingled together in poetry and music. The psalmist calls out, cries out, sings out to God, for the LORD promises to hear and listen to his children.

And once again in Psalm 42 we have a believer who is distressed because he is unable to come to the house of the LORD. He is unable to go up to Jerusalem and to make that precious ascent and meet with the Lord at the temple. He longs for that opportunity once more. *My soul pants for you, O Lord.* Away from the temple, removed from God's holy place, where could he meet with the Lord? And because of his situation, he has to deal with those who mock and question his faith, *"Where is your God?"* And that attack stings a bit more when disaster strikes, especially when our own uncertainty arises. *"Where is God?"* And so with the psalmist, God invites us to cry out with our feelings, to boldly go before our Lord and Father and cry out, *"Why?"* and *"How long?"*

As our emotions, and our anxieties, rise and swirl in this cyclone of emotions we might be swept away in this storm of uncertainty, if it was not for the anchor that is our God. By his grace, we are pulled back down to the solid ground that God provides for us in his Word.

By faith we confess, He is the living God. I will put my hope in him.

Look at the psalm's refrain. In the middle and at the end of this tidal wave of emotions there is this solid rock that holds us firm. ***Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.***

He is the living God. I will put my hope in him. He who created the heavens and the earth and stooped down to make us from the dust of the earth has promised that he still holds us in his hands and that he will provide for us.

He who called us to be his own cares for his children. He wants us to come to him, to cry out to him, and he listens to us and he hears our cries. He will come to our aid.

We know this to be most certainly true because our God loved us so much that he sent his only Son to live and die to pay for all of our sins. He himself came to suffer the punishment that our sins deserve. He rescued us from our sin, our sorrow, our despair and has given us hope and peace, for he promises us that he will guard and keep us and he will rescue us from all evil and bring us safely to our home in heaven. There we will see him face to face. There we will worship him day and night, gathered together in the great assembly of all the saints in heaven. He is the living God and we will live and dwell in the safety of his care now and forever.

If the Lord did not spare his own Son, but graciously gave him up for us all, how much more will he not graciously give us all that we need? We know that God will care for us because in his great love he came near to us. The Lord in his great love took on flesh and tabernacled among us. As he lived and dwelt among us he demonstrated his heart of compassion that ached for the sick and the suffering. In compassion and love and kindness he healed the sick and gave relief to the afflicted and the distressed. As he lived among us, he called people to repentance and proclaimed the good news of salvation through faith in him.

And then as our living Savior, he gave his life for us so that shall not perish but have eternal life. He handed over that temple of his body - that living tabernacle - to be destroyed on our behalf as he paid the ransom price for the many; and in his love and power, he rose again so that we might have the sure and certain hope of eternal life with him. In selfless love, he gave himself for us. He served us in his life and took care of our greatest needs by defeating sin and death and hell for us. Now our crucified and risen and ascended Lord rules over all things for the good of those who love him. He will care for our daily needs and will bring us to our eternal home. Put your hope in the living God. He who gave his whole life for you and me cares for us each and every day, now and through all eternity.

We put our hope in the living God as we eagerly await the day when we can worship him together in his house, once more. We put our hope in the living God as we eagerly await the day when we can worship him together in our home in heaven.

23, 46, 27 and now Psalm 42: ***As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God... Why are you so downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God!***