

LONGING AND THIRSTING FOR GOD

(Psalm 63)

Psalm 63:1-8 O God, You are my God; early will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. 2 So I have looked for You in the sanctuary, to see Your power and Your glory. 3 Because Your lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise You. 4 Thus I will bless You while I live; I will lift up my hands in Your name. 5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips. 6 When I remember You on my bed, I meditate on You in the night watches. 7 Because You have been my help, therefore in the shadow of Your wings I will rejoice. 8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

Ignace Jan Paderewski, the famous composer-pianist, was scheduled to perform at a great concert hall in America. It was an evening to remember—black tuxedos and long evening dresses, a high-society extravaganza. Present in the audience that evening was a mother with her fidgety nine-year-old son. Weary of waiting, he squirmed constantly in his seat. His mother was in hopes that her son would be encouraged to practice the piano if he could just hear the immortal Paderewski at the keyboard. So—against his wishes—he had come.

As she turned to talk with friends, her son could stay seated no longer. He slipped away from her side, strangely drawn to the ebony concert grand Steinway and its leather tufted stool on the huge stage flooded with blinding lights. Without much notice from the sophisticated audience, the boy sat down at the stool, staring wide-eyed at the black and white keys. He placed his small, trembling fingers in the right location and began to play "Chopsticks." The roar of the crowd was hushed as hundreds of frowning faces pointed in his direction. Irritated and embarrassed, they began to shout:

*"Get that boy away from there!"
"Who'd bring a kid that young in here?"
"Where's his mother?"
"Somebody stop him!"*

Backstage, the master overheard the sounds out front and quickly put together in his mind what was happening. Hurriedly, he grabbed his coat and rushed toward the stage. Without one word of announcement he stooped over behind the boy, reached around both sides, and began to improvise a countermelody to harmonize with and enhance "Chopsticks." As the two of them played together, Paderewski kept whispering in the boy's ear:

Keep going. *Don't quit. Keep on playing. . . don't stop. . . don't quit.*

Sometimes, when it comes to our Christian lives, it is easy to feel that they are about as significant and effective as a little boy playing "Chopsticks" in a

concert hall. We have great dreams of making music for God like one of the great masters and all that ever seems to come out is “Chopsticks.”

This morning, just before we share the Lord’s Supper together, what I would like to do is to remind each of you that you have a God in heaven that is pulling for you and cheering you on---“*Keep going, child; don’t quit. Keep on playing... don’t stop... don’t quit.*”

And as the end of summer draws near, what I would like to do over the next two or three Sundays is to motivate you in your walk with God. Maybe you want a better prayer life... or a more satisfying time in God’s Word... or a better witness to others about Christ and His gift of eternal life. Or maybe you need some other help or intervention from God.

In our text, the psalmist was in a dry and deserted land with no water and he was thirsty. But it wasn’t just water he was thirsty for. He wanted to see God’s power and His glory. He was in a *spiritual* desert and needed God to quench the inner thirst he had.

How many of you would love to see God intervene on your behalf in amazing power—where you just sit back and say—Wow! Did that just happen? God truly heard my prayer in that matter! That’s what I would like to speak to you about today as well as the next couple of weeks.

Title: Longing and Thirsting for God

(Prayer)

John Ortberg said that for many years, Max DePree was the CEO of an innovative Fortune 500 company called Herman Miller. DePree has written classic books on leadership and anchored the board of trustees at Fuller Seminary for 40 years. Max is asked to speak a lot about leadership, and at one session somebody asked him what the most difficult thing was that he personally had to work on. This was Max's response: "**It's the interception of entropy.**"

Entropy is a term from physics that has to do with the second law of thermodynamics and the availability of energy. It speaks to the fact that the universe is winding down. It's the idea that everything that is left to itself has a tendency to deteriorate.

Entropy. It's not only one of the great enemies of the universe; it's one of the great enemies of the human spirit. A person who at one point in life is **zealous and outgoing**, becomes **apathetic and complacent** and settles for the path of least resistance in some area of life. Dreams die and hopes fade and a terrible thing happens---a person learns they can live with mediocrity.

Entropy is a great enemy of the human spirit. And because this is true, you have to be on the lookout for it. Though things might have been okay yesterday, that doesn't mean they stay okay forever. **Put any important area of your life on autopilot, and risk entropy that is both subtle and destructive.**

If there was ever a believer in Christ that fought against spiritual entropy and decay in his walk with God, it had to be King David. He was a man who was devoted to knowing and serving God and was called “a man after God’s own heart.”

This morning, I would like us to look at how David devoted himself to seeking after God---to knowing and understanding Him better---so that he might be the person that God wanted him to be. Psalm 63 helps us define what a life of devotion involves.

First of all, a life of devotion involves. . .

1. **The seeking of a soul**

Psalm 63:1 O God, You are my God; early [earnestly] will I seek You; my soul thirsts for You; my flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.

- Some seek God before they are saved and it is this seeking that brings them into initial contact with God** (Cornelius)
- But, earnestly seeking God after you are saved brings a continual experience of and closeness to God** (Uzziah)

2 Chronicles 26:3-5 *Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jeholiah of Jerusalem. ⁴ And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.*

David said, “O God, You are my God; I will seek You earnestly.”

If we are to see God’s power and glory—if God is going to impact us, and we are going to impact others—it will involve our soul longing to see God — a seeking soul.

It also involves. . .

2. **The satisfying of a soul**

Psalm 63:5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.

David is saying here, “Lord, when I seek you (and You, in turn, transform me), it is like eating the best food in town!” (Marrow and fatness picture a sumptuous feast.)

When you have a regular time to fellowship with God, it is satisfying because it. . .

- A. **Restores your equilibrium** (Paul: “Pray. . . and the peace of God. . . will guard your hearts and minds. . .”)
- B. **Revitalizes your experience** (like an oil change, tune-up, and new tires for your car)
- C. **Renews your perspective** (You may feel as if your playing chopsticks — but time with God lets you hear His still small voice—“*Keep going...I’m here...you’re making a difference...*”)

The devotional life involves. . .seeking...satisfying....

3. **The strengthening of a soul**

Psalm 63:8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

As you interact more and more with God in prayer and His word, God uses that to remind you of where your strength for living truly lies.

A. **He reminds you of your position**

Psalm 63:8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

A great place to be!

You can’t follow a victorious person to defeat!!!!

B. **He reminds you of (other great things like) His power**

Psalm 63:8 My soul follows close behind You; Your right hand upholds me.

We panic and worry when we forget that we are being upheld by our Father’s own hand.

When you make time to be with God, God has an opportunity to whisper encouraging promises to you from His word like Isaiah 41:10:

Isaiah 41:10 *Fear not, for I am with you; do not be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.*

Columnist Herb Caen wrote in **the San Francisco Chronicle**: "Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning a lion wakes up. It knows it must outrun the slowest gazelle or it will starve to death. It doesn't matter whether you are a lion or a gazelle; when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

Spurgeon wrote likewise: "If you are not seeking the Lord, the Devil is

seeking you. If you are not seeking the Lord, judgment is at your heels."

[Have men come forward for Lord's Supper]

A theologian named McCullough shared the following story of when he was finishing up his doctorate. He said, [go to black]

...in Scotland, I was working on my Ph.D. thesis, and I was writing a chapter on the theology of Jurgen Moltmann, a contemporary German theologian... It happened that while I was working on that chapter, Jurgen Moltmann paid a visit to Edinburgh to give a theological lecture. When I heard he was coming, I was so excited. I wanted to meet him. I wanted to talk with him. After all, I was writing a chapter of my thesis on his theology ... I didn't know whether I would get a chance to talk with him, but I hoped that I would. Because of that hope, I prepared myself. I read every book I could find written by Jurgen Moltmann. I thought about Jurgen Moltmann all day long. All night long I dreamed about Jurgen Moltmann. I was preparing myself to meet Jurgen Moltmann. The great night came, and I sat in the front row for his lecture, because I wanted to get right to him. But immediately after his lecture he went out the door. I went racing after him. It was a dark, winter night in Edinburgh, with pouring rain. I grabbed him by the arm, and I said, "Herr Professor, I want to talk with you." ... He had an umbrella, and he said, "Come under this umbrella." We were standing face to face, and we had a great and memorable conversation. I had prepared myself for that moment. All of my thoughts were focused on meeting him.

Friends, one day, we will stand before the One whose hands and feet were pierced for our sins. The One who devoted Himself to destruction so that we might live. The important question this morning is this: "Are you devoting yourself more and more to the One who devoted Himself to you?"

[Bread]

It was author and pastor Erwin Lutzer who said:

"Last words are always important. But surely there can be no last words as significant as those of Jesus on the cross. Here we see His heart, His love for His people whom He was redeeming. In these cries we see the humanity of Jesus. His wounds were not bandaged so that ours might be; His sorrows were great so that our sorrows might be taken away."

[Juice]

