

Sunday 29 March 2020 – Thoughts and Reflections

Psalm 42

For the director of music. A *maskil* of the Sons of Korah.

- ¹As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
- ²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
- ³My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
‘Where is your God?’
- ⁴These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God
under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise
among the festive throng.
- ⁵Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.
- ⁶My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
from the land of the Jordan,
the heights of Hermon – from Mount Mizar.
- ⁷Deep calls to deep
in the roar of your waterfalls;

all your waves and breakers
have swept over me.

⁸By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me –
a prayer to the God of my life.

⁹I say to God my Rock,
‘Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?’

¹⁰My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
‘Where is your God?’

¹¹Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

The Psalms are songs addressed to God. Some are complaints, some are personal confessions of sin, others are shouts of praise when overwhelmed by God’s grace. They are a very real expression of a whole range of human emotions but they almost invariably finish on a positive note about God.

Psalm 42 probably won’t be as familiar to us as some of the other psalms but it has some important things to say to us in our current situation.

It would appear to have been written from a position of exile, as there is a lament in verse 4 that the Psalmist used to go to the house of God in Jerusalem but

currently cannot do so. Now this may have been from the time of exile in Babylon (certainly some of the Psalms were written in that period) or there may have been some other reason why s/he couldn't go there, but it is obviously weighing heavily on the Psalmist's mind.

The Israelites did wonder how they would be able to worship God in a foreign land away from Jerusalem but they found when they were in exile in Babylon that it was possible, and at a time when we are unable to worship together in our church buildings and when we miss the weekly contact with each other it's important to remember that we can still worship God.

I was reminded of that during the funeral service for Dorothy Golding, one of the members of Lee Common Methodist Church, at the crematorium this week. It was a surreal experience with just the funeral director and one of his men present at the back of the chapel. However the service was broadcast on the internet and we were able to give thanks for Dorothy's faith and life as a nurse and midwife with people watching and participating from their homes not just in this country but abroad as well.

The Psalm ends on a positive note about placing hope in God, as does Psalm 43 too. We are obviously in a different place from the Psalmist in that we know what Jesus Christ has done for each one of us, and it is in what God has done through Jesus that we have hope, even in the bleakest of situations. In turn we can be beacons of hope for the world around us.

If you have a copy of Singing the Faith why not read or sing the words of 'All My Hope On God Is Founded' (Number 455) or listen to verses 1,2,3 and 5 at <https://youtu.be/W3LCGh02Vew>

Prayer

Living God,
We thank you for the message of hope
That lies at the heart of the gospel,
And for the assurance that, whatever may seem to deny
it, your love will emerge victorious.

Lord Jesus Christ,
We remember with gladness
How you brought hope to others throughout your ministry,
Light shining in the darkness
Joy breaking into sorrow.

Holy Spirit,
We pray that you will continually remind us of the hope
that we have in you.
Help us to join in with what you are already doing to give
your hope to the world. Amen.

[In the reading from Psalm 42 you may have wondered what a 'maskil' is and who the 'Sons of Korah' are. Both are mentioned right at the beginning of the Psalm. It is assumed that a 'maskil' is a literary or a musical term and the Sons of Korah are a group of priests who were charged with the ministry of singing. 2 Chronicles 20:19 describes them in action.]

Nigel