

THE FIRST 15

Tuesday, November 5, 2024

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Today is Tuesday, November 5, 2024 and we are studying Psalm 42 – praying that God would move our hearts from despair to hope!

OPENING PRAYER

In this season, we pray together:

May the cornerstone of my life, and of our life together, be Christ and Christ alone. AMEN.

SCRIPTURE

***My tears have been my food
day and night,
while people say to me all day long,
“Where is your God?”
These 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.
Psalm 42:3-4***

REFLECTION

Yesterday, the psalmist expressed his desperate thirst for God’s presence. Here in verse three, we gain a broader sense and deeper understanding of his despair. Eating tears sounds strange, but we might be more familiar with the experience than we imagine. Have you ever lost your appetite to anxiety or grief? Maybe you are there today. I’m reminded of the days immediately following the death of a family member. You’re not sure if you’ve eaten – and you’re not sure if it matters. *Tears have been your food day and night.* I warned you: this is no Bob Ross painting.

As the writer describes his desperate thirst for living water and his unsatisfying food, he also tells us who is at the table eating with him. People who discourage him “all day long” asking “where is your God?” Those who mock him, asserting that he is all alone. Those who don’t deny the existence of *his* God (see verse one for that statement of personal allegiance) but rather, suggest that his God has abandoned him – a more painful possibility.

The Psalmist could counter with the words of Psalm 16:8: *“I know the LORD is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me”* – but instead their critique drives him to deep memory of that truth. He recalls moments of joy, celebration, and security in God’s presence, surrounded by a community of worship. He remembers the holidays that mark the Jewish calendar– the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. He can hear the joy of voices lifted in praise. The memories are sweet and provide a momentary retreat from his critics, but

they are inevitably marred by his temporal distance from them. “How I *used to go* to the house of God...” he says as *he pours out his soul*.

The Psalmist shows us the way of vulnerability in God’s presence. Note that his deepest longings, disappointments, and struggles have a place before God. Here, the heart of the Psalm comes into focus: *lament is not a mark of faithlessness but rather a profound means of drawing near to God*.

When you pour out your soul– what comes out? Does the memory of former joy only magnify the loneliness or sorrow you experience today? Grief of loss, unmet expectations, unanswered prayer? Frustration over unfulfilled longing? Has the doubt of the voice of “the people” in your life crept in as they whisper: “*where is your God?*” Or does the memory of God’s goodness magnify your praise of the God who is present with you?

May we commit to the work of baring our souls before God today. May we remember the faithfulness of the God who is with us always. May we not be shaken, for he is with us. That’s a word for the Psalmist then, and certainly for us today.

Pause and Pray

CLOSING PRAYER

King Jesus, today I remember you. You have promised to never leave nor forsake me. You have called me to strength and courage. It is you, the Lord our God, who goes with me. Today I pour out my soul to you, trusting you to receive and care for it in mercy and love. Lead me again to your presence. Amen.