

“No Rest for the Christian”

June 23, 2013

Psalms 42 & 43

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 him, my help and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan and of Hermon, from Mount Mizar. 7 Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. 8 By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life. 9 I say to God, my rock, "Why have you forgotten me? Why must I walk about mournfully because the enemy oppresses me?" 10 As with a deadly wound in my body, my adversaries taunt me, while they say to me continually, "Where is your God?" 11 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

1 Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people; from those who are deceitful and unjust deliver me! 2 For you are the God in whom I take refuge; why have you cast me off? Why must I walk about mournfully because of the oppression of the enemy? 3 O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy; and I will praise you with the harp, O God, my God. 5 Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

As the deer panteth for the water so my soul longeth after thee...packing in general is a pain. Whether we are packing to move or just cleaning up and clearing out. It is not fun and is a good part of why every time we move we unload some stuff to give away so we do not have to pack it at all! That is what I have been doing a lot of this week as we are preparing to move to a different house. I have been packing, taking care of the girls with Chad gone at Camp, working, and trying to get all sorts of the little things together before our June 30th deadline.

So I am tired; I am admittedly a little bit cranky and impatient so I do beg your forgiveness. We have been packing and cleaning and then comes the moving and the unpacking and still more cleaning because somehow everything gets dirty all over again when we move. But as we all know it does not happen magically on its own. Someone has to do it and that someone is... well in this instance me and mine but we can all relate to this scenario right? We all have those moments in time where the deadline is looming and we have so much to get done to get things together and pull it off. Whether it is a move, a project deadline, an event or a ministry we all work hard to accomplish a specific goal. We put our all into what we are doing and then the minute we are done something else happens and we have to start all over again.

But this is life is it not? We might take vacations to relax and get away from the ‘real’ world but we are constantly doing something, moving forward, progressing, and changing along the way. Change is a good thing. Change is a bad thing. Change can be complicated fraught with tension, misgivings, and angst. Change can also be the most blessed and amazing miracle transforming us for forever. We can resent it, we can embrace it, and other times we do not even realize it is happening or how much it truly affected us.

But right now, to be honest, all I want is a nap...I am panting for water, my soul is longing for rest and I do not see the end in sight! I know in my head and in my heart that I should continually keep on the good fight, stand up for my

beliefs or even as we will learn more about in Vacation Bible School next month I should stand strong for God. But I am a Christian and I sometimes just plain get tired of being a Christian.

Wait...let me clarify I get tired of being a Christian who is maligned and ridiculed for believing in Jesus Christ. I get tired of having to say I am a Christian and have people ask me what it means and then have them respond with a resounding whatever because to say Christian, to carry it as our identity has little or no meaning today. I get tired of being a Christian when others do not want to commit to Christ or commit to a church because it is easier not to lay claim to an identity. It is easier to say "I am a Christian...but not THAT Christian", it is easier to stick to generalities.

You know why it is easier, we are scared. I can almost hear those kids on the playground going bawck bawck bawck and calling us out as a chicken. We are very frightened of saying this is who we are and this is what we stand for. We do not want to commit, we do not want to work to get it done because it is easier to let somebody else do it...we are lazy...we are uncommitted...we are Christians who like the deer panting for water long for something, for someone, and we live in a world where so much is handed to us that we in the end forget the hard work that goes into being a Christian.

In our church we step forward to confess our faiths join the body and ultimately join the church but to be a Christian more specifically a Disciple of Christ is more than a Sunday deal. It is hard however to fit Sunday's into our hectic schedules. We are so used to having to cram it all in that we forget to prioritize our faiths. You see we might traditionally call Sunday our day of rest but is it? We might go to Bible Study, we go to Worship, we cook, we have ball games, we have all sorts of activities places to be and things to do and add in the occasional board meeting at 7:30 and our Sunday is gone in a flash. Then our week begins and we sometimes do not know what to do before we turn around and it is once again Sunday.

These psalms again speak to our souls. Psalm 42 bespeaks of great longing for God, the constant refrain is asking for God and hoping in God. Psalm 43 asks the questions we also ask and then reveals that we in the end have to trust and hope in God. Hope is a fickle topic. To each of us hope differs in definition and understanding. Yet, a good part of why we do what we do, why we live in the hectic paced lives we choose to live in is in hope of what tomorrow will bring. This hope is often also focused on the fact that the Good that is God will ultimately win out in the end.

This concept of the end of all is called eschatology and means in Greek the study of the end. Scripture itself is eschatological a continual focus on what is to come, what is to be, and how we are called to be a part of that. In the First Testament the focus is on the Messiah who is to come, the way for the people to be one with God. In the New Testament the focus leads us to acknowledging who Jesus is as the Christ and the eventual second coming.

So what do we long for, what do we hope for, we know who to put our trust in to accomplish everything. That answer is obviously God who we put our hope in but what do we hope to actually accomplish? What is our vision for the future? I mentioned change before but that is not a concrete idea, a concrete concept. What can we tangibly hope for; I ask this because tangible hopes are something that we struggle with. We struggle to articulate a tangible hope because as Christians we have this convoluted idea passed onto us that we should only worry about the intangibles of faith and trust and of course pixie dust.

But what can we hope for that is tangible here at Hooker Memorial? What do we vision for our church, our worship, our community needs? What are we longing for? How do we meet our needs not just on Sunday but everyday of the week? How do we support one another and love one another out of our faith? How do we answer the questions in these Psalms. "As the deer panteth for the water / So my soul longeth after you / You alone are my heart's desire / And I long to worship you."