

“Satiated”
Psalm 42 and 43:1-5
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“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” The metaphor of hunger and thirst is one of the images most often used in scripture to emphasize the human need for God.

Do you remember a time when you thirsted for God in your life? A time when you knew God, and God alone, could quench the desires of your heart?

St. Augustine, an early church father wrote, "You have made us for Yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in You."

Augustine found rest in God later in life. As a youth, he had longed for things other than God - sexual pleasure, career success, recognition in the larger world. Augustine connected with God later in life yet never lost his sense of longing for God. At the center of his being was a longing, a thirsting and a seeking after God.

Very often in scripture the experience of being thirsty and having one's thirst quenched by clear, flowing water is related to our search for God. The prophet Jeremiah calls God the "spring of living waters" (Jer. 2:13). The book of Revelation declares the "river of the water of life" flows from God's throne (Rev. 22:1). Remember Jesus' promise, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (Jn. 7:37-38). Water and God are both life-giving. Without them we dry up and die.

Daily we need to come to the flowing stream, the river of life, to quench our thirst and refresh our lives. The deer pants for "flowing streams," or as some translations have it,

“streams of water.” The deer and we long for the living, fresh, clear water of God.

It seems easier to recognize our longing for God as we despair - as we despair over the declining health of a loved one, over our children’s choices in life, over wrongs that cannot be righted. There are also those joy-filled moments, however, in which we catch a glimpse of God and our longing for God is heightened. Most often, we go about our busy, hectic lives not aware in the moment how deeply we long for God and God’s action in our lives. I began my sermon preparation this week thinking, “We pride ourselves on being rather self-sufficient, how much do we really long for God?” God decided to show me. My experience this past week was not realizing until after the fact how very much I long for God.

My 81 year-old Mother was moved into a nursing home the end of March because Parkinson’s disease makes full time nursing care necessary. I have three sisters and one brother and although we have known we needed to dismantle my mother’s home sometime this summer, there has not been complete agreement over the best way to proceed nor on the timeline. Add to the mix one sibling with an addiction which adds another whole layer of intensity to the family dynamics. My older sibling is my mother’s power of attorney. Through no fault of her own, she is *not me* and therefore chooses to do things differently. Meanwhile, my control issues are on full-alert. Last Sunday afternoon, I learned that packers from an estate selling company would come in Thursday, the movers on Friday and that the condo would be painted once it was empty.

After talking to my older sister and spending a sleepless night on Monday, I realized I needed the closure of being in my mom’s home one last time. I also wanted to be there in person to collect some items for myself and my children. God’s hand in the timing was such that I cleared it with the

Personnel chairperson Tuesday morning and with Session Tuesday evening. At 6 AM Wednesday morning, my son, Christopher, and I left for a seven-hour drive to Virginia. We arrived after lunch and began packing items we wanted and items for other family members. In the midst of packing, I answered the phone and had a conversation with one sibling who is not speaking with my older sister. I learned the items that sibling wanted and packed them up avoiding any future hurt feelings. Conflict was completely avoided because I answered the phone – I believe that was a God thing. After nearly seven hours of packing and a quick dinner, Chris and I headed to visit my Mom. The look on her face when we walked into the room made the trip worthwhile. Although dementia sometimes enters our conversations, it was held at bay that night and we had a wonderful visit together. Chris and I began driving home at 8:30 PM stopping at a motel in Charleston, W.Va. at midnight. At 6:30 a.m. Thursday morning, we continued driving back to Dayton and arrived in time for my birthday lunch given by the staff. I walked in two minutes before it was to begin.

Friday evening I had dinner with dear friends who lovingly listened to my story and my thankfulness for how the trip went. On the way to Virginia, I had prayed for safety, for patience and God's help. It wasn't until Saturday morning as I wrestled with my sermon that it began to dawn on me how I had lived my longing for God this past week. Only then did I get in touch with how much I had needed God's strength, grace and mercy. I AM just LIKE the deer that LONGS for FLOWING STREAMS

I long for God's mercy to surround my mother as her health deteriorates and death draws nearer . . . I long for God's grace to heal relationships among my siblings and give us patience in dealing with one another. I long for God's touch to heal the woundedness and hurts that occur as broken people try their best to love one another. I long

for God to sustain me in caring for both my children and my aging mother. I long for others to experience “strength beyond their own” that comes from Elders and members of Fairmont compassionately sharing the strength of God within themselves. I long for others to experience the peacefulness that comes knowing others are praying for you during a difficult situation. I long for you, members of Fairmont, to have your own longing and deepest needs satiated by God, completely satisfied by God. I long for others to experience the profound gratitude that stems from having God meet and exceed the desires of one’s heart and mind. These are some of the things I long for. What do you long for from God? How do you long for God?

There are people who journey through life unaware of who and what they long for. In his novel, *Bright Lights, Big City*, Jay McInerney describes a young man riding an uptown subway—trailing behind him the wreckage of a marriage, a career, possibly his very life, and finds himself seated next to a Hasidic Jew reading Talmud. The man looks like something straight out of an ancient history book. (Hasidic Jews as you know typically wear a simple black suit and tie with a white shirt, a long curl framing each side of their face with a prayer cap on top of their heads.)

Still, this modern-minded young man watches with fascination as this odd-looking stranger slowly moves his finger across the lines of the Hebrew, oblivious to the roaring sound and glaring lights of the modern subway. The young man reflects, “This man has a God and a history, a community. He believes he is one of God’s chosen, whereas (he muses to himself) whereas, you feel like a number in a random series of numbers. . . . Still, (he shakes his head) what a haircut!”

Only God can quench our longing for God. Only God, in the person of Jesus Christ, quenches our thirst by giving us living water to drink. In his book, *The Silver Chair*, C.S.

Lewis describes a young girl named Jill who is just beginning to get in touch with her thirst for God. Similar to scripture, her physical thirst for water and spiritual thirst for God are synonymous in the story. The following dialogue takes place between the girl, Jill, and Aslan, the Lion—who is the Christ figure.

“Are you not thirsty,” said the Lion. “I’m dying of thirst,” said Jill. “Then drink,” said the Lion. “May I . . . could I . . . would you mind going away while I do?” Jill asked. The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And, as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized she might as well have asked a mountain to move aside for her convenience. The delicious rippling noise of the stream was driving her nearly frantic.

“Will you promise not to do anything to me, if I do come?” said Jill. “I make no promise,” said the Lion. Jill was so thirsty now that without noticing it, she had taken a step nearer. “Do you eat girls?” she asked. “I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms,” said the Lion.

It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it. “I dare not come and drink,” said Jill. “Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh dear,” said Jill, coming another step nearer. “I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

I believe that. Do you believe that?

Amen.