

# Psalm 63

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[ 0 : 00 ] It's very good to be back tonight. It's good to see so many of you for a second time today. And, of course, very nice to be preaching again.!

I'm having a kind of dried-out Christian life, feeling a bit dull or bland as a Christian. And this has been a really good conversation for the two of us.

And it really has me thinking about Psalm 63, when David can cry out, earnestly I seek you, God. And it's remarkable at how many psalms really depend on this idea of a need for God, as if the kind of expectation for the Christian life is that we don't often feel, from our perspective, like we're that close to God.

Now, of course, we know that as Christians we are in Christ. We can't be any closer to God than we are on this side of heaven. And so a lot of it is a matter of perception and feeling.

The truth is that God is with us. So that's basically the sermon. But I'm going to go on and talk about Psalm 63 for a little bit longer than that. When we talk about psalms, we hear about David a lot.

[ 1 : 30 ] David this, David that. He needs God. He's crying out for God. He's in the temple or not. And so on. And a lot of the psalms make an explicit turn towards the congregation. So in the final verse of this psalm, it says sort of, all who call upon the name of the Lord, or all who regard his king and trust God, and so on.

That sort of thing. So it is safe for us as Christians to sing the psalms wholeheartedly. Even if we are not David, there's a little difference here and there.

But I just want you to think that we can identify with a lot of this. So David begins. Life is indeed a wilderness.

He talks about it in this way, as if he's remote from God. He's in a place that is dry and arid, maybe unsafe. It's a place where you conserve water.

It's hot during the day. It's cold at night. And it is certainly remote. The psalm wants to move us from that sort of place.

[ 2 : 36 ] The wilderness. And it wants to instill a passion for God. It wants us to feel a passion for God even amidst the wilderness. Now, I could say that this wilderness is likened to David's spiritual life.

It's just a kind of spiritual thing. Or it's a physical thing. He needs God's protection, for example. But David considers his whole life.

His physical life, his emotional, spiritual, mental. All of these are in need of God. Now, his wilderness, as I've said, is really a perception that God is not with him.

I'm in a dry and weary land, he says at the beginning, where there is no water. There is no satisfaction for his soul.

There seems to be no resource of life for him. No source of life in the wilderness. And the psalm's title suits the psalm very well. Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

[ 3 : 45 ] And thus he begins, my soul thirsts for you. My flesh faints for you. As in a dry and weary land, where there is no water.

All life of all sorts dissolves without God. One of Job's companions, Elihu, is right when he says this. If God should set his heart to it and gather to himself his spirit and his breath. So if God sort of inhales off of creation, all flesh would perish together.

And man would return to dust. Were God to withdraw his power from the earth, life would perish. And it's no slow or gradual kind of turning off.

Not a slow and steady process. It means all things cease in an instant without God. The whole universe, ourselves included, relies upon God at all times.

[ 4 : 55 ] It's not like a fading battery where the lights gradually dim. No, it's like a blown fuse and the lights just go out. That's it. And so David needs this source of life.

He needs it desperately. For him, he doesn't immediately see it. David needs God like someone needs water. Now, does David need physical protection?

Yes, he does. Near the end of the psalm, it talks about his enemies. It talks about him being in danger. Liars, people have turned against him. Does he want emotional rejuvenation?

Yes, I think he wants that too. Fear, longing, worry. He needs God to deal with these things. Does he need spiritual invigoration?

Well, yes, he needs that too. He has a longing for the sanctuary. And this will be central. But to whom does he turn for all of these things?

[ 5 : 56 ] He turns to one person, God. All of these things he finds in God. And this is what the whole psalm is about. We need God himself. And God provides himself when we seek him.

We need God himself. And God provides himself when we seek him. Verse 8 almost says it all. My soul clings to you. And your right hand upholds me.

My soul clings to you. I seek you. And the Lord provides himself. But it's not that simple. God provides himself. But he provides himself in several ways.

And what I want us to see here is four sources of life. There are four ways that God provides himself according to the psalm. And the first source of life is the sanctuary.

And a talk on this whole psalm could be called From the Wilderness to the Sanctuary. Or maybe even better. When the wilderness becomes a sanctuary.

[ 7 : 01 ] When the place where it feels like God is not there. A place that is remote from God. In a dry and weary land. When that becomes the very place where God gives his own presence.

David thinks back. I have looked upon you in the sanctuary. He says. Now this may mean he's in the sanctuary currently. But I think it's referring back to a time when he was.

He's recalling the sanctuary from the wilderness. Whatever this place looked like that he worshipped in. Prior to the big constructed temple. One interpreter writes.

Biblically. The highest privilege a mortal can enjoy. Is to become a welcome member of the worshipping congregation. The highest privilege a mortal can enjoy.

Is to become a welcome member of the worshipping congregation. The sanctuary was the dwelling place of God. It was God's house.

[ 8 : 03 ] It was the place that ultimately David wanted to build. Lord. Lord. I am living in a house of cedar. And you. I worship in a tent. I want you to have a really wonderful temple.

As your king. Of course that has to wait until David's son Solomon. But the temple nevertheless was holy. In any place God's people got together to worship.

Was holy and inviting. It was terrifying. It was a place for repentance. For thanksgiving. For praise. For meditation.

It was a place to be with God's family. And it is. David can say that in this very place. I look upon God.

It is remarkable that when he needs God. The sanctuary is the first place he thinks of. It is the first place that comes to mind.

[ 8 : 59 ] I am in a land without water. But I have looked upon you in the sanctuary. That is the first thing. That his mind is drawn to. And so his wilderness becomes God's very dwelling place.

The wilderness does become a sanctuary. Now if David looks upon God in the sanctuary. Then what exactly does he see? Well this takes us to the second source of life.

He sees God's power and glory. And the interesting thing here. Is what we see is that. Our needs match God's attributes. So what we need.

God provides most. Or to put it another way. God provides what his people need most. If David's life is a wilderness. And his enemies have turned against him.

What does he need? He needs the power and the glory of God. He does not call upon the tenderness of God. Though he will sometimes. He doesn't call upon the ear of God.

[ 10 : 05 ] Or the wisdom of God. In this case. David calls. He calls upon God's protection. He sits in the shadow of God's wings. God's right hand upholds him.

And so on. Have you ever tried to figure out what a baby needs? There's a brilliant movie about a widowed father. He's left with his baby daughter.

And so. This man's mom and his mother-in-law. Have offered to take the baby. Thinking that. It's just going to be a little too much for him to handle. It's too much responsibility. But no. The father is resolved.

To raise the child. And of course the baby starts to cry. And get in these crying fits. These sort of marathon crying sessions. Where she doesn't stop. And he doesn't really know what to do. He gives her food. He changes the nappy. He holds her. Puts her down in different positions. Sings to her. Puts on a movie.

[11:07] Takes her for a walk. Truly. He tries everything. And he doesn't actually know what the baby needs. And she just keeps crying. So being desperate as he was.

He goes to a new mother's group. And he just walks in. And there are five or six mothers around. Talking about raising their babies.

And he interrupts the meeting. And he says. Listen. Ladies. I can't stop this baby from crying. I've tried everything. And one of the moms asks. If he's tried the vacuum trick.

And he says. The vacuum trick. She says. Yeah. That's right. You know. You turn a vacuum on. It creates white noise. And it puts some babies right out. So he goes home.

Puts his daughter on the bed. Puts the vacuum next to the bed. And turns it on. And it works. The baby stops crying immediately. It works in the movie. It works in the movie at least. It can be difficult to know what a baby needs.

[12:11] Never mind a teenager. A brother. A sister. A spouse. A friend. A boyfriend. A girlfriend.

A parent. God knows what we need. And he provides what we need most. Most of all.

We need him. Most of all. We need him. And that brings us to the third source. Of life. The third source of life. Is God's grace.

Or steadfast love. Have a look at verse three. Because your steadfast love. Is better than life. My lips will praise you. All this time.

We thought that David wanted life. I'm parched. There's no water. There's no food. He's on the run. He's in the wilderness. Does he not want life.

[13:09] Or at least life in God. Or something like that. Now he's saying. That God's steadfast love. Is better than life. In other words. David seems to say.

That he'd rather die. Than live a life without God. Sounds like Paul. To live is Christ. And yet to die. Is gain. Death for him.

Means the certainty. Of God's presence. And he holds up really. These two options. On the one hand. We get God's eternal character. His steadfast love.

That never ceases. The presence of the Holy One. Versus a frail body. Temperamental. Spiritual life. And the pains. And frustrations. Of earthly existence.

No wonder. That the majority of Psalms. Have someone crying out. For help. So in the next verse. David makes a resolution. Verse four.

[14:09] So. I will bless you. As long as I live. If God's steadfast. Love is better than life. I will bless you Lord. As long as I live. In your name. I will lift up my. Hands.

Just as a side note. Notice the language there. I will lift up my hands. It is okay. To praise God. And lift up. Your hands. If we have breath.

In our lungs. Then it is God. We ought to praise. God is the source of life. The sustainer of life. And he himself. Is better. Than. This. Life. One commentator says.

All that a person can have. And experience in this life. Everything that we know. And can experience. Is inferior. To grace. I don't know about you.

But there are so many things. In this life. That I love. When I ought to be loving God. I love work. I love having my own time.

[15:10] Under my control. I love when things work. Correctly. Maybe it's food. Maybe it's leisure. Maybe it's a person. But these things are inferior.

To God's steady. Love. For us. Nevertheless. Here we are as mortals. Here we are. Human beings. On earth. We're not in heaven. Yet. And this is the incredible bit. God desires. That here and now. We partake.

Of eternal. Activities. Drinking from the source. Of life. Being satisfied. With the riches. Of God's mercy. Having a passion. For God. These things.

Do you realize. Will last forever. These activities. We partake in. Right now. Are some of the things. That we do. That will. Last forever. Proverbs 12.

[16:07] 28. Says. In the path. Of righteousness. Is life. And in its past. There is no death. We could say that passion.

Is an enthusiastic. Dedication. To something. Or someone. It's been expressed. Most clearly. Right now. In the Olympics. An enthusiastic. Dedication.

To this sport. These people's. Entire lives. Revolves around. That 100 meters. Or that track. Or. That pool. Whatever it is.

They give everything. For that. That is passion. It's not just a feeling. If there are any. Boston fans. Not of the city. But of the band. It's. It's more than a feeling. You hear about people.

On first dates. And they say. He's too keen. She's coming on. Too strong. Too much. Passion. Before God.

[17:06] We cannot be too keen. We cannot be too passionate. Before God. The right response. Is. Passion. Of heart. And mind. To love God.

With our heart. With all our mind. And with all our strength. I went to university. Where I didn't know anyone.

And. As an undergraduate. And. And. My primary prayer. Was that I would meet. Some Christian friends. And make some Christian friends. And sure enough. I was. I was paired with a random roommate. When I showed up. And he was not a Christian.

We became good friends. But. He was not a Christian. And I walked across the hall. Of my dorm. And little did I know. That my. Two. To be best friends. Were there in that room.

Two Christian men. That I got to know. Very well. When they found out. I hadn't read. Two books. They kind of joked. We can't read those books. And not be a Christian.

[18:02] And those two books. Were mere Christianity. And John Piper's desiring God. Now. I don't know if I would stand by that. Now. But. But we still have a laugh about that. In 1986.

John Piper released. One of the most. Popular contemporary books. On. The Christian life. And his. His main point. He says. Every time he.

Says anything. God is most glorified in us. When we are most satisfied in him. That's what he says. God is most glorified in us. When we are most satisfied. In him. There's a lot of truth there.

And we certainly cannot max out. Our satisfaction in God. The fourth and final. Source. Of life. Is. Thinking about God. Thinking about God. God gives David. Memories. About himself. When David. Is in the wilderness. Verse six.

[19:01] David says that he praises God. When I remember you. Upon my bed. And meditate on you. In the watches. Of the night. And. You know the hymn. Be thou my vision.

O Lord of my heart. Not be all else to me. Save that thou art. Thou my best thought. By day. Or by night. Waking or sleeping.

Thy presence. My light. David meditates. From his bed. And it becomes clear.

That God provides himself. In the wilderness. God provides himself. In the sanctuary. God provides himself. While waking. Or while sleeping. The wilderness has.

Indeed become a sanctuary. Because God provides himself. For those who seek him. He displays his power. And his glory. He gives. Steadfast love. And he offers.

[19:59] Up great thoughts. Of himself. Let me close. Let me close. With just a few. More thoughts. When you tell someone.

My spiritual life. Is pretty dry. Right now. Consider reading. This psalm. And when someone. Tells you. My spiritual life. Is dry. Right now.

Then you can tell them. Read psalm 63. Or. A psalm. That's. Like it. And here's part of the. The really good news about this. When we. Feel that God is absent.

We still feel for God. And when we think. That God. Cannot be found. We still. Think. Of God. Any concern.

That you might have. About dull. Christian spirituality. Means that God. Is at work. And the best thing. That we can do. In that situation. Is not to really.

[20:58] Figure out how to fix it. But to call out to God. Like David does here. To seek. For God. And this is one great point. Of commonality. For Christians.

And those who are not Christians. The starting point. Of life. Of true life. Is a need for God. And crying out. For God's help. And crying out.

For God himself. God is delighted. When we do this. And it is good. For the soul. Secondly. Seek for God.

And do it now. Charles Spurgeon says. Those who thirst for God. Thirst for him now. We don't need to put it off. Until bedtime. Until the morning. Until after a holiday.

Whatever it is. We thirst for God now. We seek him now. Jesus Christ said. Blessed are those who hunger. And thirst for righteousness.

[ 21 : 52 ] For they will be satisfied. God. At a feast in John 7. He gets up. And he announces. If anyone thirst. Let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me.

As the scripture has said. Out of his heart. Will flow. Rivers of living. Water. Passion for God overflows. And it is good.

For your friends. For your family. For your classmates. And for your church. We have no greater need. Than Christ himself. And Christ provides himself.

So let us come to the throne of God. Beholding his glory and power. Enjoying life with God. More than life itself. Filling our mind with thoughts of God. And our hearts with a passion.

For our Lord and Savior. Let us pray. Let us pray.