

Selah: Stop, Look, Listen – April 28, 2020

The Lord be with you.

What are you missing during these days of quarantine at home?

Is it going to a friend's house, is it going out for a hot dog or cheering at a ball game?

I hear people say and they tell me they didn't know how much they were going to miss this but they miss gathering with others to worship and to pray together and to learn about God together.

Today, I'm looking at a Psalm in which the Psalmist is missing. Now, that's really too weak a word he says he's longing for, he's thirsting for God and to be with God's people. I'm looking at Psalm 42 that begins to those powerful words, as a deer longs for flowing streams.

There was a key that helps unlock this psalm that's in the "superscription on at the top of the Psalm where we learned that this Psalm is written by one of the sons of Cora the sons of Cora, they were from the priestly tribe, of Levi, and they were gatekeepers in the temple that they were the ones who got to lead God's people into the temple in worship and singing.

For reasons we don't know, this particular son of Cora he is far away from the temple, he can't get to the temple and He's longing for it.

We don't know the reason. It may be sickness it may be or it may be kidnapping, but he is quarantined.

The Psalm says, somewhere up around Mount Herman and that is way to the north of Israel, into Syria and he's quarantine crazy longing to be in God's house with God's people. In Psalm 42, I begin there in Verse 2, as he says, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God, when shall I come and behold the "face of God, my tears have been my food day and night, he can't even bring himself to eat while people saying to me continually. Where is your God? People are mocking him, "Why isn't the God that you worship do something and his pain only grows and intensifies as he remembers he remembers the joy of being in God's house, with God's people, he says these things I remember as I pour out my soul I remember how I went with the throng and led them I led them in procession to the house of God with glad, shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festiva.

And then the psalmist makes a sharp turn. He gets hold of himself and he does some self-talk, he refuses to let his thoughts, just run wild over him and he starts talking to himself.

"Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul. And why are you described within me?"

You know, it can be a good thing to talk to yourself. You're, you're not crazy if you do it.

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"Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul." Hey self, listen up. I want to talk to you. Now, I find that if I don't do that frequently that self is gonna run all over me.

And so every day or so, I have to take self-in hand and I have to preach to myself Self, hold on for a moment. Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul, Listen self, if God is for you, who can be against you, Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul. And why are you disquieted within me? Hope and here is our crucial word, the pivoting word hope... Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God. The Bible puts a lot of emphasis upon hope.

If you look at a concordance to the Hebrews Scriptures, the Old Testament, you will see that there are 15, 15 different Hebrew words translated by our one word hope. That tells me that we don't know nearly as much as they did about living with hope. The Hebrew word here translated hope is Kasah and it means to flee for protection to seek shelter, to seek refuge. So here's a little different nuance of hope for us.

Our kids and grandkids live in the tornado alley that's called North Texas were not infrequently they hear a siren and that siren is telling them to seek protection to flee to shelter. That's the idea of the word here, Kasah, that when facing danger... When we are fearful when we are discouraged we do some self-talk, Hope, flee to God, take refuge in Him.

The Old Testament provides us a wonderful word picture of Kasah this kind of hope as in the Law of Moses. It was stipulated that there be cities of refuge. Kasah. So, let's imagine a that you're working in the field and you accidentally kill someone.

Suppose the ax head flies off the handle and hit someone in the head and kills them within the ancient Near East where there was this blood vengeance, the Law of Moses provided that in cases of accidental death for you to flee to seek shelter, in one of six cities of refuge, within the shelter of the walls of that city of Kasah refuge. You would be safe from anyone seeking to harm you.

What hope in God, Kashah, means is that we can see to, we can run to the refuge, to the shelter of the living God and He will protect us and care for us.

And so I'm asking myself today. Why? Why are you cast down? Oh, my soul. And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.

Flee to him for refuge, for shelter for I shall again praise him, we'll get through this. For I shall again praise him, my help and my God, so I will flee to God today, and I will lay claim on him as my help and my God. For God has also claimed you and me as his people, "I will be your God and you will be my people.

So today I pivot in hope and I do some serious self-talk. And with the Apostle Paul, I pray for you and for me, Romans 15:13, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace, in believing so that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I am Tim Smith, a fellow traveler, and the pilgrim way. Thanks for listening, until next time.

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