

**Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
20th July 2021**

READINGS

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?
How long will you hide your face from me?
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?
How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.
Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, "I have overcome him,"
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

But I trust in your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in your salvation.
I will sing the LORD's praise,
for he has been good to me.

Psalm 13

As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food day and night,
while men say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"

Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

My soul is downcast within me;
therefore I will remember you
By day the LORD directs his love,
at night his song is with me--
a prayer to the God of my life.
Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Saviour and my God.

Psalm 42: 1-3, 5-6, 8, 11

REFLECTION

Have you ever had days when you feel as if God is a long way away?

Maybe it's your health that's getting you down, maybe it's work, maybe it's life at home, maybe it's just something fairly minor that has happened that has just been the 'straw that breaks the camel's back'. Certainly, after all these months of restricted living and isolation, there are plenty of things to get us down, or to irk us, or to make us uncomfortable and throw life out of kilter.

Whatever the reason, you just end up feeling very alone, a bit lost, and not that sure that God is all-powerful, or that God cares a hoot for you right at this moment.

There is no shame in feeling like that! I know I go through many times when I feel as if God is far away. So too many of the characters in the Bible certainly experience such feelings of being isolated from God, as if God has turned away.

The Psalmist David, for example, often feels just like that. As a leader, he has had to endure the nasty comments, the gibes and the jeers of those who oppose him. He knows that he opposed, and his enemies are always looking for a chance to hurt him. And so, when something goes wrong, they are quick to say, "Ah well, where is your God now then? If he loved you as much as you say, surely he wouldn't have let that happen to you!"

At those moments when God seems far away, the truth is God hasn't moved! He is still there, ready for us to turn to him in prayer and praise, just a breath away, waiting for us. God hasn't moved, it is we who have moved. It is we who have lost sight of God. Maybe because of what has happened to us we have let go of our faith discipline, or we have stopped paying as much attention to our relationship with God. And we become like a ship that slips its moorings or loses its anchor – adrift and insecure and lost.

So what did the David do in those times? Well as our reading this week from Psalm 42 shows, he didn't mope and he didn't give up. However reluctantly, he began to think back over all his experiences of God. All the times when he felt God close, all the times when God had touched his life. As David reflects on these times, gradually he ends up coming back into God's company. He is drawn back to God. David starts out remembering and ends up praising; he starts out morose and he ends up alive with faith.

Can we then follow David's example?

Do you feel far from God? Think back to a time when you felt God close. Think about all the ways God has touched your life. Think about all the times when you have said a heartfelt thank you to God.

And as you think on those things, know this:

God hasn't changed! God loves you just as much now as then! God is still as powerful now as then. God is still longing to do those great things in your life. God is still thirsty for your company.

As Christians, this is the reality we cling too: God is still as loving toward each of us now as he was to the disciples. God is still as able to work in the lives of people now as he was

through his apostles. We have available to us all that love and all that hope that the presence of God in our lives brings.

PRAYER

Lord God,
Where are you when our thoughts drag us down?
Where are you when our spirit grows within us?
Why do you let us get so far away from you?

We know it's because you love us and offer us the freedom to make our own choices
But Lord save us from ourselves,
When our cynicism, our lethargy, our dulling experiences
Seem to drive all hope and faith out of our lives.
Turn our eyes back, towards you Lord,
Cause us to look again upon your blessings in our lives,
Ignite our hope as we remember the comfort of our faith,
Inspire our trust as we recall the joy of your nearness.
Never let us get so wrapped up in our doldrums,
That we lose sight of your purposes and your promises

In Jesus name we offer our prayers,
Amen.

