

A Hunger and Thirst for More 2022  
 Psalm 42:1-2, 5-8 Luke 5:1-11

Psalm 42:1-2, 5-8 (New Revised Standard Version)

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God? 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. Deep calls to deep at the thunder of your cataracts; all your waves and your billows have gone over me. By day the Lord commands his steadfast love, and at night his song is with me, a prayer to the God of my life.

Luke 5:1-11 (New Revised Standard Version)

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

An older gentleman went out onto a frozen lake to fish.

He cut a hole in the ice, dropped in his line and began fishing.  
 But after an hour or so he still hasn't had a bite or even a nibble.

Then a young boy walked out onto the ice, also to do some fishing.

He cut too a hole in the ice, dropped in his line and began to fish.  
 Almost immediately the boy pulled out a remarkably large fish,  
 and the old guy figured that it must just be beginner's luck.

Then just a few moments later, the boy pulled out another,  
 then another, and he kept catching more and more fish.

Meanwhile,

the old guy still hasn't had so much as even a nibble on his line.

Finally, he trudges over to the kid, points to the string of fish,  
 and asks, "You mind telling me your secret?"

The boy looked up and said, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rram."

"What was that?" the man asked.

He repeats, "Roo raf roo reep ra rums rram."

The old guy complains,  
"Look, I can't understand a word of what you're saying."

So the boy leaned over, brought his hand up to his mouth,  
and spitting something out, explains to the man,  
"You have to keep the worms warm!"

In the Luke text, Simon Peter discovered another,  
perhaps even better way to improve your fishing,  
which is to have Jesus in the boat with you  
and follow directions when he urges you to go deeper.

In John 21 there is a similar fishing-story about Jesus and Peter.  
Once again, Peter's been out all night and hasn't caught any fish.  
Jesus tells him to cast the net on the other side of the boat,  
and he catches so many fish that the nets are nearly bursting.

Here, Jesus got into Simon's boat and taught the crowd from there.  
Afterward, vs. 4~8

When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'

### **Simon Peter was the unfortunate victim of defective theology.**

He believed that we have to be good enough and godly enough  
before the Lord will come near, love, bless and accept us,  
and that our good & worthiness must come before God's grace.

The truth is, even our best and most faithful aren't nearly enough.  
Though actually it's God's love and grace  
**that enables** any good works that we accomplish.

Aware of his shortcomings, Simon was afraid in the presence of Jesus.

And though **Simon had given up on himself**, Jesus had not. vs. 10-11

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."

When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

This was more than just another story about catching lots of fish.  
It was a prophetic sign and a theological encounter  
through which Jesus connected and transformed Simon.

Jesus so completely changed Simon's perspective & his priorities,  
that he eagerly left everything behind to follow his Lord Jesus.

**An experience with Jesus creates new beginnings & new possibilities.**

In my life I've found, that it's easy for my focus to slip off mission,  
especially when stress & pressure build up & threaten to overwhelm.

**But if we will stop and pause, listen to the Lord, trust and obey,**

**if we'll allow ourselves to be found, loved and graced by God,  
then as we follow Christ our direction in life will change,  
as our relationship with the Lord grows deeper & stronger.**

We will be transformed to serve, and strengthened to endure,  
**as a taste of God's gracious love and empowering presence  
creates in us an even deeper hunger and longing for more...**

**... toward an authentic desire to know, love and serve God more fully,  
which becomes the most significant fact of truth in our lives  
which will reorient everything about how we choose to live.**

**Faith then, is our response to God's prior mercy, grace & blessings.**

One of the places where I have observed this truth most powerfully,  
has been in the courage and strength of Christian perseverance,  
tenacity & trust even amid terrible loss and suffering in life.

In my experience, my most significant moves toward spiritual growth  
toward more a mature and deeper faith, have almost always emerged  
from my worst hardships, mistakes and from painful adversity,  
and wrestling with my most difficult questions and failures,  
and unsettling situations that defy simple or pat answers.

In other words, when my faith has matured and ripened the most,  
it's been when God has had to pick me back up, forgive & heal me.

**At the time horribly unpleasant, yet eventually somehow beneficial.**

Faith includes how we choose to deal with problems & disappointments,  
as something God can use to teach or heal us and our relationships,  
as a source of **opportunity to grow toward a deeper walk of faith.**

I saw and witnessed this truth most mightily and unexpectedly  
in Abetifi, a small village high in the mountains of Ghana.  
One Sunday when our group was worshipping in their church,  
that faith-community was saying goodbye to a local family.

A woman of that community and congregation had died recently.  
She had been in charge of the schools in that district,  
and it had been her salary that had provided  
for their family, which included 6 children.

Without that income,  
the family couldn't afford to stay together in Abetifi.

Her widowed husband was leaving shortly to look for work in Accra,  
and the children were to be split up among their relatives  
who lived in different and distant regions of the country.

The children were about to leave the only home they had ever known,  
away from all their friends, their church and their school,  
away from the comforts of their family and the familiar,  
in addition to grieving the tragic loss of their mother.

It was very difficult and a crushing reality for that family.  
Their lives, for all of them were going to be very different,  
as they faced an unknown and fearfully uncertain future.

On this their last Sunday worship service together,  
the father asked his 14 year old daughter to sing Psalm 42.  
It was one of the most moving and most powerful and inspiring  
moments of worship that I have ever been blessed to experience,  
and amazing **hope and insight into human suffering and struggle.**

In a delightfully clear and sweet, beautiful and courageous voice,  
she stood all alone, singing a cappella and looking to her God.  
Her music echoed the poignant and piercing words of Psalm 42:1-2.  
*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?*

I can still hear her voice, tight with the emotional struggle,  
as with great feeling, and with astonishing grace and poise  
she declared her faith, her trust, her hope: vs. 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.*

**That remarkable young African girl made this psalm soar for me.**  
Despite losing almost everything in life that she ever valued,  
upheld by her faith, with astonishing courage and trust,  
she found voice and strength to cry out,  
*"My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

Her faith, her courage that day, her powerful and inspiring music,  
singing to God amid so much heartbreak, hurt and suffering,  
demonstrated her relationship with **her living-loving Lord.**

And even as she faced ultimate upheaval and absolute uncertainty,  
**what an inspiring and authentic declaration of her depth of faith.**

There was little or nothing left in life for her to hold onto,  
except for her personal relationship and walk with God.

That young girl came to God in abject emptiness, suffering and hurt  
but because she knew & trusted God in such a close and personal way,  
she had courage to go on, **clothed in the assurance  
of the truth and promises of God in Jesus Christ.**

**Her pain and loss, were so tragic, intense and so encompassing,  
that nothing less than God Almighty could possibly help,  
and so she hungered and longed for a deeper presence of God.**

She had absolute and resolute confidence in Christ Jesus her Lord  
because she already knew and trusted God to strengthen & sustain.

The music of her singing that day illustrated the vast difference  
between knowing that God exists and actually knowing the Lord,

between merely knowing about God and having a real relationship.

It's the difference between knowing doctrine and biblical facts  
and living within a meaningful growing journey of faith with God.

**And that which so moved and inspired me, her trust in the Lord,  
so obviously present and active, powerful and authentic in her  
was what gave her the strength to so courageously persevere.**

Today at the Table, may God create such a hunger and thirst in us,  
for there is so very much more that the Lord desires for us,  
if we will follow and submit **a little bit deeper to God's grace...**

... as in Psalm 42, and as Jesus said to Simon Peter,

*As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. You are my strength and shield, **to you alone may my spirit yield...** Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.*