

Are You Are Thirsty?

John Wesley:

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.

Psalm 42:1&2

The Psalmist presented to us in these verses, and in the rest of the Psalm, is a sad and downhearted person. It is unclear why, but he is certainly going through some kind of suffering, which is leaving him feeling thirsty for God. It is as if God is not there. The picture he gives us is of a deer longingly looking for streams of water, panting, breathless and thirsty but not finding the streams that were once there. It would seem that animals always remember where they have found water in the past and it must be very frustrating to go back and find none. The Psalmist remembers going to the Temple, leading the crowd, shouting for joy and praising God but these things are now only a distant memory and seem to bring as much comfort as a dry riverbed.

We sometimes feel like the Psalmist but, if the truth be told, we are hesitant to advertise the fact. Why is this so? Well, sometimes because we know it is of our own making. In the turmoil which is sometimes our busy lives we are tempted to neglect those things which keep us close to God: prayer, reading the Bible, receiving the Sacrament, fellowshiping with other Christians and fasting to name but a few of the means of grace that God has put in place to keep us satisfied. The means of grace are like streams of water and they water us when we come under them, satisfying and refreshing us.

But sometimes, this longing is not of our own making. God just seems to be distant and the more He seems to be distant the more we believe that He is distant. What can we learn from the Psalmist if this is our situation? Well, notice that he still calls out to the God who is distant, just as Jesus would one day cry out to the God who He felt had forsaken Him and commend His spirit into His hands. Just as the thirsty deer returns to dry river beds, so too the born-again soul knows it can return to the Christ who said: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink."

For thee my thirsty soul doth pant,
While in this desert land I live;
And hungry as I am and faint,
Thy love alone can comfort give. (425)