

Come Let Us Worship Together...

(please go through this all out loud and together)

WORSHIP IN PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for this day, and for everything in it. Thank you for the sunshine and the rain, thank you for the blessings and the stretchings, thank you for those whom we have and those whom we've lost in our lives. Help us to seek your face every day, and to trust that we will see your face someday. Help us to live each day like we believe that.

In Jesus' name we pray, *Amen*.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN - in 1863, proclaiming a day of national fasting...

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved, in the many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us! It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness..."

A FRENCH JOURNALIST - after having been held by terrorists for three years...

"I felt in that solitude that I had no one to speak to but God. I felt very close to Him then, perhaps because there was no one to distract me. I feel further away from God now that I am back with my family in comfortable surroundings. In that prison, I was face-to-face with God. I almost miss the luxury of that solitude..."

SCRIPTURE READING

Psalm 42:1 As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, O God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?

³My tears have been my food
day and night,
while men say to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"

⁴These things I remember
as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go with the multitude,
leading the procession to the house of God,
with shouts of joy and thanksgiving
among the festive throng.

⁵Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and ⁶my God...

⁹I say to God my Rock,
"Why have you forgotten me?
Why must I go about mourning,
oppressed by the enemy?"

¹⁰My bones suffer mortal agony
as my foes taunt me,
saying to me all day long,
"Where is your God?"

¹¹Why are you downcast, O my soul?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God,
for I will yet praise him,
my Savior and my God...

INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION

1. As we "self-isolate" as individuals and as a culture, what are the spiritual, emotional, and relational dangers? And yet, can there be any spiritual, emotional, or relational benefits to doing so (in addition to the physical health benefits)? How is it that "things going well" in our personal lives can actually serve to bring us to unhealthy spiritual ends, while "things going badly" can sometimes bring us to healthy spiritual ends?

Be specific in your answers to the following questions: How can this temporary self-exile force us to consciously own our own relational responsibilities to reach out to one another more actively and proactively? How can it force us to consciously own our own emotional health, requiring us to choose our feelings based on our internal joy rather than our external circumstances? How can it force us to consciously own our own spiritual connection to God in ways that we might not have if we were physically around our church family members? Can we pray that this time can somehow be a blessing for us?

2. It's believed that the composer of Psalm 42 wrote it while a captive of the invading Arameans--so how did that seem to affect him personally or emotionally? How have his captors tried to undermine his relationship with God? Have your own circumstances in the past few weeks tried to undermine *your* relationship with God? If so, then how so?

How has the combination of their undermining and his own suffering been making him doubt his faith in verse 9? *Is* God his rock, or has God *forgotten* him--how can both those concepts *feel* true at the same time, but cannot both *be* true at the same time? Have you ever felt like our captive Psalmist does in verse 9? If so, then please be specific.

3. What is the Psalmist *most* concerned about in verses 1-2? Why would anyone want to worship God so badly? Have *you* ever thirsted for God like that? If so, then why would anyone ever *stop* thirsting for God like that? What does the Psalmist choose to think about in verse 4? Does remembering the good things seem to help him or does it seem to make things worse? What does that suggest about how *we* should deal with feelings of loneliness and isolation today?
4. So why does the Psalmist keep asking, "Why are you downcast, O my soul?"--doesn't he already know the answer to that question? It's his captivity that's disturbing him, right? But then, what's his repeated response to himself in reply? How does that truth lead him to keep asking why he's still downcast? And how does that lead him to keep responding?

Can we put our hope in God--even praise God--even with no guarantee that our present circumstances are going to improve soon? If so, then how so? Please be specific. And then please spend time praying about living that out together right now.

WORSHIP IN SONG - As The Deer...

As the deer panteth for the water
So my soul longs after You
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

Chorus: You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my heart's desire
And I long to worship You

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye

Chorus
You're my friend and You're my brother
Even though you are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

