



## The Nourishing Vocation Project

### Engaging the Living Word

*Psalm 42*

#### What is this particular text?

- Psalm
  - First of two parts
  - This Psalm continues in Psalm 43
- Song
- Poem
  - Speaks in embodied metaphor
- Prayer
- Prayer for help that includes
  - Lament
  - Personal need
  - Articulation of taunt of others
  - Statement of faith
  - Articulation of hope

#### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- Personal prayer for help that relies on memories of God's help in the past

#### How can this text function in the church today?

- Invitation to lamentation
- Invitation to vulnerability
- Call to remember God's faithfulness
- Reminder to bring all things to God and to seek God's remembering mercy

#### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Emotive – engenders deep feelings
  - Longing
  - Loss
  - Aching
  - Feelings of the absence of God
- Reminds of personal longings
- Reminds of times of personal sorrow and loss
- Brings to mind memories, both good and bad
- Ultimately, it instills feelings of trust and hope

#### What do you have to say to the text?

- This is so personal
- It names my own experiences from so many different times
- Thanks for the permission to speak my heart

- Memories are powerful
- Sometimes hope is hard to come by

**What do you see through this text from the story itself?**

- Prayer
- Need and promise
- Permission to be real / authentic
- Life is hard. Naming that is important
- Refrains that bring assurance in hard times are important
- Memories can be both painful and life-giving

**What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)**

- Longing is both corporate and personal
- It is good to speak your needs out loud and to God
- The yearning that we feel is a yearning for God
- People have wondered forever, “where are you God” when times are hard
- We often say the wrong things amid another’s sorrow
- Crises of our current time
  - Climate crisis
  - Political realities that create personal suffering
  - Mental health crises

**What do you see within yourself?**

- Authenticity is critical
- It is okay to wonder where God is
- My personal mantras of faith are sustaining

**What is the context – textual and historical?**

- Personal prayer for help / lament
- Complaint about God’s absence
- Statement of trust
- Assurance that praise will come again
- Psalms 42 and 43 are one prayers

**What questions does this text raise for you?**

- What are my “memories of God” that sustain me?
- How I have contributed to another’s sorrow by saying the wrong thing?
- What do I need in order to hope in God?
- When have I found myself thirsting for God?
- How is the church thirsting for God today?
- What in our present time makes it feel like God has forgotten us?

**What words/themes seem of particular import?**

- Thirst
- Longing
- Remember
- Why
- Hope in God
- My help and my God



- Steadfast love

**What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- Our hope is in God
- God hears our laments
- God can handle our laments
- Praise will come again
- God will not be silent forever

**What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- Life is hard
- Sometimes it feels like God is absent
- We do have times when we end up dried out and thirsting for God
- Memories can be painful

**Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- A refreshing drink of water in the desert
- Living
- One in whom we hope
- One who hears our prayers and laments
- Full of steadfast love
- Rock

**What have others said about this text?**

- [Snowy mountains and vast waterfalls are wondrous](#), unforgettable emblems of natural beauty, but the greater gift of YHWH is that marvelous *chesed*, the unbreakable love of God that remains with us no matter what, no matter how despondent we may become, no matter how sinful we may be. John C. Holbert, Lois Craddock Perkins Professor of Homiletics Emeritus, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX
- [These are words of confusion and of lament](#), words that many of us in our faith are reticent to articulate for fear others might judge us as somehow inadequate in our walk with God. If I admit I do not hear God's voice to other Christians, let alone people who have a different or no faith, what will they think of me? Peter Lockhart.
- [These two separate psalms](#) - but which in some manuscripts appear as just one psalm - pose the eternal question of balance in one's life and faith. How do we balance hope and despair; faith in God and an anxious, paralyzing "wilderness" experience; the past and the present situation; and trust in our faithful God and the day-to-day realities of living in a world that very largely ignores God and the worship of God. Joan Stott.

**What will I teach or proclaim?**

- It is good and right to cry out to God
- Naming our longings is holy work
- God will fill the absence
- God will not stay silent forever
- God's steadfast love is more enduring than sorrow and pain
- God's steadfast love is reason to hope
- We are called to hold space for lament



- We are called to be the presence of God amid other's sorrow

