Psalm 42: (ESV): As the Deer Pants for Water

Main point: When your soul is downcast, turn to God.

Open with a short prayer, inviting God to teach us.

Background: Written by (or for) David as a song “to the choirmaster, a Maskil (probably a musical term) of the Sons of Korah,” a priestly family of singers with David in exile.

Focus of the study:
1. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.
2. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
   When shall I come and appear before God?
3. My tears have been my food day and night, while [my enemies] say to me all the day long, “Where is your God?”
4. These things I remember, as I pour out my soul:
   how I would go with the throng and lead them in procession to the house of God with glad shouts and songs of praise, a multitude keeping festival.
5. Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?
   Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God.

Questions:
1. At the time of this Psalm, David, the leader of the Hebrew people, is in exile from his home and people – what would that mean? If you were exiled from your home and country, how would you feel? What would you miss?
   a. Alone, lonely, sad, confused, angry
   b. David is cut off, unable to worship God in community with his people
   c. Missing your favorite things: foods; ease of life; not being chased; security; community
2. But what does David say is his primary need (not luxury)?
   a. v. 1-2: communion with God – like water to a thirsty deer
   b. He must drink or die; he must have God’s presence or faint away
3. What does it feel like when you’re thirsty?
   a. Intense craving! not quite the same as hunger; more urgent, even life and death
4. What does David thirst for?
   a. v. 2: the living God, “living water”
   5. v. 3-4 (read again): What does David say he’s doing day and night?
   a. Crying! Why?
i. feels cut off, heartsick, like dying of thirst
ii. taunted by his enemies, who think no help is coming from God
b. “pouring out his soul” – I wonder what that means?
c. v. 4: What and who does David say he misses?
   i. the throng, the procession, a multitude
   ii. glad songs and shouts of praise to God
d. Does David say he misses the honor and glory to himself as the leader of the people?
   i. No; misses leading his people in worship of God
6. So what’s the overall mood of this psalm? Does it sound like David is in triumph and “everything is great”?
   a. This is a heartfelt song of complaint, sadness, yearning, heartsick, thirsty
   b. Do you ever feel this way? Why do we sometimes feel this way?
7. v. 5: What is David question to himself? In verse 5, he seems to come to his senses:
   a. “Why are you cast down? Why in turmoil?”
8. What does David realize is coming in the future? Who is David’s sure hope?
   a. David puts his hope in GOD, that he will again praise God
   b. David knows that his salvation and restoration are in God alone
9. Who appears to have the power in David’s situation?
   a. The people pursuing him, his enemies, keeping him in exile
   b. But who really has the power? God!
10. When we are in distress, what is our temptation?
    a. It’s easy to complain, lose hope, try to work our way out of it alone, “pity party,” asking “why me”
    b. And we’ve got company! Many of the psalms are full of complaint, asking God “what’s happening? Where are you??”
11. When we feel downcast, what should we preach to ourselves and to each other? Who is with you/us at all times, working to restore you/us?
    a. Hope in and praise God; God is with you, never leaving you.

- Ask for any prayer requests for today.
- Close in prayer, naming people and needs listed.
- End with a song, e.g., first verse of Amazing Grace
Psalm 42: 1-5

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