

Thirsty Prayers – June 29, 2025

Church Wide Prayer:

Life on Mission: Churchwide commitment to "Each One, Reach One"

1. **Pray for Graduating Class of 2025** – that God would raise up & equip passionate disciples who hunger after God and give their full 'YES' to Him in their next leg of the race!
2. Pray for Camp – for campers, cabin leaders, full time summer volunteer team, and church staff. Clearly God has a plan for our camp and purposes for THIS SUMMER! Praise Him & PRAY!!
3. Pray for Christian business leaders, employees & community leaders – to shine brightly for Jesus
4. Pray for our church to be missionally minded for the Glory of God! to use hobbies, homes, relationships, abilities, resources, and lives to seek first the Kingdom of Heaven
5. Pray, by name, for those you know who need to know Jesus!

Intro: Today's sermon is on prayer. Spoiler alert: this is a simple sermon! There won't be much (if any) in the terms of "new content" – but perhaps some fresh perspectives! But here's the thing – I am not so sure "new" is what we're going for. Rather, the aim is to RENEW a fresh sense of love and Holy Desire to meet with God in the Secret Place. (let's stoke the fire & add wood for the important things!)

- Richard Foster in his book titled "Prayer: Finding The Hearts True Home", made a passing comment in the in the preface that has lodged itself in my mind like a rock in the Croc:
 - o **He wrote:** *"I am still a novice in the ways of prayer; who can ever master something in which the main point is to be mastered?"*
 - o When it comes to prayer, we are *forever-students* on a mission to be mastered by the Holy Spirit as we draw near in the quiet of the secret room as well as in the public prayer gathering when the church family gathers. Always the goal is to be mastered. We don't "arrive", but aim to continuously mature in the fertile soil of prayer in its various forms.
- **Summer is a perfect time to give yourself again to the practice of prayer;** to ask God to RENEW your hunger for prayer – or as I'll explain in a moment, to THIRST for God in prayer.

Today we will be looking at Psalm 63 together. Let's start by reading it in it's entirety.

- **Read Psalm 63** ~ *I'll be reading and quoting from NIV translation unless otherwise stated*

I would like to frame today's sermon using 5 C's...

- **Context** ~ understanding the passage in light of its historical/Biblical background
- **Contents** ~ a "first look" at a few of the main points in the passage
- **Comparisons** ~ make connections between this passage and similar examples in Scripture
- **Commitment** ~ invite you to consider renewing your commitment to prayer
- **Condition** ~ provide some ideas for how to condition ourselves (training) in the ways of prayer

Context ~ understanding the passage in light of its historical/Biblical background

- Depending on what translation/style of Bible you read, it may or may not include a note at the top of this Psalm just beneath the heading "Psalm 63". Mine says, **"A Psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah."**

- Let's start there. When I read the Psalms, something I like to imagine is that I'm getting a sneak-peek into David's personal prayer journal. These introductory notes can be helpful as they provide context behind the Psalm, such as **who the author was**.
- Some notes include **instructions for the director of music and/or the temple musicians**.
- Other notes include details about the **authors whereabouts** when writing the Psalm.
- This is the case for Psalm 63; I love this because it provides a glimpse into the circumstances David was facing and a color commentary of his conversation with the Lord at that time.
 - Do you ever wonder what it'd be like to be a fly on the wall during someone's prayer time with God, especially in a significant moment? What was, say... Martin Luther praying about just before he stood trial before the council at the diet of worms? Or what was Elizabeth Elliot praying about before she returned to the tribe of Hourani people that murdered her husband Jim only 2 years prior?
 - Maybe we have records of this, maybe not. Likewise, sometimes Scripture awards us these details, and when it does it makes me happy!
- According to tradition, Psalm 63 is the recorded Prayer from "David's Journal" at a time in his life when he was on the run, evading his enemies in the wilderness Desert of Judea.
 - Commentators point out that we can't be certain exactly which "Desert wandering" this particular Psalm is referring to (yes, David had more than one Desert exile).
- The introductory note could be referring to David's time in the wilderness when he was on the run from Saul, the first king of Israel. Or it could be referring to a later time when David's son Absalom led a rebellion against his father, forcing David to flee (yet again) into the wilderness.
 - Most commentators favor the first option; that this Psalm was written earlier in David's life when he was running from Saul, the jealousy-stricken king who viewed David as a threat to his reign. David escaped a near-death encounter where Saul tried to spear him to death over dinner. Naturally, David fled, eventually arriving in the Judean wilderness.
 - Either way, consider again the first line given the context of David's desert surroundings: *"You, God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; **I thirst for you**, my whole being longs for you, **in a dry and parched land where there is no water.**" Psalms 63:1*
 - **Sure, David was a skilled poet. He had a way with words.** But this prayer was also inspired by his literal thirst as he wandered the barren desert, low on water.
- The desert was hot, dry and would have provided many challenges for David, especially given the fact that his life was in danger and he had to remain hidden. Yet when you consider this, the words of Psalm 63 are **SURPRISINGLY** beautiful, optimistic & hopeful!
 - **Be honest:** would such a prayer flow out of you in the desert? I'm not so sure if it would for me... I'm thinking my prayer would likely be more like **Psalm 6**, a lament: *"My soul is in anguish. How long, Lord, how long?"* (Great Psalm too!)
- This "surprising tone" ultimately points to GOODNESS OF GOD & His ability to provide for David, even in such a hostile environment; **but it also shows the kind of man David was becoming**.
 - This reminds me of Paul's letter to the Philippian church, often called "*the Epistle of Joy*". The shocking thing about that letter is, it was written from **PRISON!** (a wilderness setting)

Contents ~ a "first look" at a few of the main points in the passage

Now let's look at some of the amazing contents of this BEAUTIFUL prayer. **Psalm 63 is a passionate expression of praise from the heart of a man wildly in love with his God.** In my Bible I have penciled in beside the heading, "*A beautiful love song to the Lord*", for that is how it reads.

- The Psalms contain RICH THEOLOGICAL TRUTHS. For example, in the Psalms we get many vivid descriptions of who God is, His Attributes, His Sovereignty, Character & more. We also get many prophetic promises including about the Messiah, such as in Psalm 110 (which Jesus quoted).
- However, we can't lose sight of the fact that the Psalm's are a collection of PRAYERS. As in, they are *more* than a collection of personal prayers made to God, but they aren't *less* than that. They are a written heritage of prayer; often seen as the "The Official Prayer Book" throughout the history of God's people. As we study them, we should keep this in mind!
 - **Example:** imagine if my kids dug up some old love letters that I wrote to my wife.
 - Imagine they began to study and analyze those letters, including the specific words I used, etc. Eventually it would take the fun out of it – it's a love letter, read it like one.
 - Likewise, when I study the Psalms, I like to step back from time to time and re-read it with fresh eyes to get the big picture. *I read it as a prayer.*
 - My point is, you could easily analyze the Psalms to death and miss their plain meaning.
 - As you read Psalm 63, remember that this is a BEAUTIFUL prayer; a passionate expression of praise from the heart of a man wildly in love with his God.
 - **Study it?** YES, absolutely, as we will do in just a moment. But also, PRAY IT. Allow it to shape your prayers – borrow it's language. Read it for information, with the goal of FORMATION; to become the kind of person who loves God as described.

Psalm 63:1a, "*You, God, are my God...*"

- David begins His prayer by directing it to his intended recipient, much like we would do with a letter. Rather than saying "*To whom it may concern*", David shows concern for whom he addresses His prayer to. David isn't praying to "the gods", or even to "God" (in a generic sense). He's praying to "*His God*" who is THE GOD (supreme).
- **This is a statement of exclusivity & devotion.**
 - It might sound redundant to our ears – like David is needlessly repeating himself. But he's not. David lived within a culture that was all too comfortable with a plurality of "gods", each one uniquely useful depending on your needs and what you were praying about. Idol worship was rampant in his day, as it still is in many parts of the world today.
 - David is first of all making a distinction about whom he is praying to; to THE GOD, known to him as Yahweh, Israel's God, the only true God! The other "gods" were nothing more than counterfeits – idols & demonic beings living in rebellion to the true God (Yahweh).
 - Then David takes it a step further. You, God, are MY GOD (personalized). David's made his choice – as for him, he will serve the Lord his God, the only true God.
- **STORY:** I will often pray this Psalm out loud. Recently I was praying this particular line as I watched the sun rise. I was awestruck by the beauty I beheld. The vivid colors used on the vast expanse of the creator's canvas captivated my attention. I began to think of God's goodness, his power and faithfulness. Never in my life has the sun failed to rise. I thought of God's perfect track record, accompanied by His artistic flair– reminding me each day that he is GOOD and IN CONTROL. I began to repeat this line out loud, "You God, are *MY God*..." Again. "You God (the only true God), are my God!!". Again. "You God (the one who causes the sun to rise), are MY GOD!" Eventually, with a giddy joy and Holy laughter I simply said, "I can't believe I am talking to the one who made THAT. Wow, that's MY God!" *Every line of this Psalm can come to life like this.*

Psalm 63:1b, "*...earnestly I seek you.*"

From The Expositor's Bible Commentary: *"This psalm has been used as a morning psalm because of the KJV rendering of v.1, still reflected in the NKJV: "EARLY will I seek You."*

- Most translations of this verse (including NIV, ESV, NLT, and NASB) use the word "earnestly" rather than "early". I prefer the word earnestly because it better captures the essence of **HOW** David sought the Lord (with passion, determination and persistence) as well as **WHEN** he did so, as in "EARLY" (it was his top priority, his first "go to"). So it's right to present both!
 - o **Question:** Do you seek God "early", or is he a last resort to you?
 - o **Contrast this with St. Augustine's confession,** *"Late have I loved Thee, O Beauty, so ancient and so new. Late have I loved Thee."* He lamented the time he wasted!
- While we ought not get legalistic about WHEN we spend time in prayer (i.e. devo's), there is something to the notion of how we start our day that matters. Consider...
 - o **In the morning, Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before you and wait expectantly. Psalm 5:3**
 - o *I cry to you for help, Lord; in the morning my prayer comes before you. Psalm 88:13*
 - o *My heart, O God, is steadfast; I will sing and make music with all my soul. Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn. Psalm 108:1-2*
 - o *I rise before dawn and cry for help; I have put my hope in your word. Psalm 119:147*
- Again, recently I was praying this particular line from Psalm 63, and I came to the phrase *"earnestly I seek you"*. I repeated it a few times, then felt a question rise within me. "God, what does it look like to seek you **earnestly**? How should I expect this to look?" In a moment of silence I paused to listen for His reply, and it came.
 - o **"I THIRST FOR YOU. MY WHOLE BEING LONGS FOR YOU in a dry and parched land where there is no water." Psalm 63:1b**
 - o There it is! That's the answer!! To seek God earnestly is to pursue Him with the consistency and intensity that our bodies demands water, especially in the desert heat!
- **STORY:** some years ago when I first began to run, I set out for a jog on a hot summers day. Like... it was **REALLY** hot. I underestimated the conditions and overestimated my abilities. I ran down the highway between Steinbach and Mitchell, and at first it felt great! The sun was shining, it felt happy and confident! Only thing is, prior to the run I failed to drink enough water. Funny thing about hydration is... it matters most what you do in advance... *well in advance!*
 - o *By the time you begin to feel the effects of dehydration set in, its usually too late.*
 - o There I was, halfway down the highway and I was beginning to feel it. My mouth went bone dry, my heartrate elevated, and I began to cramp. In short, I was in a panic.
 - o I had no water with me, and no wallet either. What was I to do? I eventually made as far as timber falls, and by this point I was bright red, drenched in sweat and in a daze.
 - o I burst through the door like a madman, found a cup and a water dispenser, and proceeded to drink what felt like a few liters of cool water... IT WAS PURE BLISS!
 - Question is... now what? I've got to keep running, right? It was that or suffer the embarrassment of lingering longer at timber falls before my wife could pick me up. So in my pride I set out again & tried to run again, but quickly realized that all the lifesaving water in my stomach now prevented me from running further.

Defeated and deflated, I called Elly to come rescued me!

- **Here's the point:** that story serves as a reminder to me of the kind of longing I ought to have for God. I EARNESTLY needed water – I was desperate and in dire need. That's the point. *"You God are MY God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you, my whole being longs for you..."*

- **Is this an accurate description of the kind of longing you have for God?**
- I think David is simply connecting the dots: just as he *NEEDS water*, he *NEEDS GOD* (even more).
 - If we're honest, we often treat God more casually than that. We're grateful He is there when we need him, but our lives don't always declare our desperation for him.
 - Don't despair or fall into the throes of condemnation. I doubt David always felt a perfect sense of earnesty either. **But rather, this was the kind of person He was aiming to become; the standard he sought for his life.** Indeed, this was the kind of man God was shaping Him to be. This should be our desire too!
 - I'll come back to this running story at the end in the fifth "C" – condition.

There is so much more within the contents of this Psalm that I wish we could cover. We've only made it as far as the first line, and already I hope you feel a renewed invitation to prayer!

I will quickly touch on the **in-tense-ity of this Psalm:**

A 'TENSE' Passage: A Look At *Past*, *Present*, and *Future* Tenses In Psalm 63

You, God, are **(present)** my God,
earnestly I seek **(present)** you;
I thirst **(present)** for you,
my whole being longs **(present)** for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is **(present)** no water.

v1: At the start of this Psalm, David is speaking to God in strictly present tense – these are things David is currently/actively doing and feeling! He *IS* seeking. He *IS* thirsting. There *IS* no water around him.

I *have seen* **(past)** you in the sanctuary
and beheld **(past)** your power and your glory.
Because your love is **(present)** better than life,
my lips will **(future)** glorify you.
I will **(future)** praise you as long as I live,
and in your name I will **(future)** lift up my hands.

v2-4: David switches to *PAST* tense in verse 2. He remembers his times with the Lord prior to the desert, when he beheld God in the Sanctuary! Then he jumps ahead to *FUTURE* tense in verses 3-4, declaring the aim of his life ahead.

I will **(future)** be fully satisfied **(future)** as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will **(future)** praise you.
On my bed **(present)** I remember **(past)** you;
I think of **(present)** you through the watches of the night.
Because you are **(present)** my help,
I sing **(present)** in the shadow of your wings.

v5-7: David continues to announce his commitments for the days ahead, then switches back to the present in verses 6-7, with a mention of the past (to remember) in verse 6.

I cling **(present)** to you;
your right hand upholds me **(present)**.
Those who want to kill me **(present)** will **(future)** be destroyed;
they will **(future)** go down to the depths of the earth.
They will **(future)** be given over to the sword
and become **(future)** food for jackals.

v8-10: Again, David is praying in present tense ("I cling to you"), but soon switches to future tense. He knows his current situation is dire, so he reminds himself that God *WILL* be faithful again.

But the king **(future)** will **(future)** rejoice in God;
all who swear by God **(present)** will **(future)** glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will **(future)** be silenced.

v11: David predominately prays in future tense. Note: "the king will rejoice in God". Interestingly, at this point David was not presently king, although he had already been anointed king by Samuel. David is grounding himself in God's promises to come using the *NOW* and *NOT YET*.

Comparison ~ connections between this passage & similar examples in Scripture

The Wilderness is a familiar theme throughout Scripture. As we've already noted, David found himself in the wilderness at the time he wrote Psalm 63. What can we learn from this?

Psalm 63:1, "...in a dry and parched land where there is no water."

- **The Wilderness, Biblically speaking, stands in contrast to the image of a garden.** When God created the world, he created Adam (and soon there after, Eve) and placed them in a lush Garden paradise called Eden. He provided this haven for his image-bearer's to 'rule' over in submission to Him. There was food to eat and rivers to drink from and water the ground.
 - o This stands in stark contrast to the barren wilderness that David found himself in. Given the choice – I am sure David would have chosen the well-watered garden. Wouldn't you?
 - In a way, the wilderness represents that effects of the Fall – our rebellion against God in the garden led to our wanderings in the desert afterwards.
- Compare this to the story of the Israelites after the Exodus. They became all too familiar with the barren space between deliverance and the promised land.
 - o A journey that *should have* only taken about two weeks ended up taking 40 YEARS to complete. In the span of those 40 years Moses and the Israelites wandered through the barren desert, wrestling with God and resisting His leadership. (read book of Numbers)
 - Likewise, the wilderness can represent our wrestling with God (as in sin) too. **OR** it can represent the effects of sin (i.e. life in a broken world). In Davids case, he was in the wilderness as a result of SAUL's sin, not his own.
- **The Wilderness is portrayed as a place OF TESTING & PREPARATION. Examples...**
 - o **Moses:** before becoming the leader of the Exodus, Moses himself spent 40yrs in the wilderness. He needed time to mature, lose his self-sufficiency, and receive his calling.
 - o **Elijah:** In 1 Kings 19 we read the story of the mighty prophet Elijah, who after seeing God send fire from heaven, fled in fear into the wilderness. There he despaired of life itself & questioned his calling. And there the Lord spoke to him in "a gentle whisper".
 - o **John The Baptist:** Jesus had much respect for John, saying there was "no one greater". John's task was to PREPARE THE WAY for the Lord. And where do you think he did that? In the desert! In fact, not only did God *prepare* John in the wilderness, but he used him there to prepare others. People went out to the wilderness to hear John teach!
 - o **JESUS:** Last but certainly NOT least, Jesus & the wilderness. Our Lord was not unfamiliar with this barren climate. Just after His baptism, early on in His ministry, He was "*led by the Spirit into the wilderness*", where He was tested over a period of 40 days. As surprising as this early encounter with the desert was, that wouldn't be the last time Jesus would enter wilderness. Even more surprising was how He often **SOUGHT IT OUT**.
 - o **Luke 5:16 (NASB),** *But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.*
- **TRUTH:** God uses the wilderness to test & prepare his people! Will you despise the desert, or allow God to use it in your life to form you into the kind of person He desires you to be?
- **PURPOSE IN THE WILDERNESS:** *"...solitude is the furnace in which this transformation takes place... without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self... solitude is the place of the great struggle and the great encounter – the struggle against the compulsions of the false self, and the encounter of the loving God who offers himself as the substance of the new self."* Henri Nouwen, The Way Of The Heart

Commitment ~ An invitation to renew your commitment to God in prayer this summer

"The Disciplines are God's way of getting us into the ground; they put us where he can work within us and transform us. By themselves the Spiritual Disciplines can do nothing; they can only get us to the place where something can be done." **Richard Foster, Celebration of Discipline**

- **WHY DO WE PRAY?** We've talked about this before... what is the purpose of prayer?
- **ANSWER:** To **KNOW GOD!** Prayer is the soil in which we mature & grow in Christlikeness.
 - o We pray because we are commanded to. We pray because Jesus modelled it. We pray because through partnership with God we are invited to know His will and pray it into being. Aka – when we pray, God really hears and He really answers!
- **But most importantly, we pray because we want to know Him,** our Creator and God! The same God that causes the Sun to rise each day and keeps this little blue & green rock spinning in orbit at just the right place at just the right speed at just the right tilt, perfectly allowing life as we know it to exist. We pray to know THAT GOD. *THE* God. To Yahweh, The Lord God Almighty.
 - o To Jesus, God in the Flesh, through the Holy Spirit, God dwelling within us!
- This is why we pray!! **TO KNOW HIM! And to BE KNOWN BY HIM!**
 - o *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?* Psalm 8:3-4
- Church, when I invite you to consider renewing your commitment to prayer this summer, please know that I am not trying to be another voice telling you to do more. You are likely already doing too much. But are you doing the right things? The best things?
- Progress often times means *subtraction*, not addition.
 - o Summer is a wonderful opportunity to step back from the routine rhythms of life and choose to plant yourself in God's soil. We have an opportunity to step out of the proverbial rat-race of endless pursuing... the constant inner longing for MORE.
 - o We can pause (take a *selah*, to use another note often found within the Psalms), and rest in God. To say, *"The Lord is my shepherd. **I shall not want (I lack nothing).**"* Psalm 23:1
 - **They say,** *"The grass is always greener on the other side."* I'd like to suggest that the grass is always greener when you water it, and God has an oceans worth of supply for us this summer!

Condition ~ ideas for how to condition ourselves (i.e. training) in the ways of prayer

- Back to my failed run from a couple summers ago. The issue was not that it was hot outside, nor even the fact that I didn't have water on me during my run (although that would have helped).
 - o The primary issue was what I did (or *didn't do*) in the time leading up to that run!
 - o You see, the hydration process should already begin in the days and hours leading up to the run. This allows you to preform at a peak level, and ensures that you can sustain the period of testing. And in the same way, prayer BEFORE the wilderness sustains prayer WITHIN the wilderness.
 - **After David declared his thirst for God in the opening line, he said, "I have seen (PAST) you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will (PRESENT/FUTURE) glorify you.** Psalm 63:2-3
 - **In the midst of the desert heat, David prayed EARLY and EARNESTLY to God, his true thirst-quencher. Why do you think he did this?**

Ultimately it was by God's grace. No question. But the outworking of that grace was in a time BEFORE the wilderness when David made a decision to seek the Lord, only then it was in the sanctuary.

- **STORY:** Recently I ran my first marathon. It was fun, challenging and instructive, all in one! Thankfully I was able to learn from my past mistakes – this time I came prepared. I was well hydrated and carried fluids with me in a runners belt. When I started the race I felt great, much like that time on the highway years earlier. And when the fatigue set in and the heat came, I did what I had trained to do: I nourished myself with food and water. And when the time of testing came around 2/3 of the way through, I continued to do what I trained to do.
 - o **Was it hard?** NO QUESTION. Was I tempted to quit. I'll admit, the thought came to mind at times... but in the end, thanks to God, I achieved what I came to do.
 - o I trained over a span of 125 days, running in snow and frigid temperatures, through the spring and in the heat, running 520 miles in total in order to run 26.3m at my best.
- **Here's The Point:** we don't TRY to be like Jesus, friends. We TRAIN to be like Jesus. It's called "conditioning". I've heard it said something to the effect of, *"We don't preform to the level of our intentions, we steadily follow the (formed by the) outcome of our commitments."*
- And when the conditions surrounding us prove difficult and the going gets tough, the Holy Spirit uses our conditioning to carry us forward.
 - o **Don't despise the desert, church! God uses the wilderness to prepare his people!** Will you allow God to use it in your life to form you into the kind of person He desires you to be? His desire is to know you, and for you to know Him!
- **Luke 5:16, "But Jesus himself would often slip away into the wilderness and pray."**
 - o **Samuel Whitefield wrote a great book called "Will You Choose The Wilderness?"** I love that title. Jesus chose the wilderness as a space to commune with His Father. Will you?
 - **Will you renew your commitment to prayer this summer?**

"I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that with many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain." A.W. Tozer, The Pursuit Of God

You've heard of Air Conditioning. How about Prayer Conditioning? Here are some "cool" ideas...

1. **Pray EARLY & EARNESTLY:** pray for God to increase our desire Him, both individually and as a church! Pray that our lives would be marked by an unquenchable thirst for God.
2. **Start each day by praying a Psalm.** Pick one Psalm to repeat daily, or one per day! Borrow the language of Scripture to help form & fill-out your prayers!
3. **Introduce Silence & Solitude into your day.** Try this in bite-sized chunks, such as 5 minutes in the morning before the busyness of the day begins. (Put your phone & other distractions away!)
4. **Introduce "Singing The Psalms" into your day.**
 - a. **Examples:** Create In Me A Clean Heart (Ps. 51), Better Is One Day (ps. 84), The Lord is My Shepherd (Ps. 23), Your Love O Lord (Ps. 36)
5. **Reengage With The Practice Of Journaling.** As a prayer exercise, try writing your own 'Psalm' to the Lord, or take a Psalm and write it in your own words, personalizing it to your circumstances.
6. **Read a Good Book on Prayer: Celebration of Discipline, Knowing God, The Pursuit Of God**
7. **Take Advantage of After Service Prayer!** Feeling a lack of thirst (i.e. desire) for prayer? That would be a GREAT prayer request to share with one of our AMAZING prayer ministers!