



MORNING PRAYER DEVOTIONAL

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18, 2020

Readings: Exodus 25:1-23, 31-40; Matthew 23:13-end; Psalms 42, 4

“Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul,
and why are you so disquieted within me?
O put your trust in God, for I will give him thanks,
who is the help of my countenance, and my God”

Psalm 42:14,15

Psalm 42 begins with the beautiful phrase, “As the deer desires the water brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God.” There are times in our lives when we are spiritually “parched.” Our hearts are dry and our desire is for some refreshment from the Lord. We may remember the “good old days” like the Psalmist in verses 4-5: “When I think upon these things, I pour out my heart, when I remember how I went with the multitude, and brought them into the house of God, with the voice of praise and thanksgiving among those who keep holy day.” But such memories, while helpful for a moment, are not to be dwelled upon. The Lord does not call us to live in the past. Instead, He calls us to put our trust in Him in the present: “O put your trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance, and my God” (verse 7).

This is the theme of the Psalm, as it is repeated at the very end, an exclamation point to the call of God to trust Him, even in the most difficult of times.

Trusting God when things are going well is fairly easy. Yes, we will struggle with taking the credit ourselves, for assigning the blessing we are receiving to our hard work,

our cleverness or some other virtue or positive characteristic that we think is ours, but the real challenges come when we are called to trust God when things are going badly, when we are tempted to blame God for it all, to become anxious, angry or bitter.

It is wise to remember that God will not tempt us beyond our abilities (1 Corinthians 10:13), and the purpose of His trials is not punishment, but refinement. I recall the story of a master craftsman who made beautiful pottery “the old fashioned way.” Instead of high-tech gadgets and gauges that told him when to turn the pottery, when to adjust the temperature of the kiln, or when to remove the final product, this artisan did it all by his own eye. If the oven did not get hot enough, the glaze would not set; if the oven got too hot, the pottery would crack. When asked how he knew the temperature was just right and the glaze was set, ready for the piece to be removed from the kiln, he said, “When I can see my reflection in the glaze, it is finished.”

God’s refining purposes in our lives are similar. If He doesn’t turn the heat up, the reflection of His son will never “set” in us; if He turns the heat up too much, we will crack. But once He sees the reflection of His Son in us, it is finished.

May God give us the grace to trust the Potter, acknowledge that we are the clay, and say to ourselves, “Why are you so full of heaviness, O my soul, and why are you so disquieted within me? O put your trust in God, for I will yet give him thanks, who is the help of my countenance and my God.”

-Fr. Marc

A Prayer of Self-Dedication, ACNA Book of Common Prayer, page 668

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. – William Temple

