

## Psalm 63

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you;  
my flesh faints for you,  
as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

<sup>2</sup> So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary,  
beholding your power and glory.  
<sup>3</sup> Because your steadfast love is better than life,  
my lips will praise you.  
<sup>4</sup> So I will bless you as long as I live;  
in your name I will lift up my hands.

<sup>5</sup> My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,

and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,  
<sup>6</sup> when I remember you upon my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;

<sup>7</sup> for you have been my help,  
and in the shadow of your wings I will sing for joy.

<sup>8</sup> My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

<sup>9</sup> But those who seek to destroy my life shall go down into the depths of the earth;  
<sup>10</sup> they shall be given over to the power of the sword;  
they shall be a portion for jackals.

<sup>11</sup> But the king shall rejoice in God;  
all who swear by him shall exult,  
for the mouths of liars will be stopped.

**Sermon Summary:** Of all the questions that matter to humans, perhaps the deepest and most central question is that of identity: “Who am I, and am I loved and accepted?” If the answer to that question is in doubt, we experience what many call despair. This psalm answers that question.

*The root of despair:* “The wilderness” was a time when David had to flee for his life as a result of his multiple failures in the things that would have given his life meaning and value: as a king, a father, a man. These failures strike at the heart of our deepest longings. As “seeking, thirsting, fainting” beings (v. 1), we long for a love that “is better than life” (v. 3). The root of despair is when we feel cut off from that love.

*The reason for despair:* Despite his failures, David is able to “rejoice” (v 11) in an experience of God’s love (v. 3) that brings deep satisfaction to his soul (v. 5) because he is confident he belongs to God (v. 1: “my God;” v. 8: “your right hand upholds me”). The place he experiences

that love is in “the sanctuary” (v. 2). It is not a love he gives to himself, however, but one that is *given to him*. This counters our cultural narrative of self-belonging that says we give ourselves the love, worth, and value we desire (“the only thing that matters...”). That narrative radically fails us, and is the reason for our despair.

*The resolution of despair*: The sanctuary is the place where David is honest about his failures (the altar of sacrifice was a constant reminder) but secure in God’s love (the center of the sanctuary.) The sanctuary undoes the lies we believe (v. 11), and instead secures us in God’s love. Jesus’ death on the cross established the ultimate sanctuary in our hearts where lies could be undone and we could hear the voice of the Father telling us who we are. If we belong to Jesus, sin describes us, but God’s love defines us. That holds our sin together with our beloved-ness in one coherent, secure identity.

### **Application Questions:**

1. What are some things that tend to comprise the core elements of how you think about your identity (e.g. relationships, family, achievements, experiences, various forms of status, etc)? How have your failures and successes in those things shaped how you feel about your identity?
2. In his book *You Are Not Your Own*, Alan Noble suggests our culture is based on the idea: “I am my own and I belong to myself.” What are some ways that idea influences the way you live (e.g. where you find meaning in life, your identity, morality, money, life-decisions, work, serving others, etc)? What are some problems with this idea (if any)?
3. We said that if you belong to Jesus, sin describes you, but God’s love defines you. Discuss in your group. How does this distinction help you think about yourself, especially the tension between your sins/failures and the idea that God loves you?
4. Anglican priest Rowan Williams writes:

*“You have an identity, not because you have invented one, but because you have a witness of who you are. You don’t have to work out and finalize who you are; you don’t have to settle the absolute truth of your story. In the eyes of the presence that never goes away, all that you have been and are is still present and real; it is held together in that unifying gaze.”*

How does this encourage you? How does this challenge you? What in your life might look different if this was more real to your heart?