



January 27th, 2018

Knowing God - Psalm 63

Sermon Title: Getting help from God in the wilderness

College Students listen up! My summer I spent on mission was, and this is no overspeak, one of the defining moments of my life. God used it to open my eyes to what he is doing around the world. He used it to prepare me for going into the workplace because I got training for how to speak & live the gospel in a non-christian environment. So I know right now you are thinking about this summer & what will help you get ahead. I'm telling you there is no better program, no better training, you could do than to come to city project this summer. It's going to be 8 epic weeks. You'll get worldview training & bible training, you'll experience local, national, and international ministry. You'll build some super tight friendships. You don't get a lot of chances at this. THIS SUMMER is your summer. Let's GO!!! Seriously its going to change your life. Sign up ____.

And listen let me say to you who like me and you are out of college and you wish you could get in on that, I want you to know that training and sending is really at the heart of everything we do here.

Our vision as a church, man what we really want to see happen...is what we call a gospel awakening just grip the people of this city. Where the love of God for them lights a fresh fire that changes individuals, that brings restoration and purpose to families, that breathes life into marriages, and ultimately changes the fabric of the city for good. To do that we commit Mercy to always be training up and sending out our people with the love of Christ.

We took a huge collective step that direction 4 weeks ago when We launched a second location on Providence Rd aimed at reaching people with the gospel in that area. Cause that's the vision. See an awakening! See it come to every pocket in Charlotte! Several of our members were already coming from that area and we saw this as an opportunity for them to invite their friends & neighbors to come who may be less likely to drive over to the Independence area. So we are now one church meeting in two locations – Independence Blvd and Providence Rd. We have the same sermon for both locations, same ministries...because we want to be unified in our mission. Now the cool thing with that is that for the first time in 2 years we actually have room for new people to join in to what God has been doing.

Our first 3 weeks we had 43 first time guests, not including their kids, visit mercy for the very first time just this month. Not including today.

And there is room for more! By opening a campus, We've opened space in every single ministry team. We sent like 200 people to launch providence Rd and last weekend, on a holiday weekend, our 11am at Independence was FULL. **AT 11AM – Make push for 9am

NOW is the time for you to get involved around here, be trained up to go out. Get on a ministry team. We have training for people at every level of ministry involvement here. We have short term mission trips you can go on this year. Don't let the college students be the only ones who show courage to step out and trust God this year. You come join us. At Providence Rd you talk to Joey Schwartz – Our associate campus director. At Independence, Talk to Justin Sawyer our connections resident. (I'd love to see faces & emails). If you prefer texting, text this number _____ and say "I'm in" and we'll follow up.

With all that said if you have a bible, make your way into the book of the Psalms. If you have a print version just kind of open it to the middle. You'll likely be in the Psalms. If you are using digital scroll on down. Today we finish up this part of our series in the Psalms in Psalm 63. We've done this for 3 years in a row now. We've opened the year in the Psalms to kind of hit reset on our spiritual lives. To make sure God is not just something we know about but instead SOMEONE we know. Man I've been really encouraged by conversations. Some of you have given your life to Christ this month. Praise God! We are rejoicing with you. Listen if you aren't there, if you feel like you don't know God that way where he's SOMEONE instead of just SOMETHING, the good news is there are 150 of these Psalms. These can be your prayer book, your devotional guide. Use them. Read them, meditate on them.

In fact today's Psalm, Psalm 63 is perfect for you if that's you. Because David wrote Psalm 63 while in the wilderness on the run from his enemies. He's the rightful king, yet he's running and stuck out in the wilderness. Today we talk about how to find help from God when we are in the wilderness. I know last week was intense, and well so is this one. So buckle up. I'm gonna read the whole Psalm then we are getting into it. Let's go.

God, you are my God; I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.

2 So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.

3 My lips will glorify you because your faithful love is better than life.

4 So I will bless you as long as I live; at your name, I will lift up my hands.

5 You satisfy me as with rich food; my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

6 When I think of you as I lie on my bed, I meditate on you during the night watches

7 because you are my helper; I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings.

8 I follow close to you; your right hand holds on to me.

9 But those who intend to destroy my life will go into the depths of the earth.

10 They will be given over to the power of the sword;

they will become a meal for jackals.
11 But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by him will boast,
for the mouths of liars will be shut. -- Psalms 63:1-11 (CSB)

Here's how we are going to approach Psalm 63: A field guide for trusting God in the wilderness. Remember Context: Son Absalom is hunting him. Trying to kill him. It's not that David is doubting God. That's what makes this Psalm helpful to you. It's that David is in a pretty crummy situation in his life. And in that situation we see him express a faith, a confident trust in God, that honestly we all want and hope we have in crisis like he's in. Because YOU WILL FIND YOURSELF IN THE WILDERNESS ONE DAY. You'll be in a place where you feel uncertain, your future feels uncertain, you feel like you aren't where you are supposed to be in life. And you'll feel like you are walking without a compass not sure about where you are heading & not sure what God is up to. Who am I, where am I, and what am I supposed to do now!? Sometimes life hits you with a huge crisis out of nowhere like a death in the family or an unexpected diagnosis or a job loss. Listen, that's just truth. In this life there will be suffering! Times of wilderness. You are either there, or on your way there. And today listening to this you need it for YOU and you need it for the friend. What I HOPE you hear today: God does some of his best work in the wilderness.

Gonna start in verse 1

God, you are my God; I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you; my body faints for you in a land that is dry, desolate, and without water.

David makes a pronouncement. God, you are my God. This is a faith statement right. David is out here in the wilderness and life is tough right now and he chooses to address God. And he says YOU are MY God. Ya'll that sets up everything else. If you cannot say that the God of the bible is YOUR God...the rest of this will not be available to you. You have to say "I am not my God, I am not my own ultimate authority. Nor is anything else. You are my God. My provider, redeemer, creator, and my king." And the reason why you might

Then he says I eagerly seek you. This is not "I'm seeking you because I know you are up there somewhere. This is 'I'm seeking you because I've found you before.'" Really pay attention to the words here. This is an important bible reading discipline. Don't read what you think it says or what you want it to say, read what it really says. He's not seeking relief from his circumstances. He's in a land without water, but he's not seeking water. He's seeking God. His body is fainting...because he's physically malnourished. But he says it's really fainting for God. C.S. Lewis said these verses describe our appetite for God. For David, his hunger & thirst is for God. And that's a really healthy and good thing that we are going to come back to a couple of times today. Our field Guide for finding God in the wilderness begins with a really uplifting truth that may take a minute to get your mind around.

Our appetite for God is a gift from God.

Turn your brain up a level and go with me here. When we first start towards God, we almost always go to him because we want something in life and we hope he'll give it to us. We want meaning in our lives, we need help fixing a big problem, or something like that. It's normal. But that is a self-focused seeking. It is not really an appetite for God. BUT, when you cry out like David is crying out here...that's a longing that comes out of an experience you've had being satisfied with God for who he is, not what he can give you. First it's often "If you love me, give me a good life" but then when you actually experience a relationship with God, it changes to "God if I have your love, I don't need anything else in my life." What that means, when you are honestly praying that prayer, is that you've experienced the goodness of knowing God.

And that appetite is a gift from God. He comes to us we don't go to him. He reveals himself to us and our souls find what we are created for finally. That sparks a seeking. A pursuit of God. We want more of HIM. That's him changing our desires. The appetite is a blessing from God. It's a bridge to closeness to him. Listen only a soul who has experienced God's presence, who has experienced the soul quenching satisfaction of knowing God...will say he hungers and thirsts for God.

So really, the sense of his absence...is a sign of his presence. Of his working in your life. The longing to be near to him is a sign that he is closer than you think. Don't think of your appetite for God as a curse, it's a blessing.

So listen this first principle in the field guide is both a test and a discipline. In fact I think most of these will be. It's a test because it gives you something to assess your life and see how you measure up. But it's also a calling to a way of life. To disciplines that will yield good fruit. So let me ask you: What are you hungry for right now? Are you hungry for what God can give you or are you hungry for God himself?

David had plenty of life situations he could have used God's help with. But God had brought him to a place where God's love was better than life.

How to grow your appetite for God:

- **Don't spoil your appetite with junk gods** – my kids eat ice cream at 4:30 in the afternoon, they aren't hungry for dinner. Their junk food has spoiled their appetite. In the same way we spoil our appetite for God when we pursue the big three: sex, power, and money. These might give us a sugar rush, but it spoils the feast we could have had. We must get rid of them if we are going to know God. And it won't happen overnight. Changing your appetite takes trust and time. Trust that God will be better to you and time for your soul's taste buds to change.
 - Want to know what your junk gods are? What do you fantasize about? What do you spend your time thinking about when you are all alone? What do you escape to? Netflix – junk god. alcohol – junk god. work success – junk god. gossip – junk god. sex – junk god. junk food – junk god. Momentary high, leave you feeling worse. That's not the food your soul was meant to feast on.
 - And LISTEN the GREAT THING ABOUT THE WILDERNESS – sometimes you get there because you've been stripped of a junk god. Thank the Lord for that. One

of my community group members said the other day that she loves these seasons. She actually said “I love darkness” and we were like “are you ok?” But she explained that she loves the wilderness because there is a shaking up & stripping away that God uses to reveal where you’ve been consuming junk gods and it recalibrates your soul back towards God. And maybe you can will go to him now.

- **Feast on the things of God** - Develop an appetite through sitting and studying about God. That’s what is so great about the Psalms. They are like a journal of prayers already written that meditate on everything about God. So take things from the text and start praying through them, as opposed to filling your prayer with the gimmies. Feed your appetite with the truth about God. The whole range. Reflect on his glory reflect on his power. Reflect on his love. Reflect on his holiness. David says I long to see your glory and your power. See him entirely. And discipline yourself to stay there until God changes your desires. He will do it.

Keep going. **2 So I gaze on you in the sanctuary to see your strength and your glory.**

I normally use the CSB translation and that’s what is here. But in this case it isn’t as clear to the tenses in this that evoke a really important concept. The KJV actually does it a little better so let me show you that one. But warning it was written in 1611 ok so the language is a little old but the accuracy is strong.

2 To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.

David says I want to see you again...like I have seen you before. This helps me a great deal. David’s longing for God in the wilderness is fueled and sustained by remembering God’s work in his life in the past. David remembers the temple. The representation of God’s presence among his people and it was a holy place. Because the power and glory of the Lord was so concentrated there that you couldn’t even go into the very throne room lest you be consumed by it. And David remembers the fellowship he had with God there, how God’s presence was his shelter.

His past experience of God’s faithfulness comforts him in the wilderness and gives him confidence God will deliver him from the wilderness. Look at verse 7.

7 because you are my helper; I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings.

How does David know God is his helper? He’s experienced the help of God! With Goliath, with Jonathan, with Saul...his life has been filled with God carrying him through really hard moments and him looking back on it and saying WOW. God is so good. So he says Lord, because you ARE...I’ve seen you in the sanctuary...I’ve seen you in the past. And I know YOU DON’T CHANGE. You ARE my helper. So I will rejoice in the shadow of your wings. I will worship, I will take refuge in you even here in the wilderness.

Here's the second lesson in this field Guide and it should be a familiar one if you've been here at Mercy for a while. **If you find yourself in the wilderness, Recall his faithfulness to you.**

Crisis has a way of blocking our memory doesn't it. We get tunnel vision and we get focused entirely on the present and we lose sight of the past. Even short term memory.

And what David is doing here in the wilderness, a lot of what this Psalm is, is just taking the time to remember his relationship with God has a history! He and God have priors together.

In fact ya'll...if you read the bible regularly. A big thread is going to emerge...and it is God reminding his people that he has always been faithful to them. And one of the main reasons he does it is to tell them not to fear in the present. Did you know the bible says "Do not fear" 365 times? A fresh one for every day of the year. The God of your past is the God of your present and the God of your future!

There are a few times in Israel's story where after a big moment that God clearly shows up and delivers...they take time to set up memorials to what has just happened. Joshua 4 – God stops the Jordan River from flowing and Israel gets to walk across on dry ground. Then they put 12 memorial stones so they can remember God's faithfulness. 1 Samuel 7 – Israel routs the philistines in a clear victory from God. Prophet Samuel erects a stone that he calls an Ebenezer so they will remember God gave them the victory. The Psalms are full of...REMEMBER THIS IS THE GOD WHO BROUGHT YOU OUT OF EGYPT! REMEMBER & BELIEVE. Now Christian....your Ebenezer...it's the cross & empty tomb. Jesus died for you. He rose again defeating death for you. What we say all the time – Surely God didn't die on the cross for you just to forget about you in your wilderness. No the same God that loved you then, loves you now. Is with you now.

Another Ebenezer is your baptism. Where you publicly identified yourself with Christ! That's a moment to look back to and say yes, he has worked in my life. There are others I'm sure. When we went to seminary. We quit our jobs & were SCRAPING. For months we both looked for work and were finding nothing. And then Courtney got connected to a job opportunity through a random relationship that ended up being what provided for us those 3 years. Some ebenezer's are like that...they are material like that. But not all. One of mine is when we lost a child in miscarriage. And God revealed himself to be enough for us when we were hurting with deep loss. Another is a couple of friends who stepped in to help us manage a hard time in our marriage where stress and work and kids had just taken a toll. God worked through them. I believe God is building one right now in our life that we are just too close to, to see.

So if you are in the wilderness right now, you need to be there with a journal. And you need to write down the ebenezer's in your life. God has been faithful. And his past grace, because he is a God who never changes, his past faithfulness is a promise to you of present and future faithfulness. Verse 3 – my lips will glorify you because your FAITHFUL love is better than life.

Hey I need to say something here also that is really important in this “recall” thing. It’s a preventative measure you can take to prepare you for the wilderness. Because like I said you WILL be in the wilderness one day. Here it is:

Routine worship is training for wilderness worship.

Your daily time with the Lord, and your weekly time with your brothers and sisters in worship...that’s building something in you. It’s strengthening your worship muscles. I’ve got a friend who is into ultramarathons. Last Year he ran the hellbender 100 in Asheville. This thing is 100 miles on mountain trails and total elevation change over the course of the race is around 40k feet. REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS include running a 70 miler in the last 18 months. He’s been preparing for that for years. Now, Yesterday I ran 3 miles on a sidewalk and almost died.

I’m not ready right now for the hellbender. You don’t run the hellbender unless you’ve run before or you’ll die. Listen, when you get in the wilderness...you find out who you were in everyday life. And if you don’t have a discipline & routine of worship NOW, you will NOT have a chance in the wilderness. And here’s the deal, YOU WILL find yourself in the wilderness one day. But you don’t get to register for it, train for 2 years, then do it when you are at peak worship. NO...you never know when its coming. So you gotta be training. And I know that sounds like fear-motivation but its really not. Because the training I’m talking about is regular time in your bible meditating on God, and worship & fellowship with the people of God...which is what you are created for anyways!! Which leads right to my next point and the last one I think we have time to cover today:

Christ is the king of the wilderness

Remember how the psalm ended? A pretty abrupt turn that is almost David cursing his enemies?

9 But those who intend to destroy my life will go into the depths of the earth. 10 They will be given over to the power of the sword; they will become a meal for jackals.

11 **But the king will rejoice in God;** all who swear by him will boast, for the mouths of liars will be shut.

BLAH BLAH

BENCH

- Psalm 91 – he who dwells in the shelter of the most high will abide in the shadow of the almighty.
- The Message – particularly verse 11 is helpful.
- Shimmiah – He’s cursing him. David receives it from the Lord. Shimmiah ends up getting killed by Solomon. Solomon executes him. The mouths of liars – Shimmiah.
- Remembering past graces
- One who is full loathes honey. But to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

- Verse 5 – he’s finding delight in the presence of God. Sometimes you need to be stripped of earthly blessing to get there.
- Shane & Shane Psalm 63
- Satisfaction in the wilderness.
 - Head knowledge vs Heart Knowledge
 - Looking to future joy. Saying things that he knows to be true vs feeling them
 - NOT YET
- Christ Parable of the hidden Treasure –
 - Eager seeking based on what you have seen
- External Circumstances
 - When Dad died – makes it hard to read the bible. Courtney is great
 -
- Internal Circumstances
 - This all goes back to Bathsheba. Curse from God about his sons.
 - Young Pros – dark night of the soul – overworking & not sure what to do.
 - No affection for the Lord, just feel dry. So try to stoke a fire by changing circumstance.
- Desert Feeling – unmet expectations
 - Maybe you don’t realize you had them
 - Ex: Have kids – want a girl but keep having boys. 30 & Single. Changing Jobs – this didn’t fix my problems. Oh NO!
 - People have said “do this” our whole life. But not saying that now.
- ANXIETY – A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE ANXIETY in our church
 - Those who seek to destroy my life –
- David IS NOT OUT OF THE DESERT at the end of this pzzalm
 - You want the Whole 30 day fix.
 - GOD DOESN’T WORK THAT WAY
- YOUR STEADFAST LOVE IS BETTER THAN LIFE
 - Philippians 3 –
 - Life has been deprived from him.
 - Based on this truth – he says verse 4.
- Difference between pouring your heart out & grumbling
 - David vs Israel

Keller – Discipline of Desire Part 1

- Putting an appliance together (or IKEA furniture) – I need instructions AND I need the picture on the front of the box.
 - Spiritual Experience is hot right now. Tremendous hunger for spiritual experience. Because of that, there is a great deal of questions about experiencing God. If you’ve gone to church for a long time you are like...have I ever had an “experience” of God? On the other hand, you’ve got people writing books every day who are like “I have spiritual experiences every day.” And a lot

of people are new to Christianity. And trying to figure it out. Many people are new to Christianity at our church.

- Moses in wilderness – Box Cover. We also need instructions – Here’s how whether you can see if its right or not. The Psalms are the instructions. The Psalms are like a journal. Describing experiencing God from the inside. Psalm 63 is brimming with principles for how to know God. with features that enhance your experience with God. It’s a test and also a discipline.
- One – When you read Psalm 63 – The way you know you’ve found God is that you develop a spiritual appetite. The way you know you are moving towards God is that you feel like you are too far from him. The bible never says finding God is the result of seeking him. It always says seeking God is the result of finding him. The bible says people always run & hide from the one true God. Now people are religious sure & in general they want God. there is a hunger. Everybody is spiritually hunger in general but because of sin we don’t want the real God. To seek the real God.
- David says you are “my” God. The way you know you’ve met the real God...is that you are hungry and thirsty for Him. There is a passion and hunger for him. The sense of his absence...IS an evidence that he’s touched you. A sense of his absence is a sign of his presence. How do you know you’ve met the real God? You want him. The deeper that absence, the greater his presence.
- General spiritual searching is not a sign of authentic experience. How do I know if my seeking is authentic or not?
- Edwards –
 - Maybe at first David said “if you love me...give me a good life” but once he experienced God’s love –
 - Edwards – The mark of authentic spiritual experience – you become satisfied with God for who he is and not just the benefits he gives you.

“The deeper the sense of absence the greater his presence.” Keller continues saying our initial seeking tends to be selfishly focused on us and not God. “When we first start towards God, almost always we go to him because we want something in life and hoping he’ll give it to us.” He says this is normal to seek and want meaning in our lives, or to solve a problem, or to fulfill a need. But it is not a mark of authentic hunger and thirst for God. “When we find him, a change happens. [First it is] ‘If you love me, give me a good life.’ But then ‘if I have your love then I don’t need anything else in life.’ ... you become satisfied with God for who he is and not the benefits he gives you.”

Lamentations 3 which I think I’ve referred to the last two weeks:

19 Remember my affliction and my homelessness, the wormwood and the poison. 20 I continually remember them and have become depressed.

21 Yet I call this to mind, and therefore I have hope: 22 Because of the Lord’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!

24 I say, "The Lord is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in him." -- Lamentations 3:19-24