

Spiritual Desire
Seeing, Beholding and Tasting
Lesson 2 Psalm 63.1-5
052525

A psalm of David. When he was in the Desert of Judah. ¹ 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. ² I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. ³ Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. ⁴ I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁵ I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you. (Psalm 63:1-5)

- 1 Athanasius, a theologian and religious leader who lived nearly 1,700 years ago, wrote that the psalms not only contain information about God, but they also train us in the language of desire for God. Of all the Psalms, Psalm 63 probably is at the top of the list for this.
- 2 This psalm is about spiritual desire for God and we are looking at it so as to learn how to increase or rekindle our spiritual desire for God.
 - a If you have been a believer very long you know that occasionally you have to do this. In the course of life our passion for God ebbs and flows.
 - b Sometimes we feel very close to God and at other times not so close. Sometimes we do not feel close because of unrepented sin. But there are other times where that is not the issue, we just don't feel as close to God.
 - We don't sense his presence like we once did.
 - We don't feel delight in the Lord like we have in the past.
 - We sense a dryness in our prayer life.
 - We feel that our passion for God has diminished.
 - c The question is how do you turn it around? How do you fix this? How do you stoke the flames of your desire for God? That's what we are endeavoring to learn from Psalm 63.
- 3 And the reason we are taking this up right now is because spiritual desire is the theme for our Summer Week of Prayer coming up June 2-6.
 - a Last fall we held our first week of prayer and it was a great encouragement to many folks.

- We opened up the sanctuary every morning from 6-9am because it is sometimes its helpful to have a place to pray away from your normal routine.
 - We played prayer music and provided prayer stations that helped guide folks through a time of prayer.
 - We had some people come once, others every day. Some for a few minutes before work, others for a couple hours. All in all it had a noticeable impact on the life of the church.
- b So that's June 2-6. In the middle of that week (Wed June 4th @ 7pm) we are going to hold another "Prayer in the Round" service. It will be in the Student Center and it's different from other prayer services.
- We don't use the stage and move the chairs back against the walls.
 - We center the band in the middle of the room and everybody kind of gathers around like were at a singalong or campfire.
 - We rotate between worship and prayer for about an hour and a half.
 - We try not to plan to much and focus more on being open to the Holy Spirit's leading.
 - We plan to offer child care for infants and a special lesson on prayer for Preschool and Lower Elementary children.
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- 4 If you were not here last week and you didn't get a chance to watch online let me take a couple of minutes to catch you up.
- a This is a psalm of King David and he wrote it during a season of personal and national crisis.
- One of his sons, Absalom, led a military coop against him and David was forced to flee for his life from the royal palace in Jerusalem into hiding in the Judean desert.
 - Of all the trials that David went through in his life, this one was probably the most difficult because it involved so many people betraying him.
- b The story is found in 2 Samuel 13-19 and when you consider the whole thing it seems that David had drifted away from the Lord and that this trial was used by God to restore David's desire for the Lord. Last week we began to look at the process of how this restoration happened. David does three things.
- He realizes his current *spiritual condition* as dry and thirsty.

- He recalls his past *experiences* of God's power and glory in the sanctuary.
 - He *concludes* all he needs is God and verbalizes that in praise to God (next week).
- 5 Last week we looked at the first of these three points. David realized his spiritual condition. He admitted that he was dry and empty which in turn stirred up his hunger and thirst for God.
- a Being a Christian is not just about knowing and believing God's Word but also hungering and thirsting after God himself.
 - b We see this hunger & thirsting imagery throughout the Bible.
*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul **thirsts** for God, for the living God (Ps 42:1).*
*Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness for they will be filled (Mt 5:6).*
*Like newborn babies, **crave** pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Peter 2:2-3).*
*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 (Psalm 63:1)*
- 6 Again, David is in the desert of Judah and he uses the dryness and desolation of it as a poetic background to describe his spiritual condition of being dry and thirsty for God. We focused on this last week and in a nutshell here's what we discovered.
- a Just like we are born with a physical appetite we are born again with a spiritual appetite.
 - If we have no appetite for the things of God we are either not born again or we are weighed down with hinderances (Heb 12:1) or sin is suppressing our spiritual appetite.
 - And that is often the case. Sin is so deceptive that at times we don't realize that other things have become more important to us than the Lord. We are believers but functionally we are looking to things other than God to satisfy our soul.
 - b When we do that God graciously blesses us by allowing us to feel the dryness and emptiness of pursuing anything more than Him. He does this in order to restore our thirst/hunger for him. *Blessed are those who*

hunger and thirst (those who realize they are empty and thirsty) *for they shall be filled*.

- c It is a great help in our walk with the Lord to realize that the sense of dryness & emptiness resulting thirst and hunger is actually a sign of God's presence in your life.
 - You would never feel dry and thirsty **or** empty and hungry unless you first knew him.
 - And you would never desire to satisfy that thirst and hunger if he was not at work in you.
- e This realization is the starting point for rekindling or increasing one's desire for God. It is the first thing David does. The second thing David does is he recalls his past experiences of God's power and glory.

David recalls his past experiences of God's power and glory.

He says, and notice the past tense ...*I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your **power** and your **glory**. Because your **love** is better than life, my lips will glorify you* (v2-3).

- 1 This remembering takes place in the sanctuary, aka The Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was the mobile worship structure that God commanded Moses to build following the Exodus from Egypt. Therefore it was referred to as the "Tabernacle of Moses."



- a It was comprised of a courtyard formed by a linen fence supported by brass poles, about the size of a PSL city lot. Within the courtyard was an altar where sacrifices were made and a basin of water for the priests to ceremonially cleanse their hands. Near the back wall of the fence was veiled tent-like structure called the Holy Place.



- b In the Holy Place were three furnishings; a lamp, table and 2nd smaller altar used for burning incense. Near the back of the Holy Place was a smaller room cordoned off by another veil called the Most Holy Place.



- c Inside was the Ark of the Covenant which was wooden box overlaid with gold on top of which was a lid called the mercy seat (the seat of God's throne on the earth). At each end were cherubim angels between which God manifested his presence.
- d Inside the ark were the ten commandments. Once a year on the day of atonement the High Priest of Israel enter the MHP and sprinkled the blood of a goat over the lid to atone for the sins of the nation.
- e As God looked down from between the cherubim he saw the blood on the mercy seat covering over the law underneath which had been broken by the people. Thus the peoples sins were atoned for.
- 2 The tabernacle was the center piece for Israel's worship of Yahweh. That's why one of the first things David did when he became king was to restore the Tabernacle of Moses and retrieve the ark of the covenant which had been abandoned many years earlier. From then on it was also referred to as the Tabernacle of David (Acts 15:16).
- a Apparently David is remembering a time(s) he went to the Tabernacle to meet with the Lord, worship the Lord, make an offering to the Lord or to make atonement for sin.
- There was the priesthood, the altar and offerings being made just outside the holy place.
 - There was the people of God, there was worship, there was prayer and the reading of Scripture.
- b And on one or several of those occasions God's glory seemed so real to David that he began to see it and behold it. Now there are several occasions in the Old Testament where someone visibly beheld the glory of God (Moses, Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah). But I don't think that is what David is referring to here.

- c David was not seeing & beholding with his physical eyes ... but he was seeing & beholding none the less. He was seeing with what you might call a “sixth sense.”
 - God created our bodies with five senses which provide us with the capacity to know and experience the world God created.
 - Likewise, when we were born again, God recreated our souls with the capacity to know and experience (sense) God himself.
- 3 The Bible consistently describes this capacity by using analogies from our five natural senses.
 - a ***Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law (Psalm 119:18).***
 - So here you have someone reading the Scripture obviously with their eyes opened and yet they’re praying for God to open their eyes.
 - Paul prays the same for the Ephesian church *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened (Eph 1:18).*
 - What’s are the Psalmist and Paul talking about? Well, just like God made your eyes to see the glories of his creation, he has made your soul to be able to see the glories of his person, his power and love.
 - b My sheep ***listen to my voice (Jn 10:27).*** Just like God made your ear to apprehend sound, He made your soul to discern and hear the voice of the Good Shepherd.
 - c ***Taste and see the Lord is good (Ps 34:8).*** Just like God made your palette to taste and enjoy food, he has made your soul to be able to savor and enjoy God himself.
- 4 This capacity to taste, see, hear or experience God is neither intellectual or emotional. It affects the intellect and the emotions for sure. But it is more than that. It is not of the natural man. It is spiritual in nature.
 - a Before you were born again you didn’t have the capacity. 1 Corinthians 2 says that the natural man with just natural senses cannot perceive the things of God.
 - b But when you believed the gospel, you were made spiritually alive to God, you were born again, the Holy Spirit indwelt you and you were given the capacity to taste, see, hear or experience God.
- 5 Let me give an example of this that relates to experiencing God when reading his Word. In Psalm 19 the Psalmist is describing how valuable the Words of the Lord are him. In verse 19 he says ... ***they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10b).***

- a As the old saying goes it's one thing to know honey is sweet and another thing to taste the sweetness of honey. Likewise, there is a difference between knowing Scripture is like honey and actually tasting the sweetness of Scripture. Tasting is experiential.
 - b Now it's not that we are constantly tasting. We are reading, listening, meditating and then all of a sudden we are tasting the sweetness of the Word. You're reading along and all of sudden you see something and you experience it, there's power in it, you savor it and it and it leads you to worship the Lord. It changes you.
 - c For example Romans 8:31 says, *If God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8:31b)*.
 - Let's say your dealing with fear and because you are a believer you have an appetite for God and his Word. So you turn to that verse and read it several times but your still fearful.
 - It's information and you believe it. You know it's true. You believe that it is God's promise to you but your still fearful. Your trying to believe. Your meditating on it.
 - And then one day your thinking about it and quoting and all of a sudden it blazes out at you and fills your soul with the assurance that if God is for you, who can be against you ... and the fear is gone.
 - Your circumstances haven't changed but you are filled with the assurance that you have nothing to fear. Why? You tasted the sweetness of Romans 8:31. You've experienced Romans 8:31. And that is what the Psalmist is calling us to when he says *taste and see that the Lord is good*.
- 6 Being a Christian is not just about knowing and believing God's Word but also hungering and thirsting after God which leads to beholding and experiencing God.
- a When you walked into the sanctuary did you think to yourself Lord I really want to meet with you today. Help me behold you this morning. Give me eyes to see the richness of your Word is rich today. I want to taste and see Your goodness.
 - b You say I didn't do that. Well why not? There are a number of reasons but maybe it is because your walk with the Lord has become only about knowing and believing but not *also* hungering & thirsting and beholding & experiencing God.

- c You have the *status* of belonging to Jesus (saved, redeemed, reconciled and justified) but you are not *experiencing* Jesus.
- 7 Illustration: Last September Violet and I celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary.
- a Because it was a milestone I wanted to plan something special. So several months prior, without Violet's knowledge, I made arrangements to visit a destination we have many fond memories of, the Finger Lakes in New York.
- b So I booked the tickets, rented a lakeside cottage, planned an itinerary and we experienced a wonderful week there. Here's a picture of my beautiful bride at Letchworth State Park.



- c Now what if instead of going to the Finger Lakes we got up the morning of our anniversary, and I led Violet into the study, opened up the filing cabinet and pulled out our marriage license and said, "Happy anniversary Honey."
- d That wouldn't have been very good. We would have been acknowledging the *status* of being married but not enjoying the *experience* of celebrating 40 years of being married.
- God calls us to grow in our knowledge of what he did for us on the day we were made one with Him in Christ. We have the marriage certificate ... our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. But God also calls us to *experience* the joy of being joined to him as part of the Bride of Christ.
 - Another way of saying it is that God has not only called us to the *status of sonship*, He has also called us to enjoy the *experience of being his child*.

How do you experience what David experienced?

- 1 First *realize* that emptiness and dryness are sign of hunger and thirst which are evidences of God's grace working in you. Blessed are those who admit they are dry and thirsty. Blessed are those who acknowledge they are empty and hungry for they shall be filled.

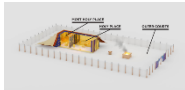
- 2 Secondly **recall** times from the past when you experienced God's power and glory ... times when you have especially sensed the reality of his presence. David said, *I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory* (v2).
 - a Throughout the Bible recalling or remembering what God has done is presented as a spiritual discipline somewhat like prayer and fasting.
 - b That means just like your intentional about prayer you should be intentional about remembering moments or seasons in your life where you have especially experienced the love, power and glory of God.
 - Remember those times where his presence was especially sweet in worship.
 - Remember when he revealed himself to you by meeting a significant need.
 - Remember when his Word jumped off the page of Scripture and how he set you free. (E.g. liberated from depression through Eph 6:10f)
- 3 Why remember? Because remembering sparks desire.
 - a I can remember a house we lived in or a vacation we took or a car we owned ... and it's just a memory.
 - b But when I remember a significant experiences with God its more than a memory, it has power and stimulates my desire for God.
- 4 Asaph experienced this phenomenon and wrote about it in Psalm 77.
 - a He was a musician that served in the Tabernacle during David's reign and he was lamenting the absence of God's presence in his life and in the nation of Israel. At the height of his lament he asks, *Has his unfailing love (Heb. hesed) vanished forever? (Psalm 77:8a)*
 - b But then something happens. He starts thinking about what God did for Israel in the past and in particular the Exodus.
 - Even though he was not a part of the Exodus generation he considered their testimony his testimony because it is the testimony of all of God's people. Our testimony is God's redeeming love, power and glory.
 - So Asaph basically preaches the gospel to himself. He says, *Then I thought, "To this I will appeal: the years when the Most High stretched out his right hand. (v16-20=Exodus) ¹¹ I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. ¹² I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds. ¹³ Your ways, God, are holy. What god is as great as our God?*

¹⁴ *You are the God who performs miracles; you display your power among the peoples With your mighty arm you redeemed your people (Psalm 77:10–15a).*

- c Asaph goes from have you taken away your hesed **to** Who is as great as our miracle working God!
 - This is also what we need to do to stoke the embers of our passion for God.
 - We need to get our minds off Satan’s false narrative for our lives and on to God’s redemption story for our lives. And when we do that it always leads to renewal, hope and a fresh sense of God’s presence.
- 5 So David recalls his past experiences of God’s power and glory in the sanctuary and it fuels his passion for God so much so he concludes that whatever happens, whether he lost the kingdom or if it was completely restored to him ... knowing and experiencing God’s faithful love is better and more satisfying than life itself.
 - a Your love (hesed) is better than life! No one in that situation says that without experiencing it. That is someone who not only knows honey is sweet but has tasted the sweetness of the honey.
 - b Have you tasted and seen that the Lord is good? Have you ever come to that place in your life where you said to the Lord Your love, knowing your love, sensing your hesed, experiencing Your Presence ... is better than anything else.
 - c That’s what God wants for you. And that’s what David experienced ***in the sanctuary*** ... which raises a question.
- 6 Why is this experiencing of God limited to the sanctuary. *I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory* (v2).
 - a He does not simply say “I have beheld your power and glory.” He says, “I have beheld you power and glory ***in the sanctuary***.”
 - Certainly he beheld God’s power and glory at other times and in other places like when he was a young man watching the sheep in the solitude of the desert night ?
 - Or the season of his life where he served as a musician in Saul’s house composing a worship songs that silenced Saul’s demons?
 - b Why does the Holy Spirit, in this Psalm, lead David to record his experience of God’s power and glory in the sanctuary/Tabernacle?

- 7 Romans 15 says, everything that was written in the past was written to teach us (Rom 15:4). And this verse certainly does because everything that David was beholding in the Tabernacle was specifically designed by God to reveal and teach us about Jesus.
- a Eventually the Tabernacle was made into a permanent structure in Jerusalem called the Temple. One day Jesus was standing next to it and he said, *Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days (Jn 2:19)*.
 - The destroying was his death and the raising up in three days was his resurrection.
 - He was saying, “I am the ultimate Temple of God. I am where you go to meet with God. I am the Great High Priest who makes the ultimate sacrifice. And I am that sacrifice, the Lamb of God.
 - b Everything about the temple and its predecessor the tabernacle symbolized the Person and work of Jesus Christ from the outer courtyard fence to the lid over the ark of the covenant in the most holy place.

Jesus and the Tabernacle



- 1 The outer courtyard fence made of linen was representative of Christ's righteousness and the righteousness that comes to us through his sacrifice
- 2 At the east end of the courtyard, like the Garden of Eden, there was a **gate** by which you entered. Here's the way back into the Garden of God's presence forfeited by Adam and Eve. Jesus referred to it when he said, *I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved (Jn 10:9)*.
- 3 Just beyond the gate was the **bronze altar** in the center symbolizing the centrality of Jesus' sacrifice for our sins as the Lamb of God.
- 4 Past the bronze altar but just outside the holy place was the **bronze basin** where the priests ceremonially cleansed their hands in water. It represents Christ's power to sanctify us as his new priesthood through the washing of the water of the Word.
- 5 At the back of the Tabernacle courtyard, was the **Holy Place**. Inside were three pieces of furniture, all symbolic of Christ.
 - a The golden lampstand – He is the light of the world (Jn 8:12).
 - b The table of showbread – He is the bread of life (Jn 6:48).

- c And when we behold Christ and his love for us revealed in the gospel we conclude with our minds and experience in our hearts that there is nothing in all creation that compares.
- d And so we say with David, your love is better than life (v3) and therefore I praise you (v4) and am fully satisfied in you as with the richest of foods (v5a).

Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 Have you experienced seasons of spiritual dryness or diminished passion for God? How did you recognize it, and how did it make you feel?
- 2 The sermon suggests that feeling spiritually dry or empty can actually be a sign of God's grace. How does this perspective change how you view spiritual struggles?
- 3 David recalls his experiences of God in the sanctuary. What are some significant moments or places where you've especially sensed God's presence or power in your life?
- 4 How does understanding the symbolism of the Tabernacle/Temple as pointing to Jesus enrich your appreciation of the gospel?
- 5 The sermon emphasizes that being a Christian involves both knowing/believing and experiencing/beholding God. How do you see these two aspects playing out in your own faith journey?
- 6 David concludes that God's love is "better than life." Have you ever come to a similar realization in your walk with God? What led to that conclusion?
- 7 How does the gospel serve as a means to satisfy our spiritual hunger and thirst for God?