

Dear Friend

Again, I have turned to the Psalms for today's reflection. One of the Psalms set in the Lectionary for today is Psalm 42. This is the first Psalm in the second section of the Book of Psalms and starts with very well-known words, which have been used for several hymns and anthems. But it's not a joyful psalm like the musical versions we know and love. It's a very bleak Psalm indeed.

In spite of the sunshine we have been enjoying, some of us may now be feeling quite bleak ourselves. I heard yesterday that one of my lovely older clients had died earlier in the week and the family are waiting for a cause of death. She was in a care home and died without her family being able to say goodbye. The family think that the loneliness of being in that care home under isolation and lockdown helped her to feel that enough was enough, although when I last saw her, she was then quite frail in any case. This is not a solitary incident but is currently being replicated all-round the country. While there is much hope for those of us in our own homes that we may be getting towards the easing of the lockdown, those in care homes are likely to see a much greater increase in the number of deaths. And their carers are still very much at risk themselves whilst performing heroic work in sitting with the dying.

So this Psalm seems appropriate for today.

I'm turning again to the "Reflections on the Psalms" from Church House Publishing and today the comments are from Peter Graystone, who is currently Lay Training Officer of our Diocese and incidentally is a Reader too. He says:

"Why was the psalmist so desolate? Because all the evidence seemed to be that God had abandoned him.

"If you have ever felt like that, three things the psalmist did might help. First, he kept crying out to God, even though he was not sure that God was listening. Second, he went back in mind to a time when he did have assurance of God's presence, remembering songs of worship from his past. Third he was totally honest with God and told it like it was – angry and confused.

"That honesty brought him a reward. Suddenly he had a stunning and reassuring glimpse of God. In the barren heights of Mount Mizar he had a vision of water cascading all over him. He was overwhelmed by hope in God's loving-kindness (v.10). No sooner than it had come, it was gone. He was back to anguish, but for an undeniable moment it was there."

The psalmist finishes still in a place of agony, but tells himself that he CAN hope in God and he will get to a better place in life when he is again able to praise him, "my help and my God". We know from this that we too will reach a place when we can praise God even if we feel at the moment we cannot do so. And we WILL meet again in church to do this as his gathered people.

Let us pray:

Come, creator Spirit, source of life;  
sustain us when our hearts are heavy  
and our wells have run dry,  
for you are the Father's gift,  
with him who is our living water,  
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Regards Alison Radford