

Dear Friend

There is a choice of three psalms for Morning Prayer today – 41, 42 and 43. Psalm 42 is the main choice and I realized that I have already written about this on 2 May. You may wish to go back to look at that again. It's interesting to me to read how I tackled that reflection and how things have changed since then.

At that time, I had recently learned of the death of one of my elderly clients and we now know that she did have Covid-19 although it wasn't the only cause of death. The psalm is a lament and I suggested that it was in tune with some of our feelings at that time. Since then we have moved forward quite a way and the complete lockdown we had six weeks ago has now been eased a little. While many of us will be feeling that a lament suits their mood still, some of us may be feeling a little more hopeful.

I've had a look at some of my other commentaries on the Psalms and the general tone of them is pretty similar. As I said last time, Psalm 42 starts Book 2 of the Psalms but what I didn't mention before is that some scholars think that 42 and 43 were once joined as one psalm. Geoffrey Grogan writes that the psalmist's "remoteness from God's house (vv.2, 4) is agonizing, comparable to an animal's desperate thirst for water. Weeping, he recalls joyous festivals when the temple was thronged with worshipers". The psalmist is praying at the furthest point in Israel from Jerusalem and takes comfort remembering God's promise of love (v. 8) but then changes to the phrase "I say to God, my rock, 'Why have you forgotten me?"

Psalm 43 starts in the same mood but does turn to a more hopeful note before ending. I'd like to commend that thought to you now. We too have been a long way from our church, if not physically, then certainly emotionally as we have not been able to gather for worship together. Like the psalmist, we may have been at the furthest point from our temple, but now we are getting closer to the point when we can return. We are already opening the church for private prayer and Rebecca and I will be there today from 2.30 pm to 4 pm for those who wish to come in for a time to reflect and pray. So I'd like to finish by asking you to pray through the last three verses of Psalm 43 with me:

³ O send out your light and your truth;
let them lead me;
let them bring me to your holy hill
and to your dwelling.

⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God,
to God my exceeding joy;
and I will praise you with the harp,
O God, my God.

⁵ Why are you cast down, O my soul,
and why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,
my help and my God.

Amen.