

Again today we have a choice of three psalms for Morning Prayer – 41, 42 and 43. I've already written about 42 – As the deer longs for the water brooks, so longs my soul for you, O God. So I'm going to turn to Psalm 43.

It's a psalm that speaks of lament and some commentators think that it was linked to 41 as one psalm. Helen-Ann Hartley in Reflections on the Psalms (Church House Publishing) says that it is a prayer that speaks of the gulf between despair and praise. It serves as a reminder that any relationship with God is inevitably made up of both extremes – and life is the same.

God as refuge has a meaning that is wider than a place of safety and retreat. Refuge is more accurately imagined as strength for the journey rather than escape and retreat. To feel protected is one matter, but to feel strengthened at the point of trial is at the heart of the psalmist's prayer. Linked to praise, it speaks of a sense of confidence that putting one's trust in God yields results far beyond that which we ever thought possible.

One thing that stood out for me at this particular time is verse 4:

That I may go to the altar of God,  
to the God of my joy and gladness;  
and on the lyre I will give thanks to you, O God my God

I've been working all week (and more!) on the service for Sunday morning which will be Morning Prayer. The theme is music in worship and here is a verse showing a desire to praise God at his altar with music, in this case on the lyre which is like a small harp. I am very much looking forward to the service of praising the Lord with music so I hope you can join us in church or on line. As is so often the case, the psalms have something to say into the current moment!

Alison