

THE DECLARATION AND DECISION OF A SOUL THAT SEEKS GOD

Answer—in your mind, not out loud—this question: “What makes good preaching?”

First, it has to be **centered on the Word of God**, right?

II Tim 4:1-2 “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom; ² **Preach the word**; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.” Good preaching, then, **has to be** centered on God’s Word.

Second, I think you’d agree that the Word of God should be **preached with passion**. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones in his classic book *Preaching and Preachers* refers to it as “zeal,” then goes on to explain what he means: “When I say zeal I mean that a preacher must always convey the impression that he himself has been gripped by what he is saying. If he has not been gripped nobody else will be. This is absolutely essential.” (pg 87)

I used to think of it like this: *The best preaching is when the preacher takes his heart and sets it on the pulpit!*

Just recently, though—as in this past week—I’ve changed my mind on that. The best preaching is **not** when the preacher puts his heart on the pulpit—it is when the preacher puts God’s heart on the pulpit! I don’t think I’ve been doing a very good job of that and want to do that better.

But to put God’s heart “on the pulpit,” so to speak, I need to know **His heart** better. How blessed we are to not only have **the mind** of God in this Book—we also have **His heart**! God’s heart—God’s desire—is that He wants **my heart**—and He wants **your heart**! We saw a couple of weeks ago from the **life of Martha** that our priorities can “get out of whack.” We can be cumbered about much serving...and anxious and troubled about many things...and lose our joy in serving Jesus. We can even wrongly **accuse God of not caring**—and tell Him what **we** think **He** should do—just like Martha did!

But then we **saw the heart of God** through Jesus. Jesus **gently** rebukes Martha and says that Mary has chosen the good part—spending time with Him! There **is work to be done**—there always will be—but we cannot let the **busyness of life** crowd out our time of “sitting at the feet of Jesus.”

Last week we learned from the life of Elijah that we can **get discouraged** while serving God—even after seeing Him do great things! We can **feel alone**—and begin to question whether **what we are doing** is making a difference... just like Elijah did. And like Elijah, we can be very slow to get our eyes **off ourselves** and our circumstances and put them **back on God**.

But once again we see the **heart of God**! God personally comes and cares for Elijah by **giving him food and rest** because the journey was too great for him. God **encourages him** by telling him he is **not the only** faithful one—there are 7000 others who have not bowed unto Baal. He then **gives Him specific instructions** to get back to work. But more important than all these—at least in my opinion—is that God calls Elijah **on a journey to meet with Him** and **teach him** a very valuable lesson.

What was the lesson? That God doesn’t **just speak** through great winds...and earthquakes...and fire! Sometimes He speaks through a **still small voice**—and we need to be still if we are going to hear Him!

This morning we are going to continue on the theme of **God’s desire for our heart**. These messages are probably more for me than they are for you. Sadly, I’m hard-hearted—and often times a slow-learner. My heart is not as soft—or as easily broken—as it should be, so God keeps working on me about that. And I’m going to keep sharing with you what God speaks to me about—unless He leads differently.

Please take your Bibles and turn to Psalm 63. We have here a Psalm of David—whom God calls a man after His own heart—inspired by God to share **his heart** with us. And from David’s heart we see what **God desires** in our heart.

Psalms 63; beginning with vs 1. I'm going to read the whole Psalm, but we will only be looking at the first couple of verses.

BACKGROUND:

My guess is that some of you have a Bible where there is a **title given** for this Psalm; something like "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah." The Bible gives us two instances when David's time "in the wilderness" may have occurred.

The **first** was **before he was king** and was being chased by King Saul. I Sam 23:14b-15 "And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. ¹⁵ And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was **in the wilderness** of Ziph in a wood." This was probably **not the circumstances** of Psalm 63, however, for this simple reason: In vs 11, David calls himself king and he wasn't when he was running from Saul!

The **second** time David was said to be in the wilderness—and the one that most commentators believe is the background for Psalm 63—is when David **fled from Jerusalem** because his son Absalom was leading a rebellion against him. He was forced to leave the comforts of the palace and city he had built—as well as the ark of God—and was now in a desert place. He most certainly **felt disgraced** that his son would do this to him...and rejected by the people he had so faithfully served...and uncertain as to what the future held for him.

And it was under these circumstances that he wrote this wonderful Psalm. As Spurgeon so aptly put it: "There was no desert in his heart, though there was a desert around him." (Treasury of David; pg 1101).

With that as a background, let's consider first... **1. The declaration**

Vs 1 "O God, thou art my God..." What a powerful statement! Six short, simple words—the longest containing **just 4 letters** which could easily be shortened to a 3-letter word: "O God, **you** are my God!"

Let's think through what makes this declaration so powerful.

A. It was prayerful

Do we **usually say** "O God" when we pray? Most of the time **we don't!** We say, "Heavenly Father" ...or just "Father" ...or "Father God" ...or "Lord" ...or "Gracious Heavenly Father."

Rarely do we say, "O God!" In fact, it probably gets said more out of **irreverence** than it does in prayer! Case in point: Think of how often you see "OMG" on Facebook!

But there are times when "O God" is **not used** irreverently—because it comes from the **depths** of our soul. **When** is that? In times of **great anguish** in our hearts, in times of **desperation**.

We know from the background of this Psalm that David was certainly in a situation where he **would have been earnest**—if not desperate! We'll also see as we go through this Psalm that the **words David uses** express an intensity where "O God" is certainly not out of place.

What is interesting about this "prayer" is that even though it is **earnest and heart-felt**, David doesn't really **ask God** for anything! Instead, he **expresses his desire** to seek God (vs 1) ...and to see God (vs 2) ...and to praise God (vs 3) ...and that he is satisfied in God (vs 5) ...and meditates upon God (vs 6) ...and rejoices in God (vs 7) ...and follows hard after God (vs 8). So this declaration was certainly prayerful.

B. It was about the present

Notice again vs 1: "O God, thou **art**"—you **are—right now**—"my God..."

--It doesn't say, "O God, you **were** my God!" like some would say—if they were honest!

--And it doesn't say, "O God, some day you **will be** my God!" like some with good intentions would say. What does it say? It says, "O God, **thou art** my God..." It was a **present** reality for David; not something that **used** to be—and is no longer true—and not something that David **intends to** have happen in the future.

It is a declaration **about the present**.

Not only is it a prayerful and present declaration... C. It was personal: "O God, thou art **my** God"

--Often times we read in the OT the phrase, "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

--We also see in the Bible the phrase “the God of **our** fathers” meaning their ancestors.

--And sometimes we see one person talking to another and saying, “the Lord **your** God.”

But David doesn't use any of those, does he? Instead, he says to God “...thou art **my** God.”

--God was David's **possession**; God **belonged** to David!

How can that be? How could David declare that the Creator and Sustainer of the universe—and the Sovereign Ruler and Judge of **all mankind**—belonged **to him**?

I believe many of you could give the answer. The answer is that God becomes **ours** when we become **His!** And we **become His** when we come **to God in God's way**—through Jesus! **John 14:6** “Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man **cometh unto the Father, but by me.**”

John 1:12 “But as many as **received Him** [Jesus], to them [those that received Jesus] **gave He** [God] **power** [the authority, right, and privilege] to **become the sons of God**, even to them that believe on His [Jesus'] name:”

It was a personal declaration; David “possessed” God. Do you? Is God yours? Are you His? Have you come to God the only **way He allows**—through His Son Jesus Christ? If not, why not? Why the delay? God's Word reminds us that “...behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Lastly... D. It was probing

I say it was a probing—meaning a searching—declaration for two reasons:

i. Because it requires honesty

Think about what is happening here: David is talking **to God**—about his relationship **with God!**

--Can one **person say to another person** that they have a relationship with God when they **really don't**? They **certainly can** and, sadly, **many do!** They tell their friends...or their spouses...or their Pastor... that they are a child of God when they really aren't!

--But God **can't be fooled**, can He? **II Tim 2:19** reminds us that “The Lord knoweth them that are His.” So when David told God that God was his, he was telling **the only Being in the universe** who could really know for sure if David was telling the truth!

Notice on your outline **Mt 7:21-23** “Not every one **that saith unto me, Lord, Lord**, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, **I never knew you: depart from me**, ye that work iniquity.”

What is Jesus saying? The same thing I just said, right? 1) Jesus is saying that there are people who think that they are children of God—and are not! 2) Jesus knows who belongs to Him—and who doesn't!

The second reason David's declaration is a probing—a searching—one is this:

ii. Because it requires humility

When you declare that God is your **God**, you are **admitting your neediness**.

--You are saying **you need** a Comforter...and a Counselor...and a Friend...and a Father...and a Guide... and a Protector...and a Provider. And to admit you need those things requires **humility**.

--And when you declare that God is your **God**, you are surrendering to Him your allegiance...and love... and praise...and service. And that **takes humility**, too!

But when we really “get it”—when we really understand who God is, like David did—it is **not a sacrifice**—it is **not a surrender**—to give to God our allegiance...and our love...and our praise...and our service.

It will be a **natural response** because we personally have tasted and seen that the Lord is good. The Apostle John put it like this in **I John 5:3** “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous.”

In other words, They are not a burden; they do not cause grief.

David—with honesty and humility—declared: “O God, thou art my God.” What about you? What about me? God desires that this expression *from David’s* heart be true of *our heart*. Is it?

Next, let’s consider... **2. The decision.** Vs 1 “O God, thou art my God, early **will I seek** thee” David follows up his declaration that God is *his* God with a **decision to seek God**. But why would he seek something—actually, Someone—that he already *had*? For the same reason we continue to cultivate relationships with those that we know and love!

--**Men** don’t pursue a woman with the goal of just “tying the knot,” do they? No; they pursue a woman to marry her to **have a partner for life**. “Tying the knot” is the **start** point—not the **end** point!

--**Couples** don’t desire to have a child just to say they had a child! They have a child to love...and raise...and teach...and develop a life-long relationship with.

--And so it is with God. We don’t seek Him **once**—and **find** Him—and **then stop** seeking Him. It is a life-long pursuit—with blessings that carry over into eternity!

Notice first... **A. The priority in seeking**

Vs 1 again: “O God, thou art my God; **early will I seek** thee...”

--Does that mean early **in the day**? Yes—but **not only** early in the day!

The **time of day** that you spend with God is **not nearly as important** as where your **head and heart** are when you are spending time with God!

--If your mind is still **in bed**, wait until you wake up!

--If your mind is already **at work**, wait until you come home from work!

--Does “early will I seek thee” mean early **in life**—as in, don’t wait until you are old? Yes—but **not only early in life!** Our seeking of God should last our entire life!

Many commentators suggest that the word “early” has more to do with **earnestness and diligence** than it does with the **time of day!** Regardless of if that is the case or not, it is impossible to miss the fact that **seeking God was David’s priority**. Mid of vs 1 “my soul **thirsteth** for thee, my flesh **longeth** for thee”

--vs 8 “My soul **followeth hard** after thee...”

And in these very same verses, we see not only the **priority** in seeking, we also see...

B. The Person being sought. David was seeking God, wasn’t he?

--vs 1 “early will I seek **thee**...my soul thirsteth for **thee**...my flesh longeth for **thee**”

--vs 8 “My soul followeth hard after **thee**...”

Let’s not miss the significance of this.

--David wasn’t **seeking** for a way to get his kingdom back—he was **seeking God!**

--David wasn’t **thirsting** for vengeance on his enemies—he was **thirsting for God!**

--David wasn’t **longing for all the possessions he left behind**—he was **longing for God!**

--And David wasn’t **following hard** after plans to figure out a way to fix all this—he was **following after God!**

It is as if David was saying: ‘I want you, God, more than my comfort...and more than my crown...and more than my friends...and more than my family...and more than my possessions...and more than my reputation!’

How—or why—could David say such a thing? We have the answer in vs 3: “Because thy lovingkindness is better **than life**...” In other words—to David—having God was better than **anything** this world had to offer!

Sadly, that kind of thinking **seems strange** to many of us. ‘It’s fanatical; it’s too extreme,’ many will say—or at least think! And yet, God shows us **from the man** after his own heart that that is what he wants to see **in our heart**.

What does God see in **your** heart? What does God see in **my** heart? What does He see in our **priorities**...and in our **schedule**...and in our **thoughts**. David was a king with **pressures** and **responsibilities** far greater than ours—yet he sought God. And David was in the **midst of problems** that would equal—or exceed—any of ours, yet he still sought God.

Let's make the **decision** that David made—to earnestly seek God.

And then let's believe the promise Jesus made in **Mt 5:6** "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled."

So what would God have us do in light of His word?

1. First and foremost, I believe God wants us to honestly answer this question: Is God **your** God? He wants to be! A.W. Tozer put it like this: "God **waits** to be wanted."

--God can only be yours when you become His! And the only way you can become His is to come to Him through Christ. Jesus did not lie when He said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

2. What about you, child of God? God is your God—but do you "treat" Him as God? Do you seek Him? That's what He wants—and that is what He deserves!