

Psalm 63

only verses 1-8 (verses 9-11 not in the liturgy)

22nd Sunday Year A; 32nd Sunday Year A

12th Sunday Year C

Morning Prayer Sunday Week 1

The psalmist thinks of God as he lies on his bed at night, and he rises in the morning to praise God in the temple. It is a prayer of especially intimate trust, addressing God in the second person throughout. Note the constant reference to the body - throat, hands, lips, flesh; seeing, tasting, touching, speaking. It is good to read the psalm in the light of God's Incarnate Word, Jesus. The title reads: "A Psalm* of David, when he was in the Wilderness of Judah." The account is found in 1 Samuel 22-24.

'My whole being' translates the Hebrew *nepeš* (also found in verses 5 and 8). See the article 'Being' in the Introduction. Compare the following:

I will satisfy the weary *soul*, and replenish the *person* who is faint.

– Jeremiah 31:25

I stretch out my hands to you; my *soul* ('my whole being') thirsts for you like a parched land.

– Psalm 143:6

'Look upon' translates the Hebrew *hāzâ* [הָזַא], a verb frequently used for the experience of 'seeing' God.

The oracle of one who hears the words of God, who *sees* the vision of the Almighty.

– Numbers 24:4 and 16

They *beheld* God, and they ate and drank.

– Exodus 24:11

The upright shall *behold* his face.

– Psalm 11:7

I shall *behold* your face; when I awake I shall be satisfied, knowing that you have appeared.

– Psalm 17:15

One thing I asked of YHWH, this is what I seek: to live in the house of YHWH all the days of my life, to *behold* the beauty of YHWH.

– Psalm 27:4

In my flesh I shall *see* God.

– Job 19:26

**¹O God, you are my God,
for you I arise at dawn. My
whole being* thirsts for you;
my flesh faints for you, in a
dry and weary land where
there is no water.**

**²For I have looked upon you
in the sanctuary, beholding
your power and glory*.**

³Because your kindness* is worth more than life, my lips will sing your praises.

⁴I will bless* you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands and call on your name.

⁵My whole being* is satisfied as with a rich feast, and I praise you with joyful lips,

⁶as I think of you on my bed, meditating on you in the watches of the night.

⁷For you have been my help, and in the shade of your wings I sing for joy.

⁸I cling to you with all my longing*; your right hand holds me fast.

They feast on the abundance of your house, and you slake their thirst from the river of your delights. For with you is the fount of life.

– Psalm 36:8-9

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

– Isaiah 55:2

As in verse 1, ‘my whole being’ translates Hebrew *nepeš*.

While lying in bed at night, the psalmist is reflecting on God and on the place God has in his life.

Know this: YHWH has set apart the faithful one for himself; YHWH hears me when I call to him. Tremble with fear and stop sinning; ponder on your beds, and be silent.

– Psalm 4:3-4

Let the faithful exult in glory; let them sing for joy as they rest.

– Psalm 149:5

They find delight in the law of YHWH, and meditate on his law day and night.

– Psalm 1:2

‘With all my longing’ translates the Hebrew *nepeš* (see verses one and five).

You shall fear YHWH your God; him alone you shall worship; to him you shall hold fast.

– Deuteronomy 10:20

Loving YHWH your God, walking in all his ways, and holding fast to him.

– Deuteronomy 11:22

YHWH your God you shall follow, him alone you shall fear, his commandments you shall keep, his voice you shall obey, him you shall serve, and to him you shall hold fast.

– Deuteronomy 13:4

The theme of longing to cling close to God has many echoes in the New Testament:

Anyone united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.

– 1Corinthians 6:17

Who will separate us from the love of Christ?

– Romans 8:35

How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.

– Matthew 23:37

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The final verses exhibit an abrupt change of feeling. They appear to be an appendix to the psalm. The psalmist's (the king's?) profound longing for God is experienced in dire circumstances.

**⁹But those who seek to destroy my life
shall go down into the depths of the earth.**

**¹⁰They shall be given over to the power of the sword,
they shall be prey for jackals.**

**¹¹But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by him will exult,
when the mouths of liars are stopped.**