

Arwada
United Methodist Church

7 February 2010

Rev Rusty Butler

“Deep calleth unto deep”

Psalm 42

Psalm 42 is a sad sort of Psalm. The poet says in different parts of the song, my tears have been my food day and night, My soul is cast down within me, I say to God, my rock, why have you forgotten about me? , Why are you cast down O, my soul, and why are you disquieted within me.

Do you hear the sadness? I thought to myself, do people really want to hear about the sadness of some old poor bastard, they've got enough trouble on their own.

Here this guy is going through the trouble and he's trying to hold onto this little sliver of hope, trying to make himself believe when everything is going against the tide.

It kind of reminds me of a story I received this week from one of you, As a senior citizen was driving down the freeway, his cell phone rang. Answering, he heard his wife's voice urgently warning him, 'Herman, I just heard on the news that there's a car going the wrong way on Interstate 77. Please be careful!'

'Heck,' said Herman, 'It's not just one car. It's hundreds of them!'

Well this guy who is writing this poem, is in one of those seasons of life that is not too whippy and he keeps trying to pull himself up and out of it.

It's sad, but it's real. In the King James version of the Psalm, the first lines go like this, As the hart desireth the waterbrooks so panteth my soul after thee O God.

Now that might not make a great bit of sense, until we realize a hart is a small deer and so the psalmist is simply saying, I've seen these deer and they will do almost anything to get down to the water to get some, just panting after that water, they've got to have some...and he says my soul is like that with God, it's just panting after God...I need God, for strength, or comfort, or courage or help...

But it's not coming.

So here is a person bruised and broken and hoping for some way out.

I could go down that road with you but we've had enough of bruises and brokenness for awhile. Let me move you to another dimension of the Psalm and that is the desire that the Psalmist speaks of.

Desire is a whole other thing. Longing.

I've been reading JD Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. Holden Caulfield wants people to not be "phony".

Could it be that the relationship with whatever it is in the universe that is called God, is not realized in immediate satisfaction or instant gratification, but rather the longing itself.

What if that was what it was all about?

Maybe it's more like that African proverb that says, "When I pray for bread and I get it. I think about bread and forget God. When I pray for bread and don't get it, I think about God...a great deal."

Sometimes they do these surveys about us. The United States. About how we are the richest, most powerful, most Christian nation in the world, and yet, what explains the fact that we are the most unhappy; anxious, spiritually insecure nation at the same time?

It is a strange state to be in, isn't it?

Last week, Valerie asked the question to the congregation what brings you to church, why do you come here.

Some people answered but the vast majority of us were silent. That's the way it is when you ask questions like that. Hard to say. I'd need to think about it.

But my guess is that not many of us would say it is our desire for God.

There is a saying not many of us know it but it goes like this, "tell me your ultimate desire, and I will know all that can possibly be known about you." We are not what we have, we are not what we know, we are not what we do, we are not even what we eat. We are what we desire. It is something to consider in these days. What do we desire?

Augustine said, "**Excerpt from *Confessions*, Book I, Chapter I**

"Great art thou, O Lord, and greatly to be praised; great is thy power, and infinite is thy wisdom." And man desires to praise thee, for he is a part of thy creation; he bears his mortality about with him and carries the evidence of his sin and the proof that thou dost resist the proud. Still he desires to praise thee, this man who is only a small part of thy creation. Thou hast prompted him, that he should delight to praise thee, for thou hast made us for thyself and restless is our heart until it comes to rest in thee. Grant me, O Lord, to know and understand whether first to invoke thee or to praise thee; whether first to know thee or call upon thee. But who can invoke thee, knowing thee not? For he who knows thee not may invoke thee as another than thou art. It may be that we should invoke thee in order that we may come to know thee. But "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe without a preacher?" Now, "they shall praise the Lord who seek him," for "those who seek shall find him," and, finding him, shall praise him. I will seek thee, O Lord, and call upon thee. I call upon thee, O Lord, in my faith which thou hast given me, which thou hast inspired in me through the humanity of thy Son, and through the ministry of thy preacher.

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