

Jesus Came... To Save

Psalm 43

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NHQ #J HKUHOV
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R QWDUIR /#FDQDGD

You've got to hand it to him. Corry Clouston does a good interview. He often goes straight to the strategy, without all the blah blah blah that so often comes with sport interviews.

He goes right to his strategy to win games.

Like after last Thursday's game against Pittsburgh. *"We've got pay more attention to our line changes, especially if there's a glitch in coming off the bench. And should something happen there, the rest of the players have to hold 'em to the outside. Clog up the centre of the ice."*

Strategy. Right to it.

Of course - would be a bit helpful if the strategy worked. Right?

No use having a plan if it leads to nowhere.

(Jury's out on Sens strategy. At least for now. One small comfort - it's certainly better than Toronto's!)

I want to share with you a thumbnail sketch of a strategy for combating not a hockey game but something far more significant -

the horrible surprises, the deep struggles and sometimes painful battles that come our way. The cracks and wrinkles of our personal lives, of the communities in which we live, and some that are worldwide.

What to do with them?

We go to Psalm 43.

What we find there is a poem.

It describes the journey of one believer in his personal battle.

And in that journey we see some significant, life-giving strategic steps that keep him going.

And those strategic steps are important for our lives, too.

PSALM 43, P.515

There's three parts to the poem of Psalm 43:

- the problem (v.1,2)
- the plea (v.3,4)
- the push (v.5)

The writer had his **problem**. Unique to him. Like ours is unique to us.

The **plea** and the **push**, though - they're more universal. And they are where our coping strategy can gain traction.

So, what was **the problem?**

We're not exactly sure.

Only that there seemed to be some very powerful people hounding him.

Willing to say anything and do pretty much anything to get what they want.

Was it in business that they were deceitful and unjust?

Or in a social situation?

Was it political in nature?

Did it involve personal relationships?

Was the writer physically attacked?

Or was it emotional?

Or financial?

The answer is - *We simply don't know.*

And so, you fill in the blank.

Which, by the way, is very valid use of the Psalms.

I believe that is part of why God put the Psalms in the Bible.

To be a starting place for the prayers and cries and songs of our heart.

In the happy times.

And when we're left speechless with shock and grief.

Doesn't matter what the situation or emotion.

There's a bit of poetry there somewhere in Psalms that will help you articulate your situation.

All you need to do is fill in the blank.

When the Psalm speaks of "*the enemy*" - think: *what's my enemy?*

Is it cancer?

Is it loneliness?

Is it political corruption that I'm trying to fight?

Is it poverty?

Is it temptation?

Fill in the blank.

Are you doing that this morning? Filling in the blank of verse 1?

Then this --- the struggle of verse one leads to an inner reaction in verse 2.

The writer feels really far away from God.

He feels as if God has tossed him aside.

Friends - That happens **so** often.

If your life is hurting, and you're feeling as if God is a million miles away, or wondering if he's there **at all** -

Please know that you're batting about average.

Doesn't mean you give in to those feelings.

Rather - you don't panic because you get them.

Instead, simply acknowledge that this is part of the deal; a dark cloud along the way.

That, brothers and sisters, is **the problem**.

On to the second part - **The Plea**. (v.3,4)

Where to with the pain?

Answer - straight to God.

Even when it feels like you're calling into an empty room

Go ahead -

Take the risk.

Take the leap.

Make the call.

"Send out your light and your truth; let them lead me...."

This past summer Sharon and I had the privilege of heading up the Bruce Peninsula, where we did some hiking along Georgian Bay.

Just north of Lion's Head, we followed a trail to a lighthouse, perched on the edge of a cliff overlooking a treacherous shoal in the bay.

The light warned of the danger.

But it also pointed towards safety.

Just north of the lighthouse was a narrow passage. And through that passage, sailors find a calm, protected harbour from the ferocious storms that pound the Bruce Peninsula.

That lighthouse is marked on the official charts published by the Canadian government. These charts show exactly where the rocks and shoals are; and where the safe deep water is. You can count on these charts. They are **true**.

I thought of that lighthouse and those charts while reading this Psalm, imagining a ship's captain in a storm, in the dead of night, fishing boat bouncing this way and that, desperately trying to keep control through the lightning and rain and wind and waves.

Wondering where he is.

And then - the beacon.

Flashing.

Flashing again.

The peculiar light pattern of only that beacon.

And then looking at the true and trustworthy chart, the captain would be able to gain his bearings and steer to the safety of the calm harbour.

God - in this present darkness, send your light and truth.

Lead me out of this dark and dangerous situation with your light and truth.

I can't tell you what that would have looked like for the original writer. So, once again, here I'm going to fill in the blank.

Because I read this Psalm through some very particular glasses. They are the glasses of the New Testament. I read this Psalm from a Christian perspective.

And when I hear the cry for God's light and truth my mind immediately goes to someone who claimed -

I am the light...

I am the truth...

And that, of course, is Jesus Christ.

You'll find those claims in the gospel of John where Jesus is quoted:

John 8:12 "I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life."

John 14: 6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."

You want to know how I characterize this Psalm?
It is desperation, coloured by hope.

And the hope is not even so much that the physical situation will be immediately turned around. But, rather, that the one who struggles will be able to stay near God.

That God won't let go.
That the dark situation won't be allowed to stain his soul and mind and heart forever.

And so the writer's primary pray isn't for victory in the situation. Instead, he prays that
no matter what else happens
that he, himself, would be led into the presence of God.

That's his plea in verse 4 and 5.

The holy hill to which he desires to be led by God's light and truth, is Jerusalem.
In ancient Israel, Jerusalem was where people would go to connect to God.

That's where the temple was.
That's where worship and prayer happened.
And offerings were brought.
Perched on the holy hill of Mt.Zion.
In the temple - the dwelling of God.
Before the altar where sacrifices for sin were offered;
and sacrifices of thanksgiving were offered.

And **that** is how I approach the struggles of life.
And what I commend to you as your strategy to approaching the dark challenges that loom like a monster in your living room.

It begins with calling to Jesus.
Jesus who came to bring light into a dark world.
Who came to give truth into a world that has been infected with so many lies.

He came to bring the light and truth of eternal life.
He came as Saviour
came into a world where there are a million different ways that you can fill in the blank of
verse 1 because there seem to be a million different pains and sufferings around.

Jesus came to combat it all.
He came as Saviour to restore w God's full and rightful plan for this world -
- that it would be a perfect place, free from sin and sorrow and pain and tears and death, a
place where humanity can live and work and play in the very presence of God as caretakers and
developers of Creation.

That's what the Saviour came to bring.
And He will bring it!
That's the promise so beautifully and triumphantly declared in Rev 21.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had
disappeared....

3 ...I heard a [voice] saying, "Look, the home of God is now among his people! He will live with
them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them.

4 He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. For
the old world and its evils are gone forever."

5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making all things new!"

He's moving creation history towards that time.
And until then Jesus provides light and truth that keeps us connected to God.

In a world where not all challenges will go away, and not every injustice will be set right, and not every enemy will be overcome,
in that kind of a world
where the storms keep blowing
Jesus, the Saviour, is our lighthouse keeper.
He is the Light himself.
He keeps us from wrecking on the shoals.
He guides us into the safe harbour of God's presence.

So that we can live with hope.
And rejoice again.
And sing again.
And perhaps one day even experience that God
hasn't tossed us away
and he **doesn't** ignore what we say
and he **does** keep hold of us!

We take our situation before Jesus the Saviour.

Jesus, who calls everyone with a burden to come to him, and he would gladly receive them and replace their burden with his load.

Who promises that he will never crush those that are stumbling, or snuff out the light from the life of a person who's candle in the wind is barely flickering.

Who promises to believers that he will be with them always, to the end of time.

Who declares that whoever believes in him would not perish, but have everlasting life.

Who promises to send a counselor, the Holy Spirit, to be the conveyor of truth and direction and power and life from the very throne of God right into our lives.

What's our prayer?

God, send the presence of your Son, the light and the truth of this world, into my heart, into my life, into my battles and questions and traumas.

That's part 2 - **the Plea.**

The third and final part is **the Push.**

Where the writer doesn't talk to God.

Now he talks to himself.

It's verse 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.*

He's pushing himself, coaching himself if you will, to reach out to God.

Because, you see:

- It's easy when things get dark to walk away from your faith.
- It's easy to blame the darkness on God, or get mad at God for the trouble, and walk away.

- It's easy to go elsewhere looking for solutions.

But that would be precisely the **wrong** strategy.

No matter how we're feeling, the best strategy is a Christ-centred strategy.

Keep going back to heaven with your prayers.

Keep going there with your frustrations.

Keep going there with your questions.

Keep going there with your hurts.

Just keep going there with however you've filled in the blank in verse one.

Push yourself.

Go there.

And trust

- yes, that's the faith part -

push and coach and remind yourself

and each other

that He who is Light and Truth

will

have the last word over your life

and over all creation.

And that word is -

Behold, I am making all things new!