

*As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?
My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me all day long, "Where is your God?"
These things I remember as I pour out my soul:
how I used to go to the house of God under the protection of the Mighty One
with shouts of joy and praise among the festive throng.
Why, my soul, are you downcast?
Why so disturbed within me?
Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God. – Ps. 42:1-5*

When was a time in your life when you wanted to go to church? I don't mean that you felt like it, or allowed it, or even looked forward to it. When was a time when you longed for it, thirsted for it like a panting deer that has just run itself dry?

We are calling everyone in the congregation each week during the pandemic, and in these conversations I can't tell you how many times people share with me their longing to be back at church. They long for the regularity of weekly worship, for the joy and peace that comes from singing praises among their church community. They long for hugs from their church friends, trivial conversations in the narthex, deep learning in bible studies, and meals together in the basement. "You don't know how precious something is to you until it's gone," a famous adage says. And in COVID land, that is deeply true of the church. "When can I go and meet with God," is an apt sentiment for today from the Sons of Korah.

In normal circumstances, it's hard for us in the Chicago suburbs to understand this kind of longing. We have made it the key to our lives to have anything we long for. If we want it, we work hard and then get it. There is little if anything we truly long for. But this is just materially speaking. We still long for the real things in life. We long for acceptance, love, success.

What makes us long for something? Why do we long for some things and not for others? And where does God fit into these longings? Do we truly long for God like we long for love, or acceptance? Or do we put God in the same category as a new car, or a raise at work, or our next meal? The Sons of Korah who wrote this Psalm understood a real longing for God. I pray we will, too.

What do you long for today?
Do you long for God like the Psalmists wrote?
What might help you long for God more in the week to come?