

WILDERNESS WORSHIP

By John Richardson

SCRIPTURE

Psalm 63:1–4

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

OBSERVATION

David is in the wilderness of Judah when he pens this Psalm to God in worship. When David writes this psalm, he is king but on the run from Absalom. The wilderness of Judah is not like the wilderness of East Texas. Surrounding David would have been rocks, sand, caves, dryness, hot—much like a desert with little coverage and not many places to hide. The physical circumstances give a description on how to read through the text. Though David is surrounded by desert land, his heart is different. Though he is not currently leading as king in daily tasks, his focus is set on the King. This fleeing from an enemy was a time that refreshed David's soul as he sought God.

- The view of God is primary in the life of David as he is running from Absalom. David is not requesting rescue this time; he is instead offering up songs of praise and pouring out his desire to see God. The whole of David's being is utterly different than the world around him. Where heat and lack of water is evident in his world, he focuses on his spiritual thirst for God. The outside world is not consuming his focus but instead is being used to understand God more fully by describing his soul condition (v. 1).
- How badly does David desire God? As badly as a desert that desires water. David has a chance to express his heart by understanding that his spiritual needs are far greater than his physical needs.
- David sees God. The sanctuary is the location where David remembers the power and glory of God, but he doesn't highlight the location. The sanctuary is but a background that captures the person and character of God. In the wilderness, David refocuses his life by remembering God. Beholding displays the fixed gaze of David on God. Believers behold God by setting their whole being on Him alone. Looking leads to beholding—our eyes and minds connect in worship because God is powerfully at work in and through us (v. 2).
- In verse 3, David gives the why behind the what: because your [God's] steadfast love is better than life. In days where life is being measured and weighed, every

believer gets to test this statement. Is God's love better than one's life? The statement give understanding to the priorities and the risks associated with being a believer in difficult times. Praise echoes out beyond fear as one sees the continued love of God as desirable more than the next paycheck, safety, or one's next breath on this planet.

- David continues with focusing on his life of worship in the midst of wilderness living. Verse 4 shows the length of David's days being bound to the lifelong commitment to God. This verse is not exertion of will but a reflection of life under the power and glory of God, a life reflecting on the glories of God, and lips that send continual praise to Him. David sees life as only being directed toward God; all else has been removed and stripped away, leaving only his communion with the Father.

OBEDIENCE

Our wilderness looks much different than David's, not only the outdoors but the indoors. God has gifted many people with more time than ever before; believers can respond to this season with the cultivation of a deeper walk with Christ. Praise should be the anthem of our trust in God as we see the power, glory, and love from Him.

- Set up a time to engage God in His Word each day, multiple times a day, with family or friends.
- Move from worry to worship by reflecting on the glory, power, and love of God.
- Share the things God is doing in your life with other people. We don't know how people are wrestling with isolation and idleness; work to encourage others in this season.
- Spend time in solitude/silence, praying and meditating on all that God has done this week, month, year(s), lifetime. God is ever faithful.

PRAYER

Pray for a growing passion for the things of God. Ask God to help you never go back to the business of normal where He is challenged by "things." Ask God to give you people by name to connect with and encourage. Thank God as praise for what He is doing and has done in your life.