

God My Refuge
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
July 10, 2016
Rev. Jose Angel Lopez Dominguez

Text: Psalm 43

Psalm 43 is connected to Psalm 42, what we see then in Psalm 43 is the final section of that prayer.

Psalm 43

1 Vindicate me, my God, and plead my cause against an unfaithful nation. Rescue me from those who are deceitful and wicked. 2 You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy? 3 Send me your light and your faithful care, let them lead me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell. 4 Then I will go to the altar of God, to God, my joy, and my delight. I will praise you with the lyre, O God, my God. 5 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.

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God

Psalm 42... Staged a Question mostly from the “oppressor” Where is your God? While the Psalmist responds in 43 and he said my God is here with me, and I am talking with the divine right now. (This answer is a nonsense for the world, talking to an invisible God and expecting justice, care, Refuge, seriously? Yeah! This is the God of Abraham, the God my grandparents and my mom, this is my God, this is your God, this is our God. Amen!)

I do not know how you the people of this town lament. I have lived here for almost 5 years but I’ve not seen yet a non-Mexican person crying with me or crying with somebody else. It is uncommon here to see people lamenting this way; I don’t know when or where you lament. One of the ways Mexicans lament or more exactly people from Chiapas lament is by crying in public or in private. They, mostly Christian and non-Christian, protest to God, they ask why? Why this happening to me, no dear God, why now. I have seen lots of Mexican lamenting this way. People might say that we are too emotional perhaps, but I will dare to say that Mexican people cry a lot, lament a lot.

For all over the centuries, the book of Psalm has been the school of prayer; here we are inspired and instructed on how to express with our heart, our soul, hands, feet, with our entire body to our God. We express our misery; our happiness! We learn to express it in words, in poetry, by singing, by praising to our God, Amen! For Calvin, for instance, Psalm was considered as a Little Bible, it was for him a reflection of the entire Bible. Here we found words of God, God’s and humanity expression together.

I am always thrilled to know that Jesus knew and read the Psalms too, for example, Psalm 118, "The Stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone."

But before getting into it, I want you to understand one more thing, how do you read this, at what tone of voice you read this... literarily

We, I pay little attention of how I read this particular Psalm of lament.

I wonder how a person who had loss a loved one this year, this month, this week, today would read this psalm? For the last couple of years people has been shot, at the border of countries, on the street, at the Hospital, at the school, at the Library, at Church, at a nightclub, inside and outside of their cars. Couple days ago I found myself crying in front of my computer by the images on the media of people killing and dying... How would you read this prayer of lament? How families and relatives would they read this prayer? How would you read this prayer?

As I read commentaries, I realized that the psalmist was possible an immigrant during the exile of the people of God doing this prayer. He or she was taken to a strange land far away from home.

As I read the local history of your town, not only in from 1875 when the pioneers came to this place but the recent history of 1956 and after that, I realized that many of your grandfather and fathers immigrated to this country. Can you imagine being a 10, 13 or 16 years old saying goodbye to your grandparents from a harbor somewhere in the Netherlands, perhaps this was the last time to see your love one. Life is not always the life we imagine... sometimes terrible and cruel, full of pain and anxiety. You are God my stronghold. Why have you rejected me? Protest the Psalmist, As I telling you this part of your story I might be scratching an old wound among you. Going somewhere, far away from home is always difficult, believe me!

It's from this kind of pain and love that we can begin imagining how the psalmist prayed.

Where is your God? My God is here, and he is my refuge said the psalmist. It is not from doubt that he asks WHY? But I believe that this prayer comes from an unshakable faith that he is asking Why? Ask your missionaries or someone in this congregation and they will tell you how they have read this Psalm.

But, who is the Psalmist? It is you or me, or some else. Angel, this is the beauty of the Psalmist, it can be anyone who believe in living God I was told by one of my professor at the Seminary.

As a boy, I never pay attention to the context in which the psalmist was praying, till one night. When I was not able to sleep for the lack of food, I hear a whisper, broken words, and tears in the middle of the night, it was my mother praying for food for her children. I realized that night, the psalmist was at home, asking faithfully, protesting faithfully, living faithfully and even dying faithfully in the middle of the night.

The powerful strength of the Psalmist is that he is giving us a space to all of us. The psalmist is giving us his shoes and we became him or her when we pray.

Where is your God? My God is here with me, and I am taking refuge in him.

But even if we understand the Psalmist context, and even we can imagine being him or her, there is something that we might never comprehend. Why the Psalmist in the darkest of his life could still believe and care to pray to the invisible God? You might wonder

I do not know you, perhaps you are a visitor this morning, maybe you have been a faithful to this church of your life, the president of the congregation, one of pastor, a missionary. Perhaps you work or teach at the seminary on how to believe in this God, and maybe you are one of the members of choir or part of the Consistory or a brand new member, young or senior. But I believe that one day, one night we might pray this prayer. Soon or later this happen. What kind of relationship is this, what kind of mystery is this, who is this God? Who are you? What kind of faith is this?

Couple years ago I moved to North America, you have short summers and too long winters, so I began to watch Christmas movies on winters, like "It's a Wonderful life" by Director Frank Capras... so sorry if I spoil the ending for you. George Baigley the main character, all his life wanted to help and support his people, but one day was too much for him, all collapse, his world was upside down. On a winter, on a very cold day in the middle of a bridge ready to take his life, He wished not to have been born. You must be desperate to do and wish that. The angel that was there took note of it and show to George Bailey a community without him, no Bailey at all, never born. As Bailey realized, a world without him was not an answer either, so he prayed again to be back, he was sent back to the same place at the same time. To the exact time and place he came back... To the bridge, to winter cold, to the upside down world, to the very reason he wanted to die in the first place. But this at time, George Bailey, came back and found all the things the same, but at this time George Bailey came back and found all things different too.

We are call to live on and believe in a mysterious faith, that all things are new every day and hope is there waiting for us in Christ... I wish this mystery could be obvious as George Bailey experience in his life, but it is not.

What I want you to see is that the Psalmist is free, freedom is around him in God, in Christ. The psalmist has been in the mountain top; He has seen the past, the present and the future in Christ. This is the mystery in Christ, our Lord, our servior, our refuge in times of trouble. This is the freedom in which he speaks and cry, live and dye.

Here, today, we are believing too in the incarnate Lord, In communion we lift up our hearts... our pastor declares, that the bread and the wine are the sings of communion with our God.

Where is your God people of God? God is here with all of us!!

Hope Church, the psalmist reminds us that there is absolutely nothing that we can do without God.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

Amen!