



WEEKLY SERMON

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Sunday December 4, 2022

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Message: Discouragement

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Text: Psalm 42-43

“Silent Night! Holy Night!”

In Luke 2:10-14 we read,

“And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. (11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. (12) And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. (13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, (14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”

When the beloved hymn, “**Silent Night! Holy Night!**” was written by two humble church leaders for their own mountain village parishioners, little did they realize how universal its influence would eventually be.

Joseph Mohr (1792-1848), assistant priest in the Church of St. Nicholas in the region of Tyrol, high in the beautiful Alps, and Franz Gruber (1787- 1863), the village schoolmaster and church organist, had often talked about the fact that the perfect Christmas hymn had never been written. So Reverent Mohr had this goal in mind when he received word that the church organ would not function.

He decided that he must write his own Christmas hymn immediately in order to have music for the special Christmas Eve service. He did not want to disappoint his faithful flock. Upon completing the text, he took his words to Franz Gruber, who exclaimed when he saw them, "Friend Mohr, you have found it - the right song - God be praised!"

Soon Gruber completed his task of composing an appropriate tune for the new text. His simple but beautiful music blended perfectly with the spirit of Reverent Mohr's words. The carol was completed in time for the Christmas Eve service, and Reverent Mohr and Franz Gruber sang their new hymn to the accompaniment of Gruber's guitar. The hymn made a deep impact upon the parishioners even as it has on succeeding generations.

When the organ repairman came to the little village church, he was impressed by a copy of the Christmas carol and decided to spread it all around the region of Tyrol.

Today it is sung in all major languages of the world and is a favorite wherever songs of the Christmas message are enjoyed.

During the Christmas season allow the peaceful strains of this carol to help you worship in awe with the shepherds and sing alleluia with the angels for God's "redeeming grace."

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.
Holy infant so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.
Glories stream from heaven afar
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,
Christ the Savior is born!
Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.
Radiant beams from Thy holy face
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

In HIS Amazing Grace,
Pastor David Miklas

PS: Here is a THIRTEEN DAY suggested Christmas Bible Reading plan

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Day 1 - The God-Man | John 1:1-18 |
| Day 2 - His Glory | Hebrews 1:1-14 |
| Day 3 - A Substitute | Isaiah 58:1-12 |
| Day 4 - Mary's Privilege | Luke 1:26-36 |
| Day 5 - Mary's Visit | Luke 1:39-56 |
| Day 6 - Holy Birth | Luke 2:1-20 |
| Day 7 - His Humiliation | Philippians 2:3-13 |
| Day 8 - In the Temple | Colossians 1:15-23 |
| Day 9 - Seeking Sages | Matthew 2:1-12 |
| Day 10 - King of Kings | I Thessalonians. 6:6-16 |
| Day 11 - Why He Came | Hebrews 2:9-18 |
| Day 12 - Worthy Is the Lamb | Revelation 5:5-12 |
| Day 13 - His Question | Matthew 16:15-28 |

God does whatever He wants, whenever HE wants for whatever reason HE desires and HE uses whomever HE likes for whatever purpose HE has... and GOD never makes a mistake. Whatever HE DOES is RIGHT."

"UP-Look for the Downcast"

INTRODUCTION: This morning, I believe with all my heart God would have me touch upon a subject all of us face from time to time - including this preacher. It's common to all of us to become discouraged in the WAY, or discouraged because of PEOPLE.

I find it rather comforting that God's inspired Hymnal, the Book of Psalms, does not omit the reality of the grind and inner turmoil that produces DISCOURAGEMENT. With that in mind, please turn with me to Psalms 42 and 43. These Psalms should be taken together as a unit, the one flowing quite naturally into the other.

Psalm 42, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. (2) My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? (3) My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? (4) When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday. (5) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. (6) O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar. (7) Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. (8) Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. (9) I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? (10) As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? (11) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

Psalms 43, "Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. (2) For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? (3) O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. (4) Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. (5) Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

The situation the writer is facing is seen in that phrase repeated three times in 42:5, 11, and 43:5, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" The situation in his life is one of inner despair, and discouragement. Then to make matters worse, the writer's enemies or friends were saying in verse 3, "Where is thy God?"

These two songs from the Book of Psalms have been preserved to provide you and I with wisdom and insight in handling:

Those days when you are ready to throw up your hands and say, "So what, what's the use of trying?"

Those days when you feel like curling up in a fetal position, and just quitting.

Those days when you are saying, "I am down and feeling low, nothing seems to be working."

Those days when it appears you have reached a **BREAKING POINT**, and you don't know whether you are coming or going.

Those days when God seems far away, which is not actually true, and when no one seems to care, which is also not true, but just the same, that is how you feel.

Look, I am just as human as you are. I am a sinner, Praise God, saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ on Calvary like the majority of you here. Believe me; I have my times of DISCOURAGEMENT:

**When the DEVIL seems to be on my back and won't get off, and
When PEOPLE have approached me with three big "A's" – attitudes, actions and activities,
and
When MY SPIRITUAL SELF is fighting on the bottom and my HUMAN FLESH is on top.**

Look, it's not a disgrace to become discouraged, it comes to all of us, to some more than others. But it **IS** damaging to your testimony to linger there! And by the way:

This is not the time to stay home from church and brew over your problems. I have said it over and over again, the message you miss is the very message you needed either now or in the future.

This is not the time to stay away from God's people. I believe more people would care about you and respond to you if they knew of your needs.

This is not the time to change churches or stop serving the Lord; just because things are not going the way you might think they should go.

"Life is not fair!" Bad things do happen to good people. And like it or not, good things do happen to bad people.

"People are cruel!" It can seem that those who are the most cruel get along just fine.

However, we must remember we serve our God. It is God who has allowed us to be placed in this situation in spite of the people or circumstances surrounding us.

What **IS** important to remember is these psalms help point the way to **VICTORY OVER DISCOURAGEMENT**. From the writer's own experience, he says to us, "If you want to overcome discouragement, then you must make some radical changes in your "OUTLOOK ON LIFE."

FIRST: We need to stop looking at ourselves and start looking at God. As we read through Psalms 42-43 we will soon discover 51 personal pronouns. The writer mentions "I" 14 times, "me" 16 times, and "my" 21 times. He mentions "God" only 20 times. We get the distinct impression that life was a mirror, and the writer was looking only at himself. His constant cry was "LOOK AT POOR ME."

He was discouraged because HIS PLANS HAD NOT BEEN FULFILLED, verse 4, "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday." He had gone to the house of God and had expected to be uplifted, but he came away discouraged still. You can understand this, when you do what you are supposed to do and "expect" God to supply your need, but he chooses not to respond immediately. However as someone said, "WHO ARE WE THAT GOD SHOULD ALWAYS WORK THINGS OUT TO PLEASE US?"

He was discouraged because HIS FEELINGS HAD BEEN HURT, verse 3, "My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" **and in verse 10 we read,** "As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?" Whatever the problem he was facing, he was crying over it night and day. To make matters worse, his enemies were taunting him, "Where is your God in all this?"

He was discouraged because HIS QUESTIONS HAD NOT BEEN ANSWERED, questions such as:

"Why art thou cast down?"

"When shall I come and appear before God?"

"Why has thou (God) forgotten me?"

Ten times the writer asked "WHY?" What makes this passage so interesting is the fact

that we have no record that God ever gave him an answer! What was at the heart of his complaint? **IT WAS SELF.**

He wanted **HIS** plans to be fulfilled.
He wanted **HIS** feelings to improve.
He wanted **HIS** questions to be answered.

He was so busy looking at himself that he forgot to look at God. How true that is. We are so full of self that:

We want **OUR** plans to be fulfilled.
We want **OUR** feelings to improve.
We want **OUR** questions to be answered.
We want **OUR** way or no way.

SELFISH-PRIDE sees only one thing - **ME**. No matter where I look, all I see is **ME**. This explains why a change of circumstances cannot of itself cure discouragement, because we take our hearts with us. As we read this Psalm we will discover that even natural beauty will fail to give peace to the troubled heart, especially if we are thinking only of ourselves and not of God and others.

What the writer needed to do was **STOP**, just as you and I need to do along with constantly reminding ourselves that we walk "**BY FAITH SEEING GOD IN THE PICTURE.**"

After all, **God is in control of this universe!**
After all, **God is in command of our lives!**

Listen! The most important thing about any difficult experience is not **THAT we get out of it, but WHAT we get out of it.**

If we are truly thirsting after God in all our experiences, we will be **PRAYING** and **PRAISING GOD** instead of complaining.

If we are looking **THAT** we get out of it, life will be a **MIRROR** in which we only see ourselves;
If we are looking **WHAT** we get out of it, life will be a **WINDOW** through which we see God.

Again, we are encouraged to **stop looking at ourselves and start looking at God.**

SECOND: We need to stop looking at the past and start looking at the future.

If we look to the **FUTURE**, we are trying to put ourselves aside.
If we look to the **PAST**, we usually are having a self-pity-party.

When we see God in our past, then the memory will be a blessing. But when we only see **OURSELVES**, and start complaining about our circumstances, then the memory will only bring more discouragement.

The important thing is not just to remember the past, but to **REMEMBER GOD IN OUR PAST**, verse 6, "**O my God, my soul is cast down within me, therefore will I remember thee...**" It is helpful to look back and see what God has done. We cannot recapture the past, but we can trust **THE SAME GOD WHO HAS NEVER FAILED OR FORSAKEN US IN THE PAST.** Listen to this poem:

Yesterday God helped me; today He'll do the same.
How long will this continue? **FOREVER!** Praise His name!

The **ANSWER TO DISAPPOINTMENT AND DISCOURAGEMENT IS HOPE.** Three

times in 42:5, 11 and 43:5, the writer encouraged himself to **"hope in God."** Four times in verses 42:5, 6, 11; 43:5 the writer says **"that his soul is cast down."** But then the response comes, **"Hope in God."** In Psalm 43 the Psalmist lists his hopes:

In **verse 1** the writer knows that **"God will one day defeat the enemy and give victory."** "To Judge me" means, "to do justice for me."

In **verse 2** the writer has hope because of **"God's presence and protection."** Why go around mourning when God is with us to be our strength and stronghold? God may not change the circumstances, but He will enable us to face them.

Someone said this years ago, **"Do not pray for easy lives, pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks."** This seems closely related to those 3 "A's" – attitudes, actions, and activities!

In **verse 3** the third source of hope is **"God's direction in our lives."** God gives light in the darkness. Here is some wise advice:

**"Never make IMPORTANT DECISIONS when you are tired;
"Never make IMPORTANT DECISIONS late at night;
"Never make IMPORTANT DECISIONS when you are discouraged or depressed; because they will probably be wrong decisions."**

The key is to wait on the Lord.

In **verse 4** we have hope because **"God is our joy."** If we always base our feelings on being in comfortable circumstances, we will constantly be disappointed. But in the midst of hopeless situations, if we find our joy in Him, we will experience hope.

To remember the past and forget God's control of it is to encourage disappointment! Our only help in the PRESENT, and hope for the FUTURE, is God. Like the Apostle Paul we need to say what we read in Philippians 3:13, **"Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before."**

A lost world does all it can to manufacture hope, but they have no hope. On the other hand, it is Jesus Christ, who is our hope. His death on Calvary and His resurrection from the grave have given us a living hope. Thank God for His faithfulness in the PAST and in the PRESENT, but our assurance comes from anticipation of a thrilling FUTURE!

There is one more thing to call to our attention before leaving this point. Three times the Psalmist mentions **"the health of my countenance, and my God"** in connection with having **"Hope in God."** Certainly depression and disappointment shows on our faces! However, we can be assured that God's face is never marked by disappointment. When He looks upon us, it is always with Love and Mercy.

Remember the benediction found in Numbers 6:24-26, **"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee; the Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance, and be gracious unto thee, and give thee peace."** The countenance of God's smile is seen on the faces of those who hope in Him.

We are encouraged to

**Stop looking at ourselves and start looking at God.
Stop looking at the past and start looking at the future.**

THIRD: Stop searching for reasons and start resting on promises: There are at least thirteen questions asked in Psalms 42-43. The writer had the nerve to ask **"Why?"** ten

times and "**Why?**" is not always an easy question to answer. (If you have raised children, especially teenagers, you know that!). It is normal for us to ask questions when we are hurting or going through perplexing experiences. **IT IS NOT WRONG TO ASK QUESTIONS OF GOD, BUT IT IS WRONG TO QUESTION GOD'S MOTIVES OR INTENTIONS.**

As you read Psalm 42-43, you sense that the writer is getting impatient.

Why am I cast down in my soul?
Why, God, have you forgotten me?
Where is God?
Why doesn't He do something?
When will He start to work?

It appears that everything is against him for in verse 7 he says, "All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me."

Suppose God **HAD** answered all his questions; would that have solved any problems and made him feel any better? **NO!**

It is a basic fact of life that we **DO NOT LIVE ON EXPLANATIONS; WE LIVE ON PROMISES.**
An explanation may satisfy the curiosity of the mind, but only a promise can heal the hurt in the heart and give strength to the will.

The writer had looked around at nature and seen only himself. Why? Because he was looking for explanations. In his pride and self-pity, he was demanding that God give reasons for what He was doing! What he needed to see were the **PROMISES** of God.

He needed to LOOK UP and see that our God is the living God, 42:2, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" The enemy may taunt us and suggest that God is dead, as in verse 3, "Where is your God?" But we know that our God is alive and meeting all of our needs. Therefore, we should acknowledge Him as the **SOVEREIGN GOD** of the Universe.

Our God is El Elohim, the strong creator, literally the strongest of the strong.
Our God is Jehovah-Jirah, the one who pre-sees our needs and then has the provision to meet those needs.
Our God is Jehovah-Shalom, the God who brings peace in the midst of trying circumstances that can discourage us.

He needed to LOOK OUT and see that God promises to be faithful, verse 8, "Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life." As the earth orbits the sun, day and night, God's faithfulness is illustrated. Each sunrise and sunset is a reminder of the faithfulness of God.

In Lamentations 3:22-23 we read, "It is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every MORNING, GREAT IS THY FAITHFULNESS."

In Psalm 92:1-2 we read, "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O Most High: to show forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and THY FAITHFULNESS EVERY NIGHT, ..."

He needed to LOOK IN and see that God promises to forgive and cleanse, chapter and verse 42:4, "When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday". Apparently the writer went with others to the house of God, the temple, and while there he would have praised God and offered a sacrifice for the cleansing of his sins in keeping with the rituals associated with a holyday.

We should thank God that in Christ we have a final and completed salvation from sin, through His victory at Calvary.
We should thank God as Christians we do not have to travel to a "Holy Place" to find God because he dwells in us and works in us.
We should thank God we can come into the house of God and worship Him "in spirit and in truth."

He needed to LOOK AROUND and see that God promises to be our strength and refuge, verse 6, "O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar." The hills and mountains were the strongest and most dependable things the Old Testament Jew knew. Our God is a God of both the hills and the valleys in our life.

In Psalm 46:1-2 we read, "**God is our refuge and strength a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.**"

Even if God did give reasons for all His acts, we would not be satisfied. In fact, it would be impossible for us to fully understand all that God is doing! What we do need to understand is that "**WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT, OR BY EXPLANATIONS.**"

Someone said and I thought it was good advice, "**When the outlook is grim, try the up-look.**" That's been the advice given to us here in Psalm 42-43. "**Hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise Him.**"

**Stop looking at yourself and start looking at God.
Stop looking at the past and start looking at the future.
Stop searching for reasons and start resting on promises.**

Here again the immortal words of the hymn we have often sung:

**When upon life's billows you are tempest-tossed,
When you are DISCOURAGED, thinking all is lost,
Count your MANY BLESSINGS name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.**

**So amid the conflict, whether great or small,
Do not be DISCOURAGED - God is over all;
Count your MANY BLESSINGS angels will attend,
Help and comfort give you to the journeys end.**

Times of **DISCOURAGEMENT** will come. If not today, they will come tomorrow, but there is **HOPE** as we read again in **Isaiah 41:10**, "**Fear thou not; be not dismayed; for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.**"

If God has spoken to your heart after reading the sermon "**Up-Look for the Downcast**" then right now talk to God about what He has spoken to you.

Do you have the assurance that one day you will go to heaven? If you have no assurance that you know Jesus Christ, then I trust you will decide to accept Him as your personal Savior. The Bible tells us in

Acts 16:31, "**...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...**"
Romans 10:13, "**For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.**"

This prayer is here for those who need to ask Jesus to be their personal Savior: "**I do want to go to Heaven. I know I am a sinner, and I do believe Jesus Christ died for me. I realize I cannot buy this great salvation, nor can I earn it. Knowing Jesus died on the cross and arose from the grave to pay**

my sin debt and to purchase my salvation, I do now trust Him as my Savior, and from this moment on I am completely depending on Him for my salvation.”

If you made the decision to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, please let me know. Please send an e-mail to pastormiklas@aol.com and I will send you some literature that will help you in your Christian life.

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