

“DEEP CALLS TO DEEP”
Psalm 42
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Wilton Presbyterian Church
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Psalm 42 has always been one of my favorite psalms... the opening lines Berta read are: “As the deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.” It’s intimate; it’s honest; it’s profound; it’s deeply spiritual... and it’s true. The human drive to quench thirst cannot be denied. We need water to live... just as every part of us needs God.

While water is life-giving, we know that water is powerful too, isn’t it? The psalmist continues “Deep calls to deep, at the noise of your channels. All your breakers and waves have surged over me.”

Maybe you’ve had the experience that many have had at one point in our lives as children or even as adults... of being at the shore, playing in the surf, when all of a sudden, a huge wave comes and throws you upside down. Your life flashes before your eyes because you can’t find your footing... you don’t know if you’ll surface in time before you need your next gasp of air. It’s totally disorienting and terrifying and you realize you’re totally at the mercy of the power of the surf.

That’s the depth of feeling that the psalmist is trying to convey with passionate imagery. To bring more understanding, the poet turns us back to the roots of the ancient and powerful story. The word “deep” is the **Hebrew “tehom.”** It is most famously found in Gen 1:2, that cosmic ocean that exists as pre-existent material upon which YHWH will create and shape the earth and the seas. I love the way one pastor puts it so poetically, “Upon this deep, God’s absolute darkness rests, as the

howling divine wind roils the waters just before the light of God penetrates the darkness, ushering in the shaping of the universe in which humans and animals and plants will soon live and grow.” (Rev. John Holbert, Patheos) It’s a mystical, mysterious and powerful depiction of water... And it continues in 1:6, where God separates the waters from the waters with the dome of the sky... creating a separation of the deep from the deep...

It's in that depth of creative power welling up and swirling about that we are drawn back into our lives today.

Our longings and passions rest deep within our lives, and some are hidden to the outside eye like items resting on the bottom of this lake... But they are real... and they move and shape us, they affect our movements and relationships. And if we’re not grounded in God, we may be turned upside down by them.

This time of coronavirus, along with the movement toward greater racial justice, and the world economic tumult has brought so many of our deep longings to the surface. It makes me think of Maslow’s hierarchy of needs: You know the pyramid... at the base level are the physiological needs of food, water, warmth and rest; the second level consists of safety needs: security and safety. The next two levels are psychological needs...

People all around the world have had those two base levels shaken... it’s no wonder people feel turned upside down and left feeling tremendous grief and even anger.

Our basic longings and needs for many torn apart by the ravages of this Covid-19 virus; lives lost, livelihoods lost or threatened; And then you have the fact that many black and brown people have had their physical safety threatened... some for their entire lifetimes. Their longing to see

and experience a world where justice for all is a reality lived out BY all is being expressed now perhaps in a way our world has not seen in years. For those of us who are white, our longings to see change to our society which has rewarded some and kept others in bondage are real. Action to make changes has been slow to come but is now being realized.

Where is our hope? The depths of our longings and yearnings and sadness and hopes and joys and loves... is where God abides... Deep calls to deep. Heart speaks to heart. And in that place of vulnerability, something can happen.

Back in 1989, I spent a summer, 10 weeks, in Brazil. Another student at Princeton Theological Seminary and I had been chosen to be ambassadors from the seminary as the Independent Presbyterian Church opened its doors to the PCUSA after many years of estrangement. Lisa and I lived with the families of two pastors of the large cathedral of Sao Paulo, learning the culture and teaching English conversation to the professors at the nearby seminary. It was a fascinating time, and one for which I will always be grateful. I learned to love the Brazilian way of life and opened to their joy of living, their hope and their deep and abiding faith... even in the midst of extreme poverty. Oh... we have so much to learn from our brothers and sisters to our south.

One of the opportunities I had during that summer was to travel south to the intersection of the borders of Argentina and Brazil... where the Iguazu Falls can be found.

No photograph or verbal description can do this magnificent display of God's creation can do justice to this astonishing natural wonder. The falls are a confluence of numerous rivers flowing together over a ridge some 260 feet high and nearly two miles in diameter. Over 300 individual falls combine to form the largest waterfall system in the world... creating an almost 360-degree view. And from whichever side you take, it is

breathtaking. The largest of the falls is called Devil's Throat... the name alone conveys the power emanating from it... The noise of the cascading waters is deafening. Once you have walked to a certain viewpoint within the falls themselves you are no longer able to talk to one another, even at a shout. There is a place to walk out on a catwalk, one person at a time... you have to wear a raincoat due to the powerful mist which sprays up but in those days, waterproof cameras were as popular as they are now... and so taking a picture was not an option... but I remember so vividly, walking out the walk alone... surrounded by water and the deafening sound and I felt as if I were in another world. It was surreal and deeply spiritual... I witnessed something nothing short of a miracle... a 360-degree rainbow. It still gives me chills to think about it. Here, in the midst of the rages of power... God was present, and I felt still and calm.

One of my favorite sayings of 13th century poet and Sufi mystic Rumi is this:

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field.

I'll meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass the world is too full to talk about.”

Deep calls to deep... the spirit nudging us forward... to change... to let go... to shift perspective... to be still... to discern... to act in new ways... to be different... to have hope that we remain in the everlasting love of the One who created the heavens and the earth... the waters and all that dwells therein.

The psalmist concludes: Why are you cast down, oh my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise God, my help and my God.

May it be so...Alleluia! Amen.