

“Between God's Shoulders”

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Psalm 63; Psalm 70.1

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*You shall love the Lord your God
with all your heart,
and with all your soul,
and with all your might.*

The Book of Deuteronomy¹

*Deep within us all there is
an amazing inner sanctuary of the soul,
a holy place,
a Divine Center,
a speaking Voice,
to which we may continually return.*

Thomas Kelly²

II

We just read Psalm 63 together. It tells of someone's experience; maybe it was king David. They are hiding from enemies, hiding in the desert wilderness. They're physically experiencing thirst. But this dryness also describes their spiritual self. They thirst for God. Their exile to that desolate place overlaps with a spiritual exile from God.

They've known what it's like to be in God's Presence. They've experienced that before. They have a relationship with God, they belong to God, they know God. God is no stranger to them. Quite the opposite.

But here, where they are now, it's missing. Theologically, philosophically, they know God is with them, because God is everywhere. They know that in their bones, but they are not feeling it in their hearts. So they thirst.

If you have not experienced God's Presence, you can still feel that thirst. We are born with it. We are made for it. C. S. Lewis observed this, that the desire points to something that can fulfill it. Why does a baby feel hunger? Because there is such a thing as food, and babies are made to eat. Why does a duckling want to swim? Because there is such a thing as water, and ducks are made to glide across it.³

Your spirit yearns for God, because God is real, and you are made for God.

¹ Deuteronomy 6:5. This is part of the *Shema*, the Jewish prayer that is the main part of a prayer service.

² Thomas Kelly, quoted in Richard J. Foster, *Streams of Living Water: Celebrating the Great Traditions of Christian Faith* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998), 23.

³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: William Collins Sons & Co., 1952, 1988), 115.

III

You are made to receive God. You are bigger than you imagine.

[CLIP]

In the Harry Potter stories, they have this tent. From the outside it's nothing: shabby, cramped, and smelly I'm sure. But really . . . this is Harry Potter, so magic is everywhere.

Step inside the tent, and it's enormous. It's got a kitchen, dining table, and beds, even room for dancing. (It still smells though, like cats.)⁴ The inside is much bigger and better than you could possibly imagine from the outside.

Like you are.

Augustine, was a bishop in North Africa. He said, in Latin, that we are "capax Dei." That means, "capable of God."⁵ God makes you, and makes you with the ability to know God. You are fashioned with the capability of receiving God's Presence.

Your interior self — your spirit, your soul, your life — you are bigger than you imagine. Expansive. Roomy.

Teresa was from Avila, Spain. She was a theologian in the later 1500s. Her writings include *The Interior Castle*. In it, she described your soul as a castle. In fact, she said you're are a castle that contains within itself seven entire mansions. Dwelling in each of them brings you closer to God.⁶

The Creator who fills the cosmos and beyond, can also fill teeny, tiny you, to your depths. And there is always room in you for more of God.

IV

Back to the Psalm for a moment. Remember it starts us in the wilderness, literally thirsting for water to drink, but also thirsting for God.

Then, part-way through, it shifts us. There is nothing to say that our physical location has changed. We're still in the desert, still in danger. Spiritually, though . . .

*My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.
On my bed I think of you,
and meditate on you
in the watches of the night.*

⁴ The "Perkins' Tent" appears in *The Goblet of Fire*, and then *The Deathly Hallows*. See https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/Perkins%27s_tent. You can see the tent here from *The Goblet of Fire* film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb2U2ArNECc>

⁵ In *De Trinitate* he wrote, "The mind is the image of God, in that it is capable of Him and can be partaker of Him." (XIV, 8.11).

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Interior_Castle

*For you have been my help,
and in the shadow of your wings
I sing for joy.⁷*

The soul changes from thirsting to satisfaction.

*My soul clings to you.
Your right hand upholds me.⁸*

I think of a child clinging to his mom, and mom's strength holding him.

V

So often, we think the Christian's life is about obeying God, and doing the right things, and being good people. It is, but those things are not the centre.

The centre is God's love for us in Jesus Christ, which is our salvation, our true hope and our greatest joy. Whatever else the Christian's life is, whatever we do flows from all that God has done.

Or we think that prayer is about asking for help, and apologizing for our wrongs, and thanking God for all that God gives. Prayer is for these things, very much so. And it's much, much more.

I began our worship today with something from Deuteronomy. This fifth book of the Bible is cast as a sort of "last words of Moses." Moses has led God's people for more than 40 years, through the desert wilderness. Now they are about to go into the Promised Land. But not him. Moses' days are ending. He knows this, and he's got a lot to say.

One thing he does is give blessings to each of Israel's 12 tribes. To the tribe called Benjamin, he says those words I used at the beginning.

*The Lord's beloved rest in safety.
The High God surrounds them all day long.
The beloved rest between God's shoulders.⁹*

Resting between God's shoulders. I see that young child, held against her mother's chest, resting.

Prayer is resting between God shoulders. You, held safe, surrounded by the love of God, and pressed against God's heartbeat.

⁷ Psalm 63:5-7.

⁸ Verse 8.

⁹ Deuteronomy 33:12.

VI

Let me offer you a prayer practice you might try. It's simple, a couple of lines.

*Yes, my soul finds rest in You;
my hope comes from You.*

I've taken that from Psalm 62:5-8. The Psalm is about someone under attack. You might feel under attack by all sorts of things these days.

Yet in the midst of that he says:

*Yes, my soul, find rest in God;
my hope comes from him.
Truly he is my rock and my salvation;
he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honour depend on God;
he is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times, you people;
pour out your hearts to him,
for God is our refuge.*

I changed it a bit, from a powerful proclamation about God, to a short prayer of

*Yes, my soul finds rest in You;
my hope comes from You.*

It's a simple verse you can learn, memorize, and carry with you.

*Yes, my soul finds rest in You;
my hope comes from You.*

Whatever is going on, still yourself and say that little prayer to God. Don't make it complicated. There is nothing complicated about a child resting between her parent's shoulders.

*Yes, my soul finds rest in You;
my hope comes from You.*

Let's try it. I'm going to leave silence, and then simply say it, a few times over. You can say it with me, then keep praying it.

After a few moments, I'll play a song. It's *My Soul is Thirsting*, and it's sung by Khrisha Blackwell.¹⁰

¹⁰ www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0MNIeJknNQ