

Psalm 63, taken from the NABRE
Lenten Reflection
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When I read this psalm, I cannot help but reflect on my own spiritual journey. It resonates with me because this is exactly what I have come to believe to be true. Both good and evil truly exist; God, our Creator, is in charge, and he will shut the mouths of the evil and send them directly to hell. This reassures me, this comforts me, and this satisfies my thirst for justice.

In my life before coming into the church, I was chasing something. I had no idea what it was; the world was telling me, but after achieving much of what it offered, I still felt empty. You see, I was trying to fill an infinite void, a vast emptiness, with the emptiness of the world. This hole can only be filled with the infinite love of God. The world and what it offered me, was my God, but no more. I've realized that my Creator is my God, and I've never been so filled, as with a banquet of "*choice foods*." That place of desolation, a world without God, is that "*land parched, lifeless, without water*," the living water offered only by God. It's a lonely place, devoid of life, a dangerous place to exist, yet so many reside there.

"*I will bless [the Lord] for as long as I live.*" Gratitude is a true grace from God. I'm grateful for his calling me by name. He chose me, and I choose him. I was lost and now I am found. I belong to him, by choice. Now, I call him by name. I know him and he knows me. When I "*lift up my hands, calling on [his] name*," like a child who runs to the safety of her Father's arms, he protects me and comforts me. Even in the darkness of night, on my bed, I think of God; I thank him for his mercy and goodness toward me, that he called me from the depths. He called me to save me, to protect me, to be counted among his flock. I rest in assurance that he is there, "*[throughout] the watches of the night*," guarding me as I rest. Yes, "*my soul clings fast*" to God, indeed, and "*[his] right hand upholds me.*"

He safeguards me against evil, *those who seek my life*. They seek to take what belongs to him, not by force, but by temptation, deception, and misinformation. The evil ones know their fate, and out of pure envy, they desire to take from me the promise of God. They can never take his love from me, but they will try to deceive me, tempting me to believe that God has forsaken me. They shall be cast down into the depths of the netherworld. Yes, they seek to deceive me, tempt me into believing that God is not merciful, that he does not care about me or love me, that I should seek my own gratification, my own good, because I am on my own. This falsehood, this sin, leads to death. They want to feast on me, like jackals, but it will be they who are to be the prey in the end. They will not succeed in tempting me to believe their lies. I know my King and he knows me. All knees will bend, including theirs. They, too, know the King; they know their demise is coming. They know their mouths will be shut, forever; perpetual damnation is never singing praise to our Creator, never seeing him, permanent separation from him. What a lonely, desolate place to spend eternity.

No, I never want to go back to that barren highway to hell, where evil feeds on the ignorant. Now that I have come to know God, I am perfectly happy in his arms, safe from the liars of this world. I am convinced that he will do as he says, that all of the prophecies will be fulfilled in the fullness of time, and judgment will come to all.

Some might suggest that this current pandemic might be the great chastisement. Whether it is or isn't, should not be the focus, nor what we may or may not have done to warrant it.

During this time of worldwide pestilence, we ought to focus our sights on the relationship we have or don't have with our Creator. This is the time to make the change and turn toward God. Repent and sin no more; Jesus tells us that many times, indicating its importance. If you have something against your neighbor, resolve it. Forgive and you will be forgiven. This is not the time to point fingers and affix blame or continue in-fighting. This is the time to recall our brokenness, to repent, make resolution to sin no more, and follow through with our promises. It is Lent, you know. Is that a coincidence? I don't think so. It's an obvious sign to remain faithful and obedient to God regardless of our circumstance.

Yes, this time is a great test of our faith, our trust in him and his will for our lives. "Thy will be done" should have poignant meaning to us during this trial. God's will is a mystery, not because we don't know it, but because it is greater than any of us. We can't understand his will, his actions, his intention for us, yet we should trust that his will, no matter the circumstance or outcome, his will shall be done. He is that powerful. We are subject to him, not the other way around. And yet, he loves us tenderly. He created us uniquely, one by one, with a specific plan in mind. We are exactly where and when we were created to be. Trust in that, if nothing else. If you have a relationship with him, deepen it. If you don't, start one. If you need help, I am here, and so is he.

I

O God, you are my God—
It is you I seek!
For you my body yearns;
for you, my soul thirsts,
in a land parched, lifeless,
and without water.
I look to you in the sanctuary
to see your power and glory.
For your love is better than life;
my lips shall ever praise you!

II

I will bless you as long as I live;
I will lift up my hands, calling on your name.
My soul shall be sated as with choice food,
with joyous lips my mouth shall praise you!
I think of you upon my bed,
I remember you through the watches of the night.
You indeed are my savior,
and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.
My soul clings fast to you;
your right hand upholds me.

III

But those who seek my life will come to ruin;
they shall go down to the depths of the netherworld!
Those who would hand over my life to the sword
shall become the prey of the jackals!
But the king shall rejoice in God;
all who swear by the Lord shall exult,
but the mouths of liars shall be shut!