

ANAHEIM COMMUNITY CONNECTION (ACC) for January 24, 2021

Our focus for worship today is: *Longing for God's Truth*

I. OPENING PRAYER:

Pray that God will lead us to Himself – by His light and His truth – and that we would find Him sufficient for our every need.

II. COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

Describe an incident / experience that left you wandering in the dark and how you managed to reach your destination.
What impact did light (i.e. moonlight, flashlight, etc) or lack of it, have on your confidence in the dark?

III. CHRIST CONNECTION: PSALM 43

A. FACING INJUSTICE, I LONG FOR VINDICATION FROM GOD, MY STRENGTH

¹ Vindicate me, O God, and plead my case against an ungodly nation; O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man! ² For You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

“Vindicate me, O God and plead my case...” Psalm 42 begins with a cry for deliverance - deliverance from injustice and a defense against false accusations. *Vindicate* means to judge, litigate, and carry out justice. *Plead my case* does not imply begging but rather to strive, attack and fight. As in a courtroom, the psalmist appeals, not to an earthly attorney, but to the Judge of the Universe. He knows that God is the judge of all hearts and will come to his aid. Before God, he is confident of his standing and righteousness. The accusations leveled against him are unmerited and unjust – as the accusers themselves are ungodly, deceitful, and oppressive. Thus, the psalmist casts himself at the feet of His defender and Judge, to fight and deliver him.

“For you are the God of my strength...” Notice that the psalmist does not ask to be strengthened, although that can happen. Rather, he appeals to the God who is his strength. His strength is God Himself. God is the strength for his soul and on whom he depends. It is not through his own effort or personal defense that will help him withstand the onslaught of persecution. He knows that his strength is only from God. He is safe in the fortress and stronghold of God, his defender.

“Why have you rejected me? Why do I go mourning...” These rhetorical questions are an expression of the psalmist’s experience, rather than doubting of God’s presence. Undergoing oppression, he feels abandoned and experiences deep sorrow over his situation. Yet, he clings to God as His strength for he knows God is His only hope and defense. This is the prayer of the persecuted - those unjustly oppressed for God’s name and thus hold on to him as their strength and help.

- Share a time when God was your strength through a difficult time.
- Describe a time when you experienced injustice or was wrongly accused. What made it difficult to endure? How did God help you through it?
- Knowing that Christ is our Advocate, how does that truth give you confidence in the midst of persecution and oppression?

B. FACING UNCERTAINTY, I LONG TO BE LED BY GOD, MY EXCEEDING JOY

³ O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; Let them bring me to Your holy hill And to Your dwelling places. ⁴ Then I will go to the altar of God, To God my exceeding joy; And upon the lyre I shall praise You, O God, my God.

“O send out Your light and Your truth...” This is a call for God to expose, illuminate and reveal in the midst of darkness and shadow. What is sent forth? It is God’s light – the radiance of His glory, the beauty of His majesty and the joy of His favor. It is God’s truth – the reality from His eternal wisdom, the revelation of His worth and the faithfulness of His character. As seen in this verse, God’s Light and Truth go hand and in hand. You cannot understand His Truth without His Light and cannot see His Light without His Truth. Both God’s light and truth is manifest most vividly in the person of Jesus Christ – for He is the Light of the World and the Truth personified. He radiated the glory of God to us and revealed the Truth of God’s character and salvation plan as He walked among us in the flesh. He is the Light that shone into the darkness and the darkness has not overtaken it. He is the Truth that set all captives of sin to freedom.

“Let them lead me; Let them bring me...” He is submitting to God’s revelation and illumination. Where God’s light shines and His truth reveals, there will he go. Where does God’s light and Truth lead to? It leads us ultimately to Himself. Note the progression and movement: First, to His holy hill and then His dwelling places or tabernacles. Now we move deeper into the Holy of Holies – the altar of God – the place of worship and sacrifice. Finally, into the very presence of God - our exceeding joy. As God’s light and Truth is revealed, it moves us not to a random destination but rather to God Himself as the destination. *God, my exceeding joy.* Similar to verse 2 – as we heard God as our strength – here we see God as our joy. He not only gives joy but *is our joy*. He is our exceeding joy – our shout of exultation, our delight, our glee and our satisfaction. As our joy, He dispels our despair. As our joy, he turns our sorrow into singing.

“And upon the lyre I shall praise you...” As we are led to God, we are led to respond in worship. Accompanied by music and instruments, there is a song of praise that proceeds from our hearts, through our lips and to the glory of our God. He is *my God*. There is an intimate and holy relationship with Him. We belong to Him and thus we long for Him. In a way, this a picture and movement of the saved. Sent by the Sovereignty of God, His light shines in our darkness and His truth frees us from our bondage. In doing so, we now enter into the most Holy place – made possible by the blood of Christ as referenced in Hebrews 10:19-25 – to draw near to our Holy God. Before Him, as redeemed and children of God – we rejoice and exalt Him with all of our being. Those who are saved will worship, for their joy is their Savior – the one worthy of all worship.

- Share a time when God’s Word led you back to Him. How has God been sufficient for your every need during this challenging year?
- How does the illumination from God and His Word lead you to respond in worship of Him.
- How is God your exceeding joy? Which worship song or hymn captures your heart’s response to Him today?

C. FACING DESPAIR, I LONG WITH HOPE IN MY GOD, MY SAVIOR

⁵ *Why are you in despair, O my soul? And why are you disturbed within me? Hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God.*

"Why are you in despair...Why are you disturbed..." This is the familiar refrain that we heard echoed in Psalm 42 from last week. These two psalms are an obvious pair as 43 may be a continuation of its preceding song. Both Psalms end with an awakening of our soul to the sufficiency of God – as our strength, as our joy and finally as our Savior and God. With all the light and truth that is revealed to us every day in creation and every day in His Word, we still can be pulled to despair and despondency. Especially in our current experience – with sickness, upheaval, economic challenges, spiritual attack, etc – we may focus on the dark clouds around us. Yet, God's Word confronts our soul with the Truth and Light once again. Like the radiant sun piercing through the clouds, the Light of His Word and the Truth of His Word penetrates our soul to stop despairing and hush the disturbance. There is a hope – a hope that is in the Eternal, omnipotent, unchangeable God. This same God is our help. He will lift our downcast faces up to see the radiance of His glory again. He is our salvation from our darkness. He is our defender and advocate. He is our strength and our joy. And amazingly by His grace, He is our God.

- Share some difficulties you have faced and how you placed your hope in God.
- What does "putting your hope in God" look like on a daily basis?
- In what ways does our eternal hope affect our attitude and decisions in this temporal world? Give examples of your changed attitude and decisions.

ROMANS 8:28-39

Is your soul troubled by the pandemic? Is your heart in disturbed by injustices? Is your spirit anxious by the economy? May we tell our souls to hope in God. Trust in the Sovereignty of God. Trust in the Goodness of God. Trust in the ability of God. Trust in the power of God. As we see the radical change of our lives by His gracious will, His effectual call, His powerful Word, His sufficient work, and His enduring seal of the Holy spirit – we can put our complete confidence in God. It is evident in our new nature. In our blood bought relationship with Him. Nothing will separate us from Him. Not any trouble. Not any trial. Not even our sin. Not even ourselves. We rest in His Sovereign goodness and grace – in this broken world until our eternal glory with Him.

- How does God's Sovereignty give you hope in suffering? In sickness? In a pandemic?

IV. CARE CONNECTION:

Spend time praying for:

- **God's light and truth to lead us to Him as our strength, our joy and our God**
- **Unity in the church**
- **All affected by COVID virus & illnesses**
- **Care needs / concerns**
- **Unbelieving friends & family**