

Let everything that has breath
praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!

Psalm 150:6

Praise Points

with Karen Holland

As the Deer Pants

It was 2003 and the song 'As the Deer Pants' was on my heart and lips. I was thinking about the deer and its thirst. At the time I had a thirst for worshipping in song and praying for the healing of others that my home church and family did not share. This thirst led me to go to another church an hour away from home. Somehow this thirst I had was filled there. I had just been there the night before and was questioning if this was the right direction for me. The motives of my heart, that's what I was really questioning.

This is when I read an article by Tim Knappenberger -- 'Today, God Spoke': <http://www.geocities.com/athens/forum/1327/weekend/godspoke.html>. Guess what this article was about; a thirst for worship that wasn't shared by his home church or family. He had asked the very same question of the Lord as I was asking. The Lord answered Tim by using the song 'As the Deer Pants' and the scripture from Psalm 42! The very same song I had been singing minutes before I started reading about Tim! A coincidence?!

The answer the Lord gave Tim, reassured him that he was on the right path. As I read further, it reassured me also. The Lord used the panting deer to reassure both of us, that it was not only OK to thirst for His presence and seek it out - but that He was pleased with this and rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:6). In 2003 this deeply touched my heart and filled me with peace, wonder and awe. It also made me wonder at this thirst I seem to have. Why is it that this thirst seems only to be satisfied or quenched for a time? The more I taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8); the more my heart craves the sweet unique taste. It seems I'm always getting thirsty and hungry for more.

Do you thirst or hunger after God in this way? Is the thirst or hunger there because you have tasted and seen that the Lord is good and know that He alone can satisfy it?

A. W. Tozer describes this taste or craving as a "piercing sweetness"... "God, I have tasted Thy goodness, and it has both satisfied me and made me thirsty for more. I am painfully conscious of my need for further grace. I am ashamed of my lack of desire. O God, the Triune God, I want to want Thee; I long to be filled with longing; I thirst to be made thirsty still."

Jonathan Edwards describes it as a longing to be satisfied. "Spiritual good is of a satisfying nature; and for that very reason, the soul that tastes, and knows its nature, will thirst after it, and a fullness of it, that it may be satisfied. And the more he experiences, and the more he knows this excellent, unparalleled, exquisite, and satisfying sweetness, the more earnestly he will hunger and thirst for more..."

But what about these scriptures?

Then Jesus declared, I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.

John 6:35

...but whoever drinks the water (living water) I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

John 4:14

Doesn't this promise that whoever eats the bread of life or drinks the living water will never thirst? How can one be satisfied and thirsty at the same time? Isn't this a contradiction?

The answer lies in the eternal part of these verses -- the bread of life -- the spring of water that wells up to eternal life. Spiritual hunger/ thirst for the bread and the living water will not truly be satisfied until perfection comes and we see Him face to face (1 Corinthians. 13:10, 12), only when we know as we are fully known will we be completely satisfied. The following Matt Redman song captures this tension between thirsting and being satisfied.

Intimacy

Words and music by Matt Redman
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Album: Heart of Worship

One thing my heart is set upon
One thing that I would ask
To know You, Lord, as close as one
Could hope to on this earth

Intimacy
O Jesus, intimacy
My treasure will be, O Jesus
Your intimacy

To look upon your beauty, Lord
Your glory and your heart
To know you close, and closer still
Each day upon this earth

Lord, since the day I saw you first,
My soul was satisfied;
And yet, because I see in part,
I'm searching, more to find.

The panting deer of Psalm 42 sheds light on this tension. The deer's thirst may be satisfied for a time by one drink, but it will soon return. As long as the deer is alive it will thirst for water. The deer's thirst is not satisfied by being removed. It's satisfied by having access to the streams of living water - so that whenever thirst returns - and it will again and again - the deer can drink.

The Song of Solomon contains a wonderful statement of unquenchable worship.

Place me like a seal over your heart, like a seal on your arm; for love is as strong as death, its jealousy unyielding as the grave. It burns like blazing fire, like a mighty flame. Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot wash it away. If one were to give all the wealth of his house for love, it would be utterly scorned.

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

What a wonderful place to be, a place where a fire for the worship of our Lord burns so bright that nothing can extinguish it. Even the mightiest rivers of opposition can not put it out or wash it away.

Charles Spurgeon sees this craving as a sign of growth. "When a man pants after God, it is a secret life within which makes him do it: he would not long after God by nature. No man thirsts for God while he is left in his carnal [i.e., unconverted] state. The unrenewed man pants after anything sooner than God: . . . It proves a renewed nature when you long after God; it is a work of grace in your soul, and you may be thankful for it."

Paul also had this desire for more of the Lord Jesus Christ. He placed knowing Christ Jesus above all else. Philippians 3:8-9 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the

surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ-the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Are you thirsty or hungry for the living God today? Do you find your worship time or devotion time so sweet that you crave more? Come drink, taste and see that the Lord is good. Do this again and again, through this process the Lord will draw you closer and closer and you will continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and forever! Amen. (1 Peter 3:18).

Lord help each heart taste and see the sweetness of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we taste and see that you are good, use our hunger and thirst for more of you, to continually increase our growth in Christ. Help us to know you more. Glory be to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ both now and forever more! Amen.

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalm 42:1-2

As The Deer

Words and music by Martin Nystrom
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As the deer pants for the water
So my soul longs after Thee
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship Thee

You alone are my strength, my shield
To You alone may my spirit yield
You alone are my hearts desire
And I long to worship Thee

You're my friend and You are my brother
Even though You are a King
I love You more than any other
So much more than anything

I want You more than gold or silver
Only You can satisfy
You alone are the real joy-giver
And the apple of my eye

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

Psalm 63:1-5