



Songs in the Night Psalm 61

Are You Happy, Is Your Family Happy? Do You Need Help?

There is a super model whose pictures are splashed all over the internet. Her posts garner millions of views and have made her fabulously wealthy. She astonished the world recently by posting pictures of herself weeping without make-up, without a hint of photographic magical touch-ups. The Instagram story that she attached to the pictures described the deep depression she admits she experiences nearly every day. No amount of success or popularity alleviates the deep pain she suffers, and it seems that mental health support has not worked. We now speak of this sort of brokenness of the soul as a mental disease as if it is nearly entirely a mechanical problem, a short circuiting of the brain that can only really be fixed by chemicals under the care of medical professionals. Yet is that true? Is what we have here and in so many others, a problem with a machine not working right or are we far more than machines, are we what Genesis calls, a "living soul"? Are we mostly, if not entirely in need of spiritual healing and an infusion of God in us? You may disagree with me, but I am convinced that the issue is much more the latter than the former, that what we face is a great crisis of hundreds of millions, if not billions of people suffering from empty hearts needing God to fill them with supernatural joy and hope.

I recently read of a very popular singer who was a star as a child. He suffered greatly from unhappiness and hoped to get rid of his misery by using chemicals to alleviate his psychological pain. He became addicted to opioids and other drugs and it was only after he put his hope in Christ for salvation that he got rid of the drugs and gained healthy and contented joy. The songwriter who composed Psalm 61 in the Bible provides us with insight in his own condition. Could it be yours too...or maybe the way it is for those you love? **Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings.** (Psalm 61:1-4 NIV)

Did you catch what the songwriter felt? Do you grasp his inner angst? **I call as my heart grows faint...**He's hurting inside and psychological pain can lead many to alcohol abuse, depression, dysfunctional immoral relationships, to work like a maniac to feel good about themselves or live for the weekend when they can "get away from it all". Pay close attention to this carefully worded comment the songwriter made. **From the ends of the earth I call to you...** At the time, most of those who were Jewish believed Jerusalem was the center of the world spiritually. The Temple was there and so were the most brilliant and godly leaders. The sacrifices were made in Jerusalem, and it was there that you found forgiveness and had your prayers answered. Jerusalem held a great mystical quality to many of the Jews. They were afraid that if they got too far from Jerusalem, they might lose their relationship with God, lose contact with Him. It was as if Jerusalem was the router God used to stay up with His people and if you got too far away from it, you would lose your signal. The songwriter was voicing his fear that he was too far away from God to be heard. Many feel that way!

Jonah the prophet, when he did not want to go preach to the hated Assyrians because he was afraid they might be forgiven by the LORD, thought he could get away from God's calling by sailing toward Spain, hoping it would be far enough off to get out of God's reach. He quickly learned however, when the Lord sent a great storm that nearly swamped the ship he was on, that there is no part of the Universe where God is not found,

where He is not connected to you. The songwriter had the opposite concern. He was afraid he might be too far away from Jerusalem to be heard by God. And therein lies the great problem of most people in the world. They have quit thinking God is there, lost sight of Him and are unaware of Him, not knowing just what He can do for them and so they make a mess of their lives. Yet something inside you realizes it is not an empty heaven, that your hopes for God are not misguided. You may be open to the fact that God is there for you.

The songwriter makes this most interesting comment in talking directly to God. **I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I.** (Psalm 61: 2b NIV) There is within each person the subtle realization that I need something bigger than me, beyond me. That is why Ted Talks are so popular, self-help books are purchased everywhere, websites on wellness get huge numbers of hits, vitamin supplements are so widely used, and drug addiction recovery centers are packed. We know we need a rock that is higher than we are. Many however don't know who that rock is or have confidence in Him to make life right. There is a great spiritual crisis in our world now. Nearly everyone knows he or she needs help. What though is that high Rock? Where do I go to find it?

Before David was officially King of Israel, when He possessed the calling of God but was not yet governing the kingdom, he was along with several hundred others trying to avoid the King in power, Saul. David and his followers were considered enemies of the state and thus in grave danger of being destroyed by Saul's great army. They had decided to gain sanctuary within the borders of Philistia, the mortal enemy of Israel. When the Philistines went to war with Israel, several leaders of the Philistine army did not want David and his men with them, so they were sent back to the small town of Ziklag in rural Philistia where they had left their families. Imagine the horror David and his men experienced when they got home and found their families gone and their homes burned to the ground by marauding Amalekites. The men were distraught and so was David. **So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep.** (1 Samuel 30:4 NIV) The men wanted to murder David, their leader, because they blamed him for what had happened. We all have the tendency to be a bit irrational when we face great heartache and desperate times. David's soldiers were no different than us. The historical account indicates though that David went left when everyone else in the camp went right. **But David found strength in the Lord his God.** (1 Samuel 30:6b NIV)

The songwriter tells you to do the same thing. When things get rough. When it seems like there is no way out of your problem. When you have no answer. Go to the Rock that is higher than you. Go to God who has a plan, who knows what to do. The songwriter's response to his own problems, his panic moment was simple. He went to God. **Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer.** (Psalm 61:1 NIV) It worked out for David when he turned to God, and it will for you too. Sometimes we have to consider the examples from the past to firm up our faith as we go to Jesus for help. A father once came to Jesus in desperate straits. His son was doing terribly. Demons plagued him. **Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us."** (Mark 9: 21-22 NIV) Jesus was incredulous. He came back, "If you can?" said Jesus. **"Everything is possible for him who believes."** (Mark 9: 23 NIV) The father knew he struggled with faith but also realized that he needed a rock that was higher than him...he needed a Savior. **Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!"** (Mark 9: 24 NIV) It was then that Jesus cast the demons out of the boy and made him right within.

The Psalmist in his cry to God made this interesting comment. **For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.** (Psalm 61: 3 NIV) Perhaps your faith in God is limited, it has been weakened by some tough times and it is hard for you to see how God can help you now. Maybe, you need to go back in your life and remember how God has answered a prayer of yours before, how He has taken you through a tough time or two. Gather up what faith you have in Him, big or small, and go to the Rock who is higher than you. Take your depression to Him, your financial hardship to Him, your family crisis to Him, your addiction to Him, your health issue to Him and admit your lack of faith if that is the case and start again. Look to Him once more for help!