



Sermon Transcription • Psalm 63 (NIV)

Push Pause, Play Psalm 63

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[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]

So this is a psalm of David, and I'm gonna read that for you. So if you have your Bibles, you can grab them, turn to Psalm 63. We're gonna read it in its entirety. We're gonna focus most of our attention on the first six or so verses. But they all create impact. And I want you to take note as I read Psalm 63 here, the personal pronouns that's the "I's" and the "me's"—all those kind of things. So you see right away that this is an intentionally personal song that David wrote. And there's circumstances that surround that, but it is very important for us to listen and encourage us. So we're gonna hope that you'll gain lots from this.

So let's read this here, Psalm 63,

"You, God, are my God,
earnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched 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.
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

On my bed I remember you;
I think of you through the watches of the night.
Because you are my help,
I sing in the shadow of your wings.
I cling to you;
your right hand upholds me.



Those who want to kill me will be destroyed;
they will go down to the depths of the earth.
They will be given over to the sword
and become food for jackals.

But the king will rejoice in God;
all who swear by God will glory in him,
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.”

So just keep that right there, and we're gonna push through the next number of minutes here. There are four things that I want to share with you this morning. Four points that will drive out of Psalm 63:

1. Determine your reality.
2. Declare your allegiance.
3. Decision: choose God over everything and anything.
4. Delight in God.

Those are the four points that we're gonna leave you with today. So let's unpack those.

Well my home renovating skills have been on display and put to the test over the years and I'm sure many of you can identify with me. One would think and believe that improvement would be expected...I'm not so sure. I am a self proclaimed, passionate do-it-yourself-er...or Mennonite.

This winter I decided to spruce up the basement and one of the projects was to remove that ugly T-bar ceiling and replace it with drywall. The project always move along slowly and my son Cody was helping me with the drywall, it's kind of a two-man project there. And so as we ripped off the T-bar ceiling and began installing the new drywall, I noticed there was, in between the four joists, there was this one lonely flimsy out of place, useless copper pipe. I assumed it was a dead end pipe, with no real purpose. I tried to figure out where it came from, what it was doing, but it seemed absolutely useless. It needed to go. I moved it around, I slapped it, I dent it, I said, "This is gotta go." I grabbed my pipe cutter out of my tool box, and like a professional plumber, [motions to circle a pipe and tighten] I circled that pipe once, tightened it, circled it twice, tightened it one more time, circled it a third time...boom! Niagara falls in my face! Well...are you kidding me? I'm screaming, <baffled> "Wha—" —you know? And... do you know how many gallons of water goes through a half inch copper pipe? You know? *This* is some serious disposal right there. So I'm not only very, very wet, but I'm also in trouble. So what do you do, Ron when you're in trouble and your renovation skills have once again met the deepest of lows? You yell for help. And so I yelled, and the only one home, thank goodness was Cody, Nancy was nowhere to be found. Which usually happens when I renovate. I yelled for help, Cody comes running down. And as he's coming down the stairs, he's critiquing my renovation skills. As he grabs a large plastic, tote box to gather and attack this monsoon that's coming from our ceiling...that I had just created. So I now run for the shut off, the water shut off valve, which by the way is located in the farthest corner of the house and extremely hard to get. And may I point out here, to those of you who build houses—you construction people—why do you put those things in the



hardest to reach places and the most awkward places? Come on? Let's think about this...they should be near me, at all times. So anyway I run for that water shut off valve and get it shut off. And boy, oh boy was there a mess. What a mess. And again, I'm very thankful that Nancy is not home. And Cody and I used every towel that we had in the house to sop up that mess. And that...my folks is one of the stories of my renovation days.

The message is entitled: "Push Pause, Play Psalms." Aren't there moments in your life when you just wish you would've pushed paused before you did something, said something—all those kinds of things? Well you know what, this is a psalm that speaks right into that. This speaks right into push pause, and I don't know what your week is like, what it's been like, the phone calls that you've received, the messages that you've received, the conversations you've had—those that are good, those were not good—whether you're doing well or not doing so well. But there are moments in times, whether you're high and things are going well, or things are really bottom laid out for you right now, it's important to place—to push that pause button and look at Psalm 63. So that's where we want to go today. And that's what's gonna happen is, we push pause and we look at those four things that I mentioned.

[Determine Your Reality]

So the first point is: determine your reality. Determine your reality. We're in Psalm 63, where David pens a song that cries out to God from the wilderness of Judah. So the moment that you see that, you're gonna think, "Okay. What's David doing in the wilderness?" He's a king! It says that in verse 11 that he's a king. So, he's in the wilderness. Well there's a reason why he's in the wilderness. David now is a king without a home. He's a king without a throne. He's a king without a sanctuary. He's a king without his family. In fact his own son Absalom has rebelled against him and has chased him into the wilderness. It's all rebellion against David. The very things that he thought were his, are no longer his. It's all gone. He's somewhere in the desert of Judah. He cries out to God. He writes this psalm.

Psalm 63 is about a relationship; a loving, committed relationship with God. David used 17 personal pronouns here to emphasize his relationship with God. Biblical faith often requires us to journey into the wilderness doesn't it? And so what is your reality today? And that is a question that only you can ask, determine your reality. Where are you at with God? I can't tell you, I can maybe—many of you I know, many of you I don't know. But if we were to sit down and have a cup of coffee together and I say, "Tell me your reality of God. Tell me where you are at with God. Tell me where your heart is at." See that's an important question for us all today. That's an important question for us *all* here at *all* times. What is your reality? Where is and how is your heart today? This is the question for each of us as we go through these verses.

This is not unfamiliar territory throughout scripture, you all know. Even Jesus when he was asked by the Pharisees in Mark 12, "What is the most important commandment of all? Like what's the most important here?" Well Jesus had an answer in Mark 12:29,



“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’”

Now here’s his answer. Mark 12:30-31,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

Regardless folks, regardless, of what this last week looked like or what your reality actually is, whether it’s good or unfortunate, whether circumstances or by choice, David declares in Psalm 63:1, “You, God, are my God,” In spite of being in the wilderness, in spite of being absent from his throne, from his home, from his city, from his sanctuary, his words were, “You, God, are my God,” “You, God, are my God,”

Basically there are only two views that come into perspective when we determine our own reality. There is a horizontal view and there is a vertical view. the horizontal view or you can even say, “horizontal hope”. Like when everything is messed up and we all have lived in those worlds, just like when that water is gushing into my face and I’m saying, “Now what?” You determine your reality very very quickly. So whatever your reality is, wherever you are at right now, you have a choice: of a horizontal view, a horizontal hope, a horizontal awe; or a vertical hope, or a vertical awe. Like where am I turning? What is your first response when things are not maybe working out as they should. Or even when things are really going well, do we have a horizontal perspective or do we have a vertical perspective? A horizontal perspective means that I keep my eyes just on circumstances, means that I keep my eyes just on the things that are in front of me. Or that *I* am my way out. *I’ll* take care of this. *I* can deal with this. But there are moments when there is just you and God. And that’s what David had here. “You, God, are my God,”

So you need to define your own reality. Determine your reality with the idea that God loves you, and desires that you love him and return with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.

Again, how is your heart today? Who gets to ask that question to you? Who gets to kinda dig deep and say, “Hey how are you doing with God?” You know, that’s an important question isn’t it. You know we can come to church every weekend, we can be in community group, we can even serve, and we can give.. and we can do all those things. And yet, who really knows how my heart is doing? We do a phenomenal job, and I speak to myself, about hiding what’s really going on in my heart. And that’s the importance of doing psalms. Psalms is one of those that book that just says, “It’s all about my relationship with God.” And folks, you’re gonna need to know that’s exactly where we are today. So, how is your heart? Number one, you gotta determine your reality.



[Declare Your Allegiance]

Number two, declare your allegiance. You are my God—I'm in, God! You know, Psalm 63:1,

“[E]arnestly I seek you;
I thirst for you,
my whole being longs for you,
in a dry and parched land
where there is no water.”

Do you see that imagery that David is using here? Can you imagine being in a desert? Can you imagine being in a place where you know absolutely have no idea where the next meal is coming from? Where's that next drink of water? I mean, you're *parched*. You're parched. It's beyond just being thirsty. This is talking about, “I need to have it now. I need to have it now.” That's the imagery that David uses here. We live in North America, where you know, for many of us, we don't need to really look very far for the next meal, for a glass of water—for all of those things. We really don't. But I'm sure there's been moments in times in your life where you've been really, really thirsty; when you've been really, really hungry.

But this goes way beyond that to that, “I'm starving and thirsting for God and God alone.” And we kind of put that to the back burner at times. We don't emphasize that, because “Hey...I go to church. You know, I read my Bible. I crack it open every now and then and I—“Thirst. Hunger. Thirst. Hunger. You know, David didn't say, “Hey I want my throne back.” He didn't say, “I want my former way of living. I need servants. I need people to take care of me. I want my sanctuary back, you know. All of those back.” In spite of all that he had lost, he probably was sleeping on the ground. He's in the desert, he's on the run. He didn't ask for that. He says, “You God, are my God, earnestly I seek you; I thirst for you.” Not for the things of this world. Not for the things that I call “luxuries”. No, he says “I thirst for you”. And we can put a lot of good things instead of God. And David says, “No. This is where your emphasis needs to be. My whole being longs for you, in a dry and weary or parched land where there is no water.” That's what God wants.

You see, declare your allegiance. Allegiance is all about affection and addiction, filled with passion. And by the way, you know what, is there anything really good that happens without passion? Like, passionate about your marriage. Passionate about the person you love. Passion about that sport that you love to play. Passionate about that person that just you know—your family member that—all of those things, your job, all of these things. Maybe you don't have—but you know what I mean? Passion brings that. Passion allows us to grab a hold of that.

I'm somewhat of a passionate person at times. I get excited about things. And long before I knew Nancy, before we even dated, got engaged and finally married. I was and always will be, hear this, a Toronto Maple Leaf fan. I know that's news for many of you. But that is true. Surprise...Nancy. Been married 30 years. Thirty years and my wife is still in awe of my addiction and passion for those leaves.



We were married in October. And once the wedding was done, honeymoon is over, we're settling into our house in Richmond. I assumed that my wife who was born and raised in Toronto, praise be to God, would be totally supportive of my addiction. [pause] Not so much. Saturday night hockey was Hockey Night in Canada, for which many of you grow up watching and I still do and love it. And that...I thought, would be a marvellous addition and appreciation to our marriage was not so much. It was likely a couple months into our marriage that you know, I realized that Nancy did not share that same affection and allegiance.

And on one particular Saturday night, Hockey Night in Canada, Nancy was no longer at my side, cheering the leafs on. However, I pressed on in faithfulness. And on this particular Saturday, there was some unprecedented noise coming from the kitchen. And I picked this up, newly married, I thought, "There's something wrong here." Doors were being shut rather loudly, okay? Pots and pans were, they were making noise that I've never heard before, you know? There was.. stomping of the feet at times. And so... I pressed pause on the remote. And I walked into the kitchen and... saw to investigate this disturbance. And upon my arrival, Nancy blurts out, <loud> "Do they play every Saturday?" And I said something like this, "Honey just think about it... it's just like go to church on Sunday, we do it all the time." [audience laughs] That did not go over well, okay? The reasoning there somehow just kind of fell right off the map there, I had to backup after that.

But, what I'm saying is, I'm incredibly passionate. I'm not afraid of my allegiance. And I think in our world of faith, this is exactly what David is talking about. He says, "This is earnestly means that I seek you. Early and often." It's about priority. No one, get this, no one more than God wants you to grow spiritually. No one more than God wants you to grow spiritually. He is for you, 100%. 1 Peter 2:2,

"Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation,"

What an image. What an understanding that that is what exactly what God wants. He wants us to grow, to fall in love with the word of God. To fall in love with him more and more and more. Who owns your heart? Who owns your heart? Cause that's where your allegiance will be. Cause where your allegiance is that's where your heart is. What do you worship? What do we worship? Worship is, just doesn't happen here [motions to the room]. It's what we put our heart into. What are you passionate about? Where do you put your time? Where do you put your energy? Do you *know* God? We understand that in Matthew 7:21 that Jesus said,

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

It's not about the church we attend, it's not about the last name that is attached to us. Or the heritage of our family or any of that. It's what's going on in your heart and who does your heart belong to? That is the question. that is why David could unequivocally say, "You, God, are my God." That is allegiance. You understand then, that our relationship with God is more than just a ticket out of hell into heaven.



It's not just about checking things off the list. It's about who owns your heart? Where is your allegiance? Where is your affection? Where is your passion?

[Decision: Choose God Over Everything and Anything]

Number three, Decision: choose God over everything and anything. I love this. You know, when verse three when it says, Psalm 63:3,

“Because your love is better than life,”

Now rest on that. Because your love is better than life? Are you kidding me? Most of us have a very, very good here in North America. We worship time and we worship money. We do! We don't want to be told what to do, we want to have plenty of time. We don't like getting old. We like to plan for time away, we want to have enough money to do it. We do that kind of thing. Nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with that. But the understanding is, do we choose to love God more than anything and everything? This decision is based on seeking God. That I will gladly acknowledge that God—loving God is better than life. From here on end, every breath belongs to God. It's not a better marriage, it's not more money, it's not a better job, it's not my health, those are all good, those are all good. But whatever circumstance, whether it's good or bad, this is about having a legacy, a legacy folks, that is driven by putting Christ at the very centre of my life. *That's* where we're at. Paul said it in Philippians 1:21, he says,

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

He really struggled with this. He says, “Man it would be so good to die and be with Christ. But it also be good to be here with you, to make an impact.” And so I'm convinced that really what he is saying is, “I don't think you're really ready to live for Christ if you're not ready to *die* for Christ.” Real living is found in Luke 9:23,

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”

Like, who's watching us? Who's observing what we truly understand to be the most important part of our lives? Decisions are being made every day aren't they whether or not I follow Christ. What is more important than God's love? Nothing. Nothing. Your love God, is better than life. It's an incredible statement. Rabbi Harold Kushner said this: “Most people aren't afraid to die they are---they are to get to the end of their lives and discover that they have never really lived”. What a sad story that would be at the end of your life, to say, “I never never really lived.” Do you want to live? Do you want to truly live? Live like verse three of Psalm 63, “Because your love is better than life.” Always. Always.

Dan Poole was a youth worker in Cabrini Green in the inner city of Chicago. Where only gangs and very, very, very poor people lived. It was Chicago at the time that I was doing my master studies in



late 80's. It was the murder capital of America. Typically usually one murder per day in Chicago. So Dan Poole, this white boy, who grew up in suburban Chicago, decided that he would give his life to serving the Lord in Cabrini Green. So he worked with this Christian organization and he made it his job and his ministry to befriend young men who were in gangs. So Dan befriended this one Hispanic boy, part of a gang named Enrique. Enrique was about 15 years of age. Dan took to Enrique and Enrique took to Dan, even a number of his friends. So much so that Dan convinced Enrique to come to a Bible camp in Northern Wisconsin. Dan was pumped. Yet Enrique had never been outside Cabrini Green. So, for him to be at a lake and at a Bible camp...unbelievable. Wouldn't you know it, the spirit of God moved in Enrique's life and Enrique gave his life to the Lord. Dan was beside himself, he couldn't wait. This is what he had dreamed about, that somebody would come to know the Lord. Dan was pumped.

On the car ride home, back to Chicago however, Enrique became very quiet. Dan asked, "Well what's wrong, Enrique?"

After a moment of silence, Enrique said, "I'll need to run the gauntlet."

Dan said, "What do you mean, 'gauntlet'? What is that?"

"Well if you leave the gang, you only leave by death, or by running the gauntlet. Where the gang members will stand facing each other, holding bats and chains and whatever else they had, and you would run through the gauntlet and they would beat you within an inch of your life. In other words, you don't leave the gang. But now that I'm a Christian," Enrique says, "I need to leave the gang."

Dan said, "No way! No way! You're not doing that. You don't have to do that. That's not what this is about—" And all of a sudden Dan is backtracking, he says, "No! That's—I'll talk to them!!I'll talk to them!"

And Enrique said, "Nah... it's not gonna make any difference."

So Dan went with Enrique to the gang members, hoping that he could plead that Enrique would not have to go through the gauntlet. And as they arrive, then the gang was all there, and Enrique informed the gang leader that he had become a Christian and that he would no longer be part of the gang. The gang leader, "You know what happens...You'll have to do the gauntlet." And Enrique said, "Yes." Dan interrupted, "I'll—No, no, we can talk about this. He doesn't have to do this. This is a good thing—" Enrique said, "Dan, it doesn't matter." Dan interrupted one more time and says, "I will take his place. Let *me* go through the gauntlet." The gang leader smiled and said, "That would be great..." Probably wanted him to go through but he says, "No. This is Enrique."

Dan felt absolutely helpless and hopeless, the gang lined up. Bats, chains, knuckle-dusters, all of those things. Dan is sobbing, Enrique goes through. And they beat him and beat him, and beat him. After it was all over, the gang leaves, Dan runs over. Picks him up and takes him to his car, his head is almost twice the size of normal. He is broken bones, he is bleeding he is barely conscious. Takes him to the hospital, he places him on the gurney, as they're waiting, Dan is sobbing and saying, "I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry." he couldn't imagine the pain. Enrique musters up enough to say, "Dan, I'd do it again. Jesus loves me."



I go, Wow... Can you imagine? Can you imagine? That's allegiance, folks. That's the decision. That's saying, "I'm all in, God! I love you better than life." And chances are, you and I are not gonna run the gauntlet. But there may be gauntlets that you're running through right now. That you're wondering whether or not it's worth it to stay a Christian. Whether it's worth it to say, "it's all in a line." Whatever that means, that could be help, that could be relationships, that could be "I'm so confused. I don't know what's up. I don't know what's down. I don't know what's left..." All of those things put together and you can say, "God I've given up!" and David says, "You are my God. Your love is better than life." Your love is better than life, I'm all in God. That's the decision. That's the decision. Is it God first in all things? Cause the real question is, where is your heart? Cause that'll tell you where it is.

[Delight in God]

Lastly, delight in God. Because your love is better than life, my lips will praise you. Psalm 63:3-6,

"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.
I will be fully satisfied as with the richest of foods;
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.
On my bed...
I think of you through the watches of the night."

How is your sleep? How did you sleep last night? Because this is where we delight in God. This is where it is. My lips will praise you with remembrance, with reflection and rest. Worship is not a feeling, it is a presence, the presence of the living God. Often we are in the wilderness and that's where our wilderness turns into worship. Only God can do that. Only God can do that. Delighting just doesn't happen here in church. It happens in our homes, around the dinner tables, it happens in our living room, it happens on the job, it happens over the fence with the neighbour, it happens at the coffee shops, it happens when you're out with your friends, it happens whatever you're doing. It happens when you feel lonely, whether you're trapped, or whether you're insecure. It's when you don't even know what's going on. We go back to the one phrase: "You, God, are my God." Delight shows up at our actual worship time when we serve, when we're in community with each other.

You see, sometimes I see more discouragement, to be honest, than I see delight. Discouragement robs us of delight. In fact, I would say, discouragement often is somewhat of a cultural disease that we live in. We seem to be more prone to discouragement than anything else. Horizontal hope and awe versus a vertical hope and awe. Do you see where that tipping point is all the time? Howard Hendricks said this, "Discouragement is the anesthetic the devil uses on a person just before he reaches in and carves out your heart." Are you leaning towards discouragement or are you leaning towards delight? Discouragement would be a horizontal view, a vertical view brings us to delight in God regardless of the circumstances that we face.



Hebrews 11:6 says this,

“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.”

The summer of psalms is meant for us to seek him. So this week, perhaps you need to push pause, determine your reality, declare your allegiance, decision time: God over everything and anything—he’s better than life, and delight in him.

Let’s pray together. Father we are truly thankful this morning for the way that you have worked in our hearts and lives. You’ve drawn us to yourselves through your son Jesus Christ. We’re thankful for the life that he gave us through the life, death and the resurrection that we now have a personal relationship with you. And so I pray that Psalm 63 would be something that we would go back to this week, willingly, willingly. Whether things are going good or whether things are not so good. May we take to heart exactly all that you’ve given us. So thank you for each one here Lord, would you bless them, encourage them, may you draw them closer to you. May we live with impact and legacy to point others to Christ in all that we do. So thank you for all of this, in Christ’s name, Amen.