



**Sermons from St. Marks
United Church of Christ
New Albany, Indiana**



Yearning for God

Text: Psalm 42

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As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

Such words. The Psalmist is longing, is yearning for God. In those words, in these short verses, we find ourselves, like the Psalmist, yearning for God.

We live in a culture of yearning. Sometimes the yearning is misdirected.

I say that less critically than I do experientially. We often yearn for the wrong things in life.

We yearn for prosperity in this life. Books which advocate that a life of faith leads to a life of economic prosperity fly off the bookshelves. If you really have faith in God, you'll be very successful. If you haven't achieved the economic success you are longing for, you don't have enough faith. Plenty of churches are built on this premise and they are filled up each weekend.

We yearn for easy answers to complex problems. I used to teach a college ethics class and one student told me that my class gave her a headache. She was deadly serious. People had their thoughts, they had their convictions, and when they had to actually defend their thoughts and their convictions, rationally, and in depth, their eyes would glaze over. It was too complicated. Take note of the Presidential Campaign. Thus far, the biggest issues discussed are little issues and mostly nonsensical. People yearn for easy answers.

And people yearn for God. On their own terms, not on God's terms.

If you remember the movie, Crocodile Dundee, he is asked by a reporter about his religious faith. He states that he read the Bible once and saw that the apostles were all fishermen. He figured since he was a fisherman, he and Jesus were mates. It was a nice moment in the film, but it reflected something very true about most people. Most people like to deal with Jesus on their own terms as opposed to how Jesus really is. Many people have many perceptions about Jesus----and often those perceptions are put aside when they actually get around to reading a Gospel from start to finish. The real Jesus and the Jesus we want there to be, are often different.

There is also the concept of purpose. We all want God to have a clearly defined purpose in our lives. Tell us the plan and we shall follow it. It's often nicely put and easy. The problem is, of course, it eliminates the concept of choice and eliminates the thought that maybe God nudges us in a general direction and leaves a lot of it up to us.

The point is this. We often yearn for what we want as opposed to what we need or what is real.

Ultimately this becomes the point of the Psalm. If you keep reading, the Psalm begins asking the question. Where is God? Why does God seem so far away? Why is it that we yearn for God and find God to be difficult to find?

God demands things on God's terms, not our's.

God is a God of mystery and we need to embrace the mystery to take the next step.

Ultimately God is a God of leaps.