

July 12th 2026

WHEN MONDAY COMES

Faith for the Week Ahead

✿ Please take this home and use it during the week. ✿

Sunday worship is not meant to stay in the sanctuary.

Each week, When Monday Comes offers Scripture, prayers, reflections, and simple encouragement to help us carry faith into everyday life.

-  Read it with your morning coffee.
-  Use a prayer before bed.
-  Think about the weekly question.
-  Share a thought with someone else.
-  Let God speak in the ordinary places of life.

Faith is not only for Sunday morning.

Faith is for Monday decisions, Tuesday worries, Wednesday conversations, Thursday responsibilities, Friday weariness, Saturday hopes, and every step in between.

So please take this home, keep it nearby, and when Monday comes, remember:

*God is still with you.
Christ is still calling you.
The Spirit is still working in you.*

• United Presbyterian Church of Whitinsville •

Another View

When God Feels Far Away

Walter Brueggemann, a respected Old Testament teacher, helped people see that the Psalms speak to different seasons of life: settled seasons, painful seasons, and seasons when God helps us find our footing again.

He called these seasons orientation, disorientation, and reorientation. Psalm 42 and Psalm 88 are psalms of disorientation. These are the psalms for the seasons when life feels confusing, painful, unfair, or dark. They are not neat and polished prayers. They are honest prayers.

Psalm 42 begins with a deep longing for God: “As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.”

That sounds beautiful, but the writer is not sitting beside a peaceful stream having a quiet devotional moment. He’s looking for God. He misses God. He remembers a time when worship felt close, joyful, and alive, but now things feel different.

In plain language, Psalm 42 is what faith sounds like when God feels far away.

There are seasons when it can feel as if God has put up a sign that says, “Gone on vacation,” with no return date listed. We pray, but we do not see the answer yet. We serve, but things still feel hard. We keep showing up, but other people do not always understand why.

The writer of Psalm 42 hears people asking, “Where is your God?”

That question is still around today.

Sometimes people say, “Why do you give so much time to the church?”

“Why do you give your money there?”

“Why keep serving when people may take advantage of you?”

“Why trust a God you cannot see?”

“God has nothing to do with church anyway.”

Those words can wear on a person. They can make us tired. They can make us wonder if we are foolish for trying to be faithful.

But maybe the real issue in Psalm 42 is even deeper than the questions people ask from the outside. Maybe the real issue is what is happening inside the writer's soul.

His soul is hurting. His soul is thirsty. His soul is losing hope.

He even talks to his own soul: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me?" Then he tells his soul where to look: "Hope in God."

That is something we all have to learn how to do.

Sometimes the soul hurts because life is hard. Sometimes the soul hurts because grief is heavy. Sometimes the soul hurts because we are tired, afraid, lonely, or disappointed. And sometimes the soul hurts even when life looks successful from the outside.

I remember a younger family member who seemed to have so much going for him. He was successful, capable, and had many of the things people spend their lives chasing. Yet he still asked, "Is this all there is to life?" That question matters.

Jesus told a story in Luke 12 about a man who had plenty stored up. The man said to himself, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "This night your soul is required of you."

That story reminds us that a full barn does not always mean a full soul. A full calendar does not always mean a full life. Success, comfort, and possessions can be good gifts, but they cannot carry the weight of our deepest hope.

Psalm 42 points us back to the One who can.

When the soul is thirsty, it needs more than distraction.
When the soul is weary, it needs more than advice.
When the soul is losing hope, it needs more than "just stay busy."

The soul needs God.

That is why the psalmist keeps praying. That is why he keeps remembering. That is why he keeps saying, "Hope in God." He is not pretending life is easy. He is reminding his soul where life is found.

Psalm 88 takes us even deeper. It may be one of the hardest psalms in the Bible because it does not end with a happy conclusion. The writer cries out to God from the darkness, and by the end of the psalm, he is still in the darkness. One translation ends with the painful line, “darkness is my closest friend.”

That is not the kind of verse we usually put on a refrigerator magnet.

Psalm 88 even gives us permission to admit that, at least for a time, it may feel as though darkness has had the last word. The psalm does not rush us to a cheerful ending. It does not tie everything up neatly. But the fact that the writer is still praying means the darkness has not silenced him completely. Even when hope feels hidden, the prayer is still being brought before God.

But maybe that is exactly why Psalm 88 matters. There are people who know what that feels like. There are people who are grieving, afraid, depressed, lonely, or overwhelmed, and they do not know how to say it. They may not even know they are allowed to say it to God.

Psalm 88 gives people words when they do not have words. It gives voice to pain. The church word for this is lament.

But in everyday language, ***lament is what we do when “I’m fine” is not true anymore.*** Lament is taking the hurt straight to God instead of pretending we are fine, stuffing it down, or letting it eat us alive. Lament is honest pain brought to God.

That matters because pain must go somewhere. Pain and hurt do not just disappear when we ignore it. If we do not have a healthy way to deal with it, we can end up carrying it alone, letting it build up inside us. It can turn inward, it can isolate us, it can make us reach for things that numb us for a while but harm us in the long run. It can make us believe we are alone when we are not.

Psalm 42 and Psalm 88 remind us that we can bring our pain to God. We can bring Him our grief, fear, anger, confusion, disappointment, depression, and despair. We do not have to clean it up first. We do not have to make it sound churchy. We do not have to pretend we are stronger than we are.

That is important because faith does not always sound the same in every season.

Some weeks faith sounds like praise.
Some weeks faith sounds like tears.
Some weeks faith sounds like, “Lord, I am still here, and I am still calling out to you.” That is still faith.

Psalms 42 and Psalm 88 teach us how to lament in real life.

First, reach for God. Even when we do not understand what is happening, we can still say, “Lord, I need You near.” Psalm 42 says the soul longs for God like a deer longs for water. That is not fancy language. That is thirst. That is need. That is a person saying, “God, I cannot make it without You.”

Second, come as someone who needs help. We do not have to have all the answers. We do not have to be strong enough to fix everything. Prayer begins when we stop pretending we can carry it all by ourselves.

Third, tell the truth. If you are tired, say so. If you feel forgotten, say so. If you are angry, confused, or worn down, bring that to God. God is not frightened by honest prayer.

Fourth, keep hope alive. Hope does not mean pretending everything is fine. Hope means trusting that the darkness does not get the final word. Psalm 42 repeats this line: “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.”

That is not denial. That is faith talking back to despair. And there is one way we help our souls hold on to hope: we remember.

When the writer of Psalm 42 feels overwhelmed, he remembers. He remembers worship. He remembers the songs. He remembers walking with others to the house of God. He remembers that his present pain is not the whole story. That is something we can do too.

I remember one of our church members saying they sit in the same pew because it reminds her of sitting there with her family.

That may seem like a small thing, but I think it says something important. Sometimes a place helps the soul remember. A pew, a hymn, a prayer, a familiar window, or a certain place in the sanctuary can remind us of times when God held us together, brought us through, or surrounded us with people we loved.

Remembering does not mean we are trying to live in the past. It means we are letting the past remind us that God was faithful then, and God is still faithful now.

When life feels disoriented, remember one time God helped you. You don't need to remember every time or the whole list, just once.

Remember one prayer that was answered.

Remember one person God sent at the right time.

Remember one door that opened.

Remember one hard season you thought you would never get through, but somehow, by the grace of God, you did.

Remembering does not make the pain disappear. But it can help the soul breathe again, and when the soul starts to breathe again, we may also begin to see what we have been counting on to get us through.

It is easy to count on the things we can see - money, success, good planning, hard work, reputation, or the approval of others. Those things may help for a while, and some of them can be good gifts. But they cannot heal a hurting soul. They cannot give lasting peace. And when God says, "your soul is required of you," none of those things can stand in our place.

A full barn does not always mean a full soul.

A full calendar does not always mean a full life.

A good reputation does not always mean a rested heart.

That is why Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." He does not just offer rest for our bodies. He offers rest for our souls.

Christ is the One who can shepherd the soul. By His saving grace, He leads us when we are tired, steadies us when we are afraid, forgives us when we fall, and gives us hope when we cannot find it anywhere else.

And when someone around us is living through a hard season, we can help them carry it. We do not have to fix everything. We do not have to explain why everything happened. We do not have to hand them quick answers or tell them to "just have more faith." Sometimes the most faithful thing we can do is sit with them, listen to them, pray with them, and remind them they are not alone.

Jesus once said that even giving someone a cup of cold water in His name matters to God. In hard seasons, that “cup of cold water” may look like a phone call. It may look like a meal. It may look like a ride to an appointment. It may look like sitting in silence with someone who has no words left. It may look like saying, “I am here, and I am not going anywhere.”

Sometimes God helps a hurting soul through another person who is willing to stay close.

The Bible says that God works all things together for good for those who love Him. That does not mean everything that happens is good. Some things are not good. Some things hurt. Some things are unfair. Some things break our hearts.

But it does mean God can work with pieces we cannot understand yet.

A stained-glass window does not look finished when it is scattered across the workbench. At that point, it may look like broken pieces, odd shapes, sharp edges, and strips of lead. One piece may seem too small. Another may seem too dark. Another may not look like it belongs anywhere.

But the artist sees something the rest of us cannot see yet.

Sometimes life feels like that. We see the broken pieces. God sees what can still be made. That does not mean the broken pieces do not hurt. Broken glass can cut. Hard seasons can wound us. Psalm 88 is honest about that. But the story may not be finished just because we cannot see the pattern yet.

So, when people question your faith, keep trusting God.
When people do not understand why you serve, keep serving.
When people wonder why you give your time, your money, your energy, and your heart to God’s work, remember what God has already done in your life.

When your soul is tired, bring it to God. When your hope feels thin, bring it to God. When all you can say is, “Lord, I am still here,” bring that to God too.

Keep praying. Keep remembering. Keep hoping. Keep walking forward. And when you cannot yet see the finished picture, trust the One who is still holding the pieces.

Walking It Out

When Your Soul Feels Tired

Psalm 42 and Psalm 88 remind us that faith does not mean pretending everything is fine. Faith means we can bring our real life to God, even when our real life feels heavy. This week, try walking it out in a few simple ways.

Reach for God

Psalm 42 says the soul longs for God like a deer longs for water. That is not fancy language. That is thirst. That is need. When you do not know what else to say, try this simple prayer: “Lord, I need You near.”

Come as someone who needs help

You do not have to have all the answers. You do not have to be strong enough to fix everything. Prayer begins when we stop pretending we can carry it all by ourselves. This week, name one burden you need to hand to God.

Tell God the truth

If you are tired, say so. If you feel forgotten, say so. If you are angry, confused, disappointed, or worn down, bring that to God. Do not worry about making your prayer sound polished. Honest prayer is still prayer.

Keep hope alive

Hope does not mean pretending everything is fine. Hope means trusting that the darkness does not get the final word. Psalm 42 says, “Hope in God; for I shall again praise him.” This week, say that verse slowly when your heart feels heavy.

Remember one grace

Think of one time God helped you, carried you, guided you, or sent someone to walk beside you. Write it down if you can.

Remembering does not make the pain disappear, but it can help the soul breathe again.

Do not walk alone

If you are going through a hard season, reach out to someone safe. Call a friend. Ask someone to pray. Sit with someone who will listen. God often helps us through people who are willing to stay close.

Offer a cup of cold water

Someone around you may be carrying pain you cannot see. A cup of cold water may look like a phone call, a meal, a note, a ride, or a few minutes of listening. You do not have to fix everything. Sometimes love simply says, “I am here.”

This week, when your soul feels tired, do not hide it from God. Bring it to Him. And when someone else’s soul feels tired, do not rush past them. Stay near. Listen well. Offer what you can. Small acts of faithfulness can help hope keep breathing.

Faith Between Sundays **Practicing REST and CUP**

Monday — Reach for God— Psalm 42:1

Scripture: *“As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.”*

Try this: Begin the day with one simple prayer: “Lord, I need You near.” You do not have to say anything fancy. Just reach for God honestly.

Tuesday — Empty Your Hands— Matthew 11:28

Scripture: *“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”*

Try this: Name one burden you have been trying to carry by yourself. In prayer, picture yourself placing it into God’s hands.

Wednesday — Say What Is True— Psalm 88:1

Scripture: *“O Lord, God of my salvation, when, at night, I cry out in your presence...”*

Try this: Tell God the truth about how you are doing. If you are tired, say so. If you are worried, say so. If you are grateful, say so. Honest prayer is still prayer.

Thursday — Trust Hope— Psalm 42:5

Scripture: “Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God.”

Try this: When your thoughts feel heavy, repeat this slowly: “Hope in God.” Let it be a small reminder that the darkness does not get the final word.

Friday — Count One Grace— Psalm 42:4

Scripture: *“I remember these things, as I pour out my soul.”*

Try this: Write down one time God helped you, carried you, guided you, or sent someone to walk beside you. Let that memory remind you that God has been faithful before.

Saturday — Use the Help of Others— Galatians 6:2

Scripture: *“Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Try this: Reach out to one safe person. Ask for prayer, share honestly, or simply spend time with someone who helps you remember you are not alone.

Sunday — Pour Out a Cup of Kindness— Matthew 10:42

Scripture: *“Whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones... truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.”*

Try this: Offer someone a “cup of cold water” this week. It may be a phone call, a meal, a note, a ride, a listening ear, or a kind word at the right time.

Prayers for the Week

Walking with God One Step at a Time

Monday — Reach for God

Lord, when my soul feels dry and tired, help me reach for You. When I do not know what to say, let my prayer be simple: “Lord, I need You near.” Remind me that I do not have to understand everything before I come to You. Amen.

Tuesday — Empty Your Hands

Lord, I confess that I often try to carry too much by myself. I hold on to worries, responsibilities, fears, and questions that are too heavy for me. Help me open my hands and trust You with what I cannot fix. Give rest to my soul. Amen.

Wednesday — Say What Is True

Lord, teach me to pray honestly. When I am tired, help me say so. When I am afraid, help me say so. When I feel forgotten, confused, angry, or worn down, help me bring that truth to You instead of hiding it. Thank You for receiving honest prayers. Amen.

Thursday — Trust Hope

Lord, when darkness feels close, help me remember that darkness does not get the final word. Teach my soul to hope in You. Even when I cannot see the whole path, help me trust that You are still with me and still at work. Amen.

Friday — Count One Grace

Lord, help me remember one way You have helped me before. Bring to mind a prayer answered, a door opened, a person sent, or a hard season You carried me through. Let that memory strengthen my hope today. Amen.

Saturday — Use the Help of Others

Lord, remind me that I do not have to walk alone. Give me the courage to reach out when I need prayer, help, or a listening ear. And help me be the kind of person others can safely turn to when their souls are tired. Amen.

Sunday — Pour Out a Cup of Kindness

Lord, show me someone who needs a cup of cold water in Your name. Help me offer kindness, patience, encouragement, welcome, forgiveness, or time. Use even my small acts of love to remind someone that they are not alone. Amen.

A Prayer for the Week

Lord, when my soul feels tired, help me remember to **REST**.

R — Reach for You. When I do not know what to say, help me pray, “Lord, I need You near.”

E — Empty my hands. Help me stop pretending I can carry everything by myself. Teach me to come to You as someone who needs help.

S — Say what is true. Give me the courage to tell You the truth about what I am feeling: my fear, my sadness, my anger, my confusion, and my weariness.

T — Trust hope. When life feels dark, help me remember that darkness does not get the final word. Teach my soul to say, “Hope in God.”

And Lord, help me remember the **CUP**.

C — Count one grace. Help me remember one way You have helped me, carried me, guided me, or sent someone to walk beside me.

U — Use the help of others. Remind me that I do not have to walk alone. Give me the humility to reach out, ask for prayer, and let someone sit with me when life is hard.

P — Pour out a cup of kindness. Show me someone this week who needs a cup of cold water in Your name: a phone call, a meal, a note, a ride, a listening ear, or a quiet reminder that they are not alone.

Lord, when my soul is tired, help me **REST** in You, and when someone else’s soul is tired, help me offer the **CUP** I can give.
Amen

From the Pew

Surrounded by Crabs When Confidence Gets Ahead of Wisdom

I was about 13 years old when I went on a dive trip to Andros Island.

It was my first real job, working for a dive shop. The deal was simple: work hard all summer, and I could go along on trips like this one. So there I was, away from my parents for the first time, surrounded by about twenty paying customers, and determined to prove I belonged.

I did whatever needed to be done. Filling SCUBA tanks. Hauling gear. Cleaning equipment. Setting boats up for dives. Helping with dinner at night. I was not just along for the trip. I was there to earn my place.

Andros itself was incredible. But there was one thing about the island I had never seen before. Crabs. Lots of crabs.

The locals called it “The Journey to the Salt.” Every year, thousands of land crabs would move inland to the coast and back again. Big white and black crabs were everywhere. You did not have to look for them. You could hear them moving through the brush.

And they were good to eat. Locals would fill burlap bags with crabs and sell them for five dollars. They had it down to a system. A quick tap on the head with a stick to stun the crab, and into the bag it went.

Safe. Efficient. No risk. Because those claws were not for decoration. If one of those crabs got hold of your finger, you were going to remember it. Maybe for the rest of your life.

So naturally, I decided I was not paying five dollars. Not when the crabs were crawling all over the place. “I’ll catch them myself,” I told one of the locals. He smiled.

“Go for it, man,” he said. “Just don’t let them get you with those pinchers. You could lose a finger.” I figured he was just trying to scare me. After all, I was not just some kid.

At least, that is what I thought. Truth is, I had already been doing a little bragging. I made sure he knew I was thirteen and already a

SCUBA diver. Looking back, that probably made the whole situation even more entertaining for him.

He even handed me a burlap bag to put all the crabs I was going to catch in, Looking back, that should have been my first clue.

I had watched how they did it. Small stick. Quick hit. Into the bag. Easy. In my mind, I was going to come walking back with a bag full of crabs and say, “Look what I caught for dinner.”

I was going to be the great crab hunter of Andros Island. Everyone would look at that bag and think, “Wow, that kid is really something.”

As I have learned many times in life, whenever I try too hard to be impressive, something bad usually happens. And on that day, “something bad” had claws.

So, I found a stick and walked up to the first crab. I tapped it on the head. Nothing. The crab backed up, raised its claws, and looked at me like, “What exactly are you trying to accomplish?”

So, I hit it again. Still nothing.
Now I’m thinking, okay, maybe I just need to hit it harder.
So, I took a bigger swing. Same result.
Except this time, the crab grabbed my stick. And would not let go.

Now the other claw looked like it was ready for me.

So, I did what any respectable person would do. I let go of the stick and stepped back. The crab just stood there for a second, holding my stick. Then it started walking away.
With my stick.

At that point, I realized two things.
First, I had just lost a fight with a crab.
Second, I now had an audience.
Because while all this was happening, the local who gave me the bag had stopped working and called his friends over.
And they were enjoying this.

For all I know, that crab is still telling his children the story of how he snatched the stick away from a boy from Kansas and sent him running like a scared cat.

In my defense, I was from Kansas, about as far away from the ocean as you can get. I knew exactly nothing about catching crabs.

But things were about to get worse. While I was focused on that one crab, I had not noticed what was happening around me.

I was surrounded. Crabs everywhere.
Between me and where I needed to go. No clear path out.
And suddenly I was not trying to prove anything anymore. I was just trying not to get hurt. So, I yelled back to the local man, “What should I do? How do I get out of here?”

He looked at me and said, in that calm Bahamian tone, “Well man, looks like you have a problem. Maybe you should have paid the five dollars.”

That is when I made a strategic decision. I ran.
Jumping over crabs. Dodging sideways.
Probably setting a personal record in the 50-yard dash.

By the time I got back, I was out of breath, shaken, and being laughed at by just about everyone watching.

I did not even have the bag anymore. I dropped it somewhere in my retreat. For all I know, the crabs took that too.

And as for dinner?
I suddenly had no interest in crab at all.
Truth is, I did not even like crab.
I was not out there because I wanted crab for dinner.
I was out there because I wanted to impress people.

Later, I found out something I did not know at the time. You do not just hit the crab anywhere. There is a specific spot on the head you have to hit. The local knew it. He could have told me.

But I also could have asked more questions. I could have listened better. I could have admitted that maybe, just maybe, a thirteen-year-old from out of town did not know everything there was to know about catching land crabs on Andros Island.

Looking back now, that moment was not really about crabs.
It was about wanting to look impressive.
I walked into that situation thinking I had it handled. I had watched someone else do it. I had a stick. I had a bag. I had a plan.

What I did not have was enough humility to listen. I had already decided I was going to be the great crab hunter, and once I get impressive in my own mind, trouble is usually nearby. And then, before I knew it, I was surrounded by crabs and beginning to realize I might not make it back with all ten fingers.

Life can feel like that sometimes. Not always because we did something foolish. Sometimes grief surrounds us. Sometimes fear surrounds us. Sometimes trouble seems to come from every direction at once. Sometimes we look around and realize, “I do not know how to get out of this by myself.”

That is a hard thing to admit. But it can also be the beginning of wisdom.

Psalms 42 and Psalm 88 remind us that we do not have to pretend we are stronger than we are. We can call out to God from the middle of the trouble. We can tell the truth. We can ask for help. We can listen to people who have walked the road before us.

There is no shame in needing help. There is no shame in saying, “I am surrounded, and I do not know what to do.”

Sometimes God helps us through prayer. Sometimes God helps us through Scripture. Sometimes God helps us through another person who knows where to step, what to avoid, and when to say, “Maybe next time, just pay the five dollars.”

Eventually, some of the people on the trip paid the five dollars and brought back full bags of crabs. And I hate to admit it, but I felt just a little vindicated when we put them in the pot to cook.

Before I left, that same local came over to me. He smiled and said, “You funny, man. You gave it a good. Next time, you should pay the five dollars.” Then he added, “And I hope you a better diver than crab hunter.” Fair enough.

Even now, at close to 71 years of age, I can still remember running and jumping over those crabs like it was yesterday. It is a memory I would never want to repeat, but one I would never want to forget.

And for the record, I still do not like crab.

Wisdom from Bird Dog

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do

This week, Bird Dog has been trying to understand my sister's old dog Lilley.



The dog is eighteen years old. She cannot see. She cannot hear. She has no teeth and wears diapers.

Mostly, she just stays in her little bed. She is a sweet dog, but she is long past the stage of chasing toys, playing tug of war, or joining Bird in whatever adventure Bird thinks is necessary at the moment.

Bird did not quite know what to make of this. At first, Bird looked confused. Here was another dog, but this dog did not want to play. She did not respond to invitations. She did not seem interested in Bird's usual charm, energy, or enthusiasm. Bird seemed bewildered, as if she were asking, "What am I supposed to do with this?"

Then Bird did something simple. She adjusted.

Instead of trying harder to make the old dog play, Bird lowered her expectations. She slowed herself down. She stopped insisting that the moment had to happen on Bird's terms.

And then she sat beside her. She did not fix anything. She did not make the old dog young again. She did not understand all that was happening. She just stayed close. That may be one of the quietest forms of love.

I should also say that caring for an old dog is not all sweetness and wisdom. Since she has no teeth, I have to make her something to eat that can only be described as a very smelly gruel. Think *Little Orphan Annie*, only with less singing and more odor.

Bird, who I believe would eat almost anything, including nuclear waste, will not touch it. That should tell you something. Then treat time came.

Bird usually jumps up from her bed and heads straight to the cabinet where the treats are kept. She knows the routine. Treats appear, Bird reports for duty.

But the old dog did not move. She just stayed in her bed and waited. She could not see or hear well enough to join the excitement, so I brought the treat to her.

Bird watched this happen a few times. Then Bird learned a new trick. The old saying is that you cannot teach an old dog new tricks, but in this case, the old dog taught the young dog one. Bird apparently decided, “Why am I getting out of bed if room service is available?”

So now, when treat time comes, I bring treats to both of them. Sometimes you do not have to run around to receive grace. Sometimes the blessing comes to you.

That sounds a little like the Psalms. They often remind us that God does not wait until we can see the path, hear the instructions, or get ourselves moving before grace arrives. Sometimes God meets us right where we are.

And yes, somehow, I became the waiter in the dog retirement home dining room. I am also hoping Bird does not decide diapers are the next great convenience she should adopt. There are some lessons I do not need her to learn.

Sometimes when we are around older adults, we approach the experience with the wrong expectations. Younger people may think older people are set in their ways. Older people may think younger people are impatient or do not value their experience. Before long, both sides can miss the gift that is right in front of them.

Of course, some situations are hard. Illness, memory loss, pain, grief, and the limits of aging can make relationships and caregiving challenging. Love does not pretend that everything is easy.

But Bird may be teaching us something. Sometimes the younger one needs to slow down. Sometimes we need to stop trying to make someone else meet us at our speed. Sometimes we need to sit, listen, and be present. And if we are lucky, we might learn something.

Bird could not get the old dog to play. So, she kept watch instead.

Maybe that is what love does when it does not know what else to do.

The People Behind the Psalms

I have to admit something. I do not always understand the Psalms.

That may sound strange, because every time you turn around somebody is quoting something from the Psalms. People find comfort there. They memorize them. They frame them. They put them on bookmarks. Meanwhile, I am sometimes still trying to figure out what exactly is going on.

Part of the problem may be that I do not really “do” music. Many of the Psalms are songs or poems, and poems do not always move in straight lines. They can jump from sorrow to hope, from fear to praise, from anger to trust, sometimes faster than my mind can follow. They are not written like an instruction manual, a fire report, or an engineering diagram.

Sometimes reading the Psalms reminds me of taking a hydrology class. As far as I am concerned, hydrology is voodoo engineering. I know it matters. I know smart people understand it. I also know I may need someone to walk me through it slowly.

That is why it helps to remember that the Psalms came from real people and real worshipping communities.

Most of us probably think of David when we think about the Psalms. That makes sense. David wrote many of them, and he had the full songwriter package: shepherd, king, warrior, sinner, poet, and occasional harp player.

But David was not the only voice in Israel’s songbook.

Some psalms are connected to a man named Asaph. Others are connected to the sons of Korah. Those names may not exactly make you sit up and say, “Now this is getting exciting,” but stay with me. Their stories are more interesting than they first sound.

Asaph was one of Israel’s worship leaders. Today we might call him the music director, choir leader, praise band coordinator, and possibly the person who had to remind everyone where the extra music stands were kept. He and his family helped lead God’s people in worship.

The Psalms connected to Asaph do not always sound cheerful. They ask hard questions. Why do bad people seem to get ahead? Why does the world feel unfair? Where is God when everything seems upside down? In other words, Asaph did not just write songs for the easy Sundays.

Then there are the sons of Korah.

Korah himself had a rough family history. In the book of Numbers, Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron. It did not go well. That is putting it mildly. If your family had that story in the background, you might be tempted not to bring it up at Thanksgiving.

But Korah's family line did not disappear. Later, his descendants became part of Israel's worship life. Some of the psalms we still read today are connected to the sons of Korah.

That is a beautiful reminder.

A family story does not have to end with its worst chapter. God can bring songs out of places marked by failure. God can use people with complicated histories. God can take what looks like a spiritual family disaster and, generations later, bring worship from it.

Psalms 42, connected to the sons of Korah, begins with longing: "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God." Psalm 88, also connected to the sons of Korah, is one of the darkest prayers in the Bible. It does not wrap everything up with a neat bow.

And maybe that is the point.

The Psalms are not always easy to understand because life is not always easy to understand. Sometimes faith sings. Sometimes faith cries. Sometimes faith asks questions. Sometimes faith just keeps showing up.

The Psalms are not only for people who have everything figured out. They are for people who are thirsty, tired, confused, grieving, hopeful, angry, faithful, and barely hanging on. They are for people who do not always know the tune but still want to be near God.

In other words, there is room in the songbook for us too.