



*Third Day Living*  
**Beyond Depression**  
**Biblical Text: Psalm 42:1-6a**

Dr. Michael F. Gardner, Senior Pastor  
 Old Mission United Methodist Church

(\* - change slide on screens)

\* I live on the upside of life, I do. I usually maintain a positive attitude. I am the guy who finds the blessing in every challenge, the silver lining in every cloud, the promise of sunshine in every rain. My mother taught me that.

In her house there was no sleeping in, no moping around. I can still hear her voice, all 5'2" of her, shaking her finger, saying up to my teenage 6'5" self: ***"Quit feeling sorry for yourself! Shake it off! Tomorrow is another day."***

Like Longfellow's poem says: \* ***"Into each life some rain must fall, Some days must be dark and dreary."***<sup>1</sup> And on rare days, the rain falls, and the fog descends. Sometimes mom's advice works out!

On nights like Friday night and yesterday, when the game gets called because of rain, \* I can shake it off and remember that like in baseball, life is a long season. **But there are other days.** On those days, no amount of the power of *"positive thinking"* can chase away the blues.

On those days, I need the message of this series: \* ***"The worst thing is never the last thing!"*** Dreary days will come. I wish it weren't so, but it is. So, we might as well admit it. The weather this weekend was a reminder.\*

Frederick Buechner's writings have given hope to thousands. But he says he struggles with what he calls, ***"the fog."*** His book, Telling Secrets, says the fog first rolled in when he was a child, with his father's suicide.<sup>2</sup>

Craig Barnes, one of my favorite preachers, talks about his own struggle with depression as: ***"descending into the fog of unanswered questions."***<sup>3</sup>

One of the things I admire the most about these Christian leaders is their courage to be honest about a topic that is hard for Christians to talk about.

**And here's the thing. Being honest about depression isn't very marketable.**

<sup>1</sup> "The Rainy Day" from Ballads and Other Poems, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, (1807-1882.) Public domain.

<sup>2</sup> Frederick Buechner, Telling Secrets: A Memoir. Copyright © 1992, San Francisco: HarperCollins Press.

<sup>3</sup> M. Craig Barnes, When God Interrupts: Finding New Life Through Unwanted Change, Copyright © 1996, Intervarsity Press.

So we settle for myths about following Jesus, with a sound bite, quick fix solutions, promising it will immediately all be better in seven easy steps.

**\* I wish I were kidding!** I'm not judging, not really. Well, maybe a little. But that stuff only sells because people are hurting. The problem is – **life isn't a game**. After every promise you order with your credit card, life is still there.

So, point #1: **\**“Admitting depression exists is the first step in getting beyond it.”***

That's why I love the Psalms. They pay attention to our feelings and do not invite us into denial. They assure us that it is acceptable to bring our true feelings before the Lord. They speak from the heart. Like Psalm 22, which Jesus quoted from the cross. You don't get more honest than this:

**\*\*\*\*** *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest.”*<sup>4</sup>

Point #2: **\* *“There is no shame in asking for help when you need it.”***

We are blessed with some wonderful resources to help us cope. And we ought to be unafraid to access them. Some of them live in our homes and families. We are blessed with skilled counselors, thank God for them! And physicians who can help us find medications that, well help. Use all of them.

**As you are doing those things, don't neglect spiritual resources** - prayer, reading the Scriptures and spending time in worship. Even if you don't want to be with people, or feel like praying, don't leave God out of your life.

**Whether you like it or not, or like God or not, God is with you anyway.**

That leads me to Point #3: **\* *“Be honest with God and with yourself.”***

I love the way the Psalmist, one of the Sons of Korah, does this in our text from Psalm 42, as he pours his heart out to God. Let's open our Bibles:

**\* *1As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.***

**\* *2My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.***

Who here, if we are honest, hasn't gone through a dry season, spiritually? That's really what the Psalmist is talking about here. There's a lovely worship chorus that I first learned in the eighties on this text. I even like it. (Even though it is older than half our congregation)

<sup>4</sup> Psalm 22:1-2, *New Revised Standard Version Bible*, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

But it sort of misses the point. It's warm and melodic, about desiring to worship God. That's not what is going on in the Psalm. It is not God's presence that is the focus, but the feeling that God is absent and doesn't even care.

**\* *"When shall I come and behold the face of God?"<sup>3</sup> My tears have been my food day and night, while people say to me continually, "Where is your God?"***

These are words of doubt, despair, and depression. It reminds me of Job's false friends. *"Turn that frown upside down!" "You must have done something to tick God right off!" "Boy is God teaching you a lesson."* Not helpful!

\* But here's what is helpful! Memories of other times when life is good - a reminder that life is not always desert dryness or fog and rain. Read on.

**\*<sup>4</sup> *These things I remember, as I pour out my soul: How I went with the throng, and led them in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.***

*(And that leads me to...)*

Point #4: **\* *"Trust in God. God can handle what you can't - until you can."***

That's why God gives us sunshine after rain and amazing moments of worship, or times when we see the truth. That's why every moment of life is a treasure. That's why, even if you are not struggling through a season of depression, you need to hold close to God and the people around you. It's so when you do go through a time of spiritual struggle or depression you can remember who God is, and that it won't always be that way! God is at work! ***"Trust in God. God can handle what you can't - until you can."***

\*The Psalmist knew this, even in exile, in depression. \*God promised there would be streams in the desert and sunshine after rain. That's why he gave us this gift, this chorus to sing and remember and hold on to! And if you open your heart to only one truth today, let this be it! You'll find it in verse 5 and the first part of 6.

*(It is also in verse 11 at the end of Psalm 42.)*

**\*<sup>5</sup> *Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my help<sup>6</sup> and my God."*<sup>5</sup>**

If we know who God is, and who we are, if hold on to this truth, and if we will trust God beyond our worst day or season, God will lead us through!

**\* Because the worst thing is never the last thing! Let us pray. \***

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Psalm 42:1-6a. Holy Bible: *New Revised Standard Version*. All preceding verses are from this source.