

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, why aren't you real to me?

Psalm 13

1. What are some of the reasons Mark suggested that God may not seem real to someone?
2. Have you ever experienced a time when God didn't seem real to you? Share with the group.

Read Psalm 13

Mark suggested four actions if God doesn't seem real to you:

TELL HIM vv1-2

3. Identify the four challenges David puts to God along the theme of "how long?"
4. How do you react to David's bluntness with God? Have you ever been that direct with God?
5. Why might some people find it difficult to be that direct with God?
6. How would you encourage someone who said to you, "I think God's forgotten me"?

ASK HIM vv3-4

7. After asking God "how long" he's going to feel like this, David now asks God to act. What lies at the heart of his request and how is this appropriate?
8. Read Ephesians 1:17-19. What are the three things that Paul asks God that the Ephesians might see? Why are these three important?
9. David reckons if God doesn't step in and act, he's as good as dead (*I will sleep in death*). Why doesn't he want that to happen? (v4 gives two answers.)

TURN TO HIM

10. Do you think Mark is right in suggesting that people can just adopt a certain Christian-like life and yet not have ever come into relationship with God?
11. Someone says to you after hearing the sermon on Sunday, "I think what Mark was saying, is true of me: I've been hanging around Christians a long time and acting like one, but I don't think God has ever felt real to me because I have never come into relationship with him." How would you help that person make the move into a relationship with God?
12. What is the cost of stepping into a relationship with God?

TRUST HIM vv5-6

13. How is it that David has moved from his desperate cry for help in the opening verses, to a declaration here that he trusts in God's unfailing love?
14. How does the cross of Christ, show us the reality of God and the reality of his love for us? (Read and reflect on John 1:18 and Romans 8:32)
15. Someone says to you "God doesn't feel real to me". After this study, how would you help them?

May the Lord help those who don't feel God is real, to tell him, ask him, turn to him and trust him and may we all be able to help one another remember why and how God's unfailing love, seen at the cross, can help us know God is real.

Date: 18th August
Services: 730, 930 Tewanin and Peregian
Series: Dear God
Title: Why aren't you real to me?
Passage: Psalm 13
Outline:

1. **Tell him**
 2. **Ask him**
 3. **Turn to him**
 4. **Trust him**
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INTRODUCTION

- "Dear God, why aren't you real to me?"
- This is such a good question!
- Why?
- Because it's **honest**. Someone is telling it **how it is**.
- It was actually suggested by a member of one of our connect groups... and I don't actually know who that person is – or what led to the question...
- ...so let me ask you – why do you think someone would **ask** that question?
- a person might wonder why God isn't more real to them because they've never actually come to a personal **knowledge** of him as **Lord and Saviour** – that's possible isn't it...? that they've adopted Christian **culture** in their life, without ever **knowing** the Lord Jesus in a **real and personal way**...!
- ... there can be a whole **culture** around being **involved** in church, whereby people **behave** like a Christian – **talk** like a Christian – have Christian **priorities** in their life – even **pray** with other Christians... all going along with the **crowd** so to speak... and **yet** / and yet... (unsurprisingly) God has never felt real to them...
- And this happens in society... people get caught up in a **sub-culture** of **society** – and live the life **expected** of them... while all the time – it's not really **them**...!
- Or perhaps the person suggesting this question **USED** to feel that God is real... but they doesn't feel so right now... perhaps they are going through a real **spiritual dry patch**...
- Or perhaps their life is just full of many many challenges... which have taken their **toll** – and as a result of very real struggles, God doesn't **seem** very **real**... //
- So here's what I want to explore with you this morning, looking mainly at Psalm 13 which I hope you may have open front of you...
- If God doesn't seem real to you – here is my suggested approach...
 1. **Tell him**
 2. **Ask him**
 3. **Turn to him**
 4. **Trust him**

1. TELL HIM

- **Tell him** because he can take anything you want to say to him...
- Let's see what the great King David had to say to God when God didn't feel **real** to **him**...!
v1 – How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? /
- You don't seem **real** to me God
- Have you **forgotten** me?
- For **how long** will you forget me? /

- Are you **hiding** from me God – for **how long** will you **hide** from me? //
- Four times David pleads ‘how long’ - How long will you **forget** me, how long will you **hide your eyes** from me; how long must I **wrestle with my thoughts** and struggle with the sorrow in my heart; and how long will my enemy **triumph over me.** //
- He’s **desperate**...!
- He’s in some sort of **trouble**... facing conflict with **enemies** as was often the case...
- ...and he just doesn’t feel God is **real**... //
- He hasn’t **heard** from him... he hasn’t stepped in to **help**... it just seems he’s not **there** – he’s not **involved** – he’s not **real.** /
- If God doesn’t seem real to **you** today, **tell** him.
- If you feel **forgotten**... if you feel God is **hiding** from you... **tell him**...!
- If **YOU** are wrestling with these **thoughts** – these **doubts**... and are overwhelmed with **sorrow** in your heart... and if you feel your **enemy** – no matter **what** type of enemy we’re talking about – is getting the upper hand... **tell God!**//
- There’s a kind of **irony** there isn’t there – that you need to turn to the one who doesn’t seem **real** to **you!**
- But for **David** – and perhaps for **you** – there was enough **history** – enough in **his past** – of times of **where God WAS real** – to at least know that he could and should tell him how he felt!
- And I’m guessing that for **most** of us here for whom God doesn’t seem very **real** today – we **HAVE** had moments in the past – even if it is in the **distant** past – where God **has** seemed real... //
- And I want you to note from David’s example – and from many other places in the Psalms – that it is **OK** to go **straight** to God and **ask** such **questions**... even as it were – to tell him off! //
- For **how long** Lord will you not seem **real** to me?
- For **how long** will you **hide** yourself from me?
- For **how long** will I have to face my **struggles** all alone?
- For how **long** will that person or that family member or that the **company** I’m **dealing** with, seem to have the **upper hand**?
- For how long will I feel **depressed** and **overwhelmed** and **anxious** and **lonely**?!
Tell him!
Talk to **him**
Be **straight** with him
He can **take** it
He **welcomes** it....
Share your **heart**; open yourself **up** to him... reach **out** to him... bare your **soul** to him... /
- For our God is **real** – and he’s **personal** – and he **cares** – and he’s **ready** to **listen**...
///
- But not only are you to **tell** him, you are to:

2. ASK HIM

- Ask him straight up to step in and **act**... to **do** something!
- Have a look with me at **vv3 and 4**...
- ³Look on me and answer, Lord my God, Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
⁴ and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,” and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

- again we see Hebraic repetition here – asking the Lord to **look** on him and **answer** are **two** ways of saying the **same thing**...
- but he's asking God to **act**... God you're not **real** to me at the moment – I **feel** like you've forgotten me – so please step in and **act**...!
- notice too that he's quite **specific** in what he asks – and *why* he asks it /
- **what** is he asking for? : **Light** for his **eyes**... now that's a fascinating request isn't it for someone who's wondering whether God is real... "enlighten my eyes"... "open my eyes to YOU!" Help me see you!
- This was a **great prayer**.
- We are to ask God to open our eyes and give us His wisdom and knowledge.
- No matter **what** problem we are facing, we should cry out with all our heart, "**Enlighten my eyes.**"
- we need God to give light to our eyes to take away the **darkness** of our **unbelief**...
- we need God to live **light** to our **eyes** to help us to see him at **work**... eyes to see that he **IS** real... //
- isn't this exactly what the Apostle Paul prays for the Ephesians? – ch 1:17-19 - *I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of **wisdom and revelation**, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the **eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably **great power** for us who believe.***
- That is what you need if God doesn't feel **real**... **wisdom** and **revelation**...
- ... so that you might see our **hope** – see the **riches** of our **glorious inheritance**... and see his incomparably great **power** for us who believe. ////
- 'Dear God, why aren't you real to me.../'
- **Tell** him how you **feel**...
- Then ask him to open your **eyes** to see the **reality** that because of your **disposition**, your **struggles**, your **illness**... that you **cannot** see. Eyes to see the **bigger picture** – God's big picture.. //
- and the **reason** David asks this? – is because if God **doesn't** to do this or **won't** do this... he reckons it's all **over** for him... he'll simply **die** and his enemies will **gloat** over their victory
- so there's a **lot** at stake **here**!
- David is saying "**intervene** Lord, lest my enemies (a) overcome me and (b) **rejoice** in so doing."
- Note that even though David has expressed utter **desperation**, he still knows that his only recourse is to **turn** and ask the Lord for **help**.
- When we feel **most** desperate, we must remind ourselves again, that even if we feel **abandoned** by God, we **must** turn and **run to him again** – for there **is** nowhere **else** to turn // and he is waiting for our **persistent, heartfelt prayer**. //
- Feeling **desperate** today? Are **you** asking '*why aren't you real to me*'?
- Then **run** to the Lord – **tell** him how you feel and **ask** him to give **light** to your **eyes**...
- **Tell** him; **ask** him... and

3. TURN TO HIM

- Under this heading, we are going to just step aside from Psalm 13 for a few minutes
- ...because it may just be – as I suggested earlier – that the reason God doesn't feel **real** to you is because you don't **know** him...
- If you had never met my wife Susan, it may be that she doesn't seem **real** to you...
- But after you **meet** her, **talk** to her, get to **know** her – she will seem **very** real to you...

- You see it's possible isn't it that you've just been carried along with the crowd here – you've lived a **Christian** lifestyle – you've adopted some Christian **traits** and **habits** – but you've never really met **God**...!
- And I think it is **entirely possible** for a person to be part of a church and yet have **never met God** – never **turned** to him... never put your **trust** in him...
- And if **that** is the case, he **won't** seem very real to you...!
- You'll have noticed in other people's lives that he seems real to **them**... they seem to have a **joy** and a **peace** you don't have – they speak like they were just **talking** to him – their lives seem **full of God**...
- But you feel on the **outer** of all that... //
- I'm going to invite you this morning to **meet God**... to **turn to Jesus**... //
- There's a **cost** involved...
- There is a sense in which it will cost you... **everything**...
- That is – to come into a real relationship with God through Jesus Christ... Jesus calls us to **lay down our lives for him**...
- We give up the right to run our **own lives** our own way
- **We** are no longer the centre of our universe
- We say to God – I'm so sorry for pushing you aside; I'm sorry for living without you – I'm sorry for the way I've treated you...
- ...and now God, I'm saying – **everything I am** – **everything I have** – is **yours** – I **want** you in my **life** – and I **turn** to you **gratefully** because you offer through the death and resurrection of Jesus forgiveness and eternal life... and I need and want both...
- **That's** how you come into relationship with God – with a **frank acknowledgement** you haven't been **treating** God as **God** – and a resolve to make him **No. 1** in your **life**... with **awe** and a **humility** at the fact that God should love **YOU** so much that he sent his Son to **die** and rise again for you; you come to him gratefully... with a deep abiding trust... and with amazing gratitude... to turn to him now and saying 'thank you for what you offer me through Jesus Christ'.
- And **if** you do that... if you **say** those things – or something like them... God will seem **very real** to you – I have **no doubt**... you'll feel very **close** to **him** – and you'll feel very **grateful** to him for blessing you with **forgiveness** and **eternal life**...
- Here is a very short prayer you may want to use as your very own today....
- *Dear Lord, I'm so sorry for pushing you out of my life and doing my own thing without you. Please forgive me. I now want to put you in charge and live only for you. Thank you that because Jesus died and rose again for me, I can be completely reconciled to you, now and forever.*
- If you prayed that prayer just now and you've never prayed anything like that before – I **need to know** – I want to know – because I want to celebrate with you, your new life – your forgiveness and eternal life – and I want to help you take the **first steps** – those first baby steps as a **Christian**... so please do tell me... and tell me that you've prayed that prayer and opened a new chapter in your life with God as Lord – no. 1 in your life – and as saviour – the one who rescued you from sin and death...
- and may God seem **very real** to you... from **this day onwards**... //
- but back to Psalm 13 – there's one more thing I want to point out...
- if God doesn't seem real to us, we need to **tell** him, we need to ask him to open our **eyes** to his **reality**, we **may** need to **turn** to him if that is something we've never done before... and then we **must**...

4. TRUST HIM

- Look with me at v5 – *But I trust your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord's praises because he has been good to me.*

- Now you may be wondering – hang on Mark – are we reading the same **Psalm** there??
- It seems something **dramatic** has changed between verse **4** and v **5**...
- You know memory is a great gift... and it would appear that somewhere between v4 and v5, David started to remember times in the **past** where God has stepped in to help him – when he’s been able to trust him...
- In fact perhaps in **response** to David asking ‘give light to my eyes’, God has **answered** that, showing him times in the past where God **had** been with him, **protected** him, given him the **victory**... reminded him of his **salvation**.
- And the tense used in v5 is probably better rendered but ‘I **have trusted** in your unfailing love’... I’ve trusted in the past – I trust you now...
- He’s been enlightened to the fact that he has trusted God in the past in circumstances just as he finds himself in now!
- As I’ve **trusted** you in the **past**... so do I **now** – so WILL I now... in fact my heart shall **rejoice** in your **salvation**...
- When you’re asking the question ‘dear God, why aren’t you real to me’, reach back into your memory banks if you’ve been a Christian a long time..- look to your own **past experiences** of God’s faithfulness...
- AND – look to the **cross** of the Lord Jesus... for there you see the reality of God’s love
- God reveals himself to us in Jesus and at the cross we see God’s we God’s mercy, God’s kindness... yes his judgement that fell on Jesus instead of us... but we see the reality of God – the glory and the wonder of God... in his kindness to us...
- And we look back to the cross and we think – we can trust him – he gave me his only Son – he met me at my deepest point of need... that is that I needed forgiveness and eternal life... and therefore I can trust him in every other circumstance... I will rejoice in my salvation – I will sing his praises...
- David even comes to **declare** – having started the Psalm saying ‘**how long will you forget me?**’... - he comes to declare that he will “sing God’s praise for he has been **good to me!**”
- What a **turnaround!**
- 
- My prayer is that it might be your turn around today
- If your questions is ‘why isn’t God seem real to me’...
- I pray that there might be a similar turn around for you this morning – or if not this morning – some time during the week.... as you reflect on what we’ve seen...
- For I urge to you **tell God** how you **feel**... he can take it... the Scriptures **model** it – the invitation is **open**... **for you to go to him and say exactly what is on your heart and mind**.... //
- And then **ask** him to **act**... ask him to **open** your **eyes** to see the **reality** – to see **his** reality – ask him to give you **wisdom** and **revelation** – ask for eyes to see our **hope**, our **inheritance** and the **power** which is ours...
- And if you have never done so **before** – **turn** to him... come into relationship with him for the **first** time by admitting you’ve **mucked things up**, **turning to him as the one in charge of your life and receiving with gratitude your forgiveness and eternal life**... which comes through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. //
- And finally – remember how you’ve trusted him in the **past**... how he’s looked **after** you – seen you through **hard times** – stood **with** you – **fought for you** – he’s **saved** you through his **Son**.... and declare with David in this Psalm that you’ll **continue** therefore to **trust** him – you **WILL rejoice** in his **salvation** – you **WILL sing his praises** – for he has indeed – been good to you...