

Psalm 27: The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? ² When the wicked advance against me to devour me, it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall. ³ Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then I will be confident. ⁴ One thing I ask from the LORD, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the LORD and to seek him in his temple. ⁵ For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock. ⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy I will sing and make music to the LORD.

⁷ Hear my voice when I call, LORD; be merciful to me and answer me. ⁸ My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek. ⁹ Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. ¹¹ Teach me your way, LORD; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors. ¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations. ¹³ I remain confident of this I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. ¹⁴ Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD.

Luke 13:31-35

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to Jesus, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

“WHEN YOU FEEL UNLOVABLE, UNWORTHY AND UNCLEAN, WHEN YOU THINK NO ONE CAN HEAL YOU, REMEMBER MY DEAR FRIEND, GOD CAN.

WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE UNFORGIVABLE, FOR YOUR GUILT AND YOUR SHAME, REMEMBER GOD CAN.

WHEN YOU THINK THAT ALL IS HIDDEN, AND NO ONE CAN SEE WITHIN, REMEMBER GOD CAN.

WHEN YOU HAVE REACHED THE BOTTOM, AND YOU THINK THAT NO ONE CAN HEAR, REMEMBER GOD CAN.

WHEN YOU FACE A SERIOUS ILLNESS, AND IT FEELS LIKE NOBODY CAN HELP, REMEMBER GOD CAN.

WHEN YOUR LIFE IS TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, AND IT FEELS AS IF YOU CANNOT TAKE IT ANYMORE, REMEMBER GOD CAN.

AND WHEN YOU THINK NO ONE CAN LOVE, THE REAL PERSON DEEP INSIDE YOU, REMEMBER MY DEAR FRIEND, GOD DOES.”

THIS POEM, BY AN UNKNOWN AUTHOR, INVITES US TO DRAW NEAR TO THE LORD AND SEEK THE SHELTER OF GOD’S PRESENCE.

IT CALLS THOSE WHO THINK THEY HAVE NO WHERE TO TURN, TO GO TO GOD.

IT ASSURES ALL WHO WILL LISTEN THAT GOD CAN AND DOES HEAR OUR PRAYERS, FORGIVES THE REPENTANT, AND OFFERS TO US THE SHELTER OF HIS PRESENCE, LOVE, AND GRACE.

THEREFORE, WE ARE INVITED TO SEEK THE SHELTER OF GOD WHO KNOWS US INTIMATELY AND LOVES US COMPLETELY.

THIS INVITATION IS ALSO EXTENDED TO THOSE WHO THINK THEY HAVE ALL THE SUPPORT THEY COULD EVER NEED, BECAUSE GOD KNOWS WE STILL NEED HIM.

AND YET, ALMOST EVERYONE WHO DRAWS NEAR TO GOD WILL FIND THEMSELVES PULLING AWAY AGAIN.

AN IMAGE THAT COULD DESCRIBE THIS AND ALSO CONNECTS TO BOTH THE WORDS OF THE PSALMIST AND THOSE OF JESUS IS ONE OF WAVES.

EVEN MOST, IF NOT ALL PEOPLE WHO KNOW AND LOVE THE LORD SO OFTEN ACT LIKE WAVES.

WE TRUST IN THE LORD, BUT THEN DOUBTS CREEP IN. WE RACE TOWARDS GOD, BUT THEN QUICKLY WITHDRAW AGAIN. BACK AND FORTH WE GO THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES.

LENT OFFERS US A CHALLENGE TO FIND WAYS TO LINGER LONGER, IF NOT ALWAYS, IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD, FINDING SHELTER IN THE LORD'S LOVE AND GRACE.

THIS CHALLENGE TO FIND OUR SHELTER IN GOD IS EXPRESSED IN BOTH THE WORDS OF THE PSALM AND THE LAMENT OF JESUS.

PSALM 27 IS BOTH A DECLARATION OF TRUST IN THE LORD AND A PLEA FOR GOD'S INTERVENTION IN A CRISIS.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, THIS PSALM HAS BEEN DESCRIBED AS AN EXPRESSION OF CONFIDENCE IN GOD MIXED WITH FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY.

IN OTHER WORDS, WE FIND HERE AN EXAMPLE OF REAL-LIFE FAITH, THE KIND PEOPLE TODAY EXPERIENCE.

YES, WE TRUST GOD, AND YET DOUBT AND FEAR CAN GIVE RISE TO FEELINGS OF INSECURITY THAT COMPETE WITH FAITH.

DAVID, IN THIS PSALM IS VOCAL ABOUT HIS CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD, EVEN AS HE LAMENTS HIS DESPERATE SITUATION AND BEGS FOR GOD'S INTERVENTION.

HIS WORDS SUGGEST THAT DAVID TRUSTS GOD BUT ALSO FEARS THE LORD MAY NOT HELP HIM-PERHAPS BECAUSE OF HIS SINFULNESS.

FAITH AND TRUST, DOUBT AND FEAR PULL HIM IN TWO DIRECTIONS.

BUT HIS HOPE IS GROUNDED IN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE BASIS FOR HIS PRAYER.

HIS WORDS INCLUDE A LIST OF REASONS TO TRUST IN THE LORD WHOM HE DESCRIBES AS: "MY LIGHT AND MY SALVATION...THE STRENGTH OF MY LIFE."

HERE THE PSALMIST EXPRESSES CONFIDENCE IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WHICH GIVES HIM REASON TO HOPE.

IT ALSO MOTIVATES HIM TO PLEAD WITH GOD TO NOT FORSAKE HIM BECAUSE OF HIS SINFULNESS, BUT INSTEAD TO HAVE MERCY ON HIM.

AND YET THE PSALM ALSO SPEAKS ABOUT- ENEMIES WHO HAVE ENCIRCLED HIM; THEREFORE HE NEEDS A REFUGE.

BUT ALONG WITH HIS STRUGGLE AGAINST FEAR- HIS FAITH IS EVIDENT BY DAVID'S REPETITIVE WORDS ABOUT NOT NEEDING TO FEAR.

DAVID EXPRESSES HIS HEARTFELT DESIRE TO DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.

TO UNDERSTAND HIS DESIRE, WE NEED TO REMEMBER THE MAIN PURPOSE OF THE HOUSE OF GOD FOUND IN THE OLD TESTAMENT.

WHETHER IT WAS THE TABERNACLE IN DAVID'S TIME, OR THE STONE TEMPLE LATER ON, GOD'S HOUSE WAS THE ONLY PLACE ON EARTH THE JEWS BELIEVED GOD'S ACTUAL PRESENCE DWELT.

SO WHAT DAVID IS REALLY PRAYING FOR IS NOT TO LITERALLY LIVE IN GOD'S HOUSE, BUT DWELL IN GOD'S PRESENCE ALWAYS.

IT IS HIS WAY OF AFFIRMING HIS NEED TO BE IN A CONTINUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, WHO OFFERS TO HIM WHAT NO ONE ELSE CAN GIVE.

AND BY SEEKING THAT RELATIONSHIP DAVID IS HELPED IN FACING AND OVERCOMING HIS FEAR, RATHER THAN BEING OVERWHELMED BY IT.

THOSE FEARS INCLUDE NOT ONLY HIS ENEMIES, BUT ALSO A FEAR GOD MIGHT NOT SAVE HIM.

THUS, DAVID PRAYS THE LORD WILL NOT BE ANGRY WITH HIM OR TURN AWAY FROM HELPING HIM, BUT HAVE MERCY.

THE BEAUTY OF THIS PSALM, AND ONE REASON IT CAN BE SUCH A HELP TO US TODAY- IS FOUND IN DAVID'S HONEST EXPRESSION OF HIS STRUGGLE WITH FAITH AND FEAR.

YOU SEE, THE PSALMIST'S WILLINGNESS TO NOT PRETEND HE IS WITHOUT DOUBT OR WORRY, TO BE HONEST ABOUT BEING CONFLICTED WITHIN IS WHAT OPENS HIM UP TO GOD.

IT IS EVIDENCE OF DAVID SEEKING TO BE GATHERED IN, GUIDED, AND HELPED BY THE LORD RATHER THAN DOING THINGS ON HIS OWN.

THIS DOES NOT MEAN DAVID SAT BACK AND DID NOTHING TO HELP HIMSELF, BUT THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WITHOUT GOD'S ASSISTANCE HIS EFFORTS WOULD BE IN VAIN.

IN THIS WAY, HE TEACHES US THAT EVEN WHEN WE MAY THINK WE HAVE A HANDLE ON TROUBLE IN LIFE, OR WHEN THINGS COULD NOT BE BETTER FOR US-WE STILL NEED GOD.

LENT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONSIDER HOW MUCH WE TRUST IN THE LORD AND SEEK GOD'S PRESENCE NO MATTER HOW WELL OR POORLY THINGS ARE GOING.

WE ARE INVITED TO REFLECT MORE CLOSELY ON OUR FAITH AND FEARS, TRUST AND DOUBT AS WE JOURNEY THROUGH THE LENTEN WILDERNESS TO THE OASIS OF EASTER.

THE GOSPEL LESSON EMPHASIZES EVEN MORE CLEARLY THE CHRIST'S DESIRE FOR US TO SEEK HIS PRESENCE ALWAYS.

IN TODAY'S GOSPEL READING THE SAVIOR EXPRESSES THE HEARTFELT GRIEF HE FEELS OVER THOSE WHO FLEE FROM HIM.

IT GRIEVES JESUS BECAUSE TO RUN AWAY FROM HIM IS TO REJECT HIS LOVE, AND THE SHELTER HE OFFERS.

JESUS SAID ABOUT THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM, AND ALSO OF US: "...HOW OFTEN WOULD I HAVE GATHERED YOUR CHILDREN TOGETHER AS A HEN GATHERS HER CHICKS, BUT YOU WERE NOT WILLING."

THIS GOSPEL PASSAGE CLOSSES WITH THE FIRST OF TWO LAMENTS LUKE RECORDS JESUS VOICED CONCERNING JERUSALEM.

THE SECOND IS FOUND IN LUKE 19, WHEN JESUS ENTERS THE CITY ON PALM SUNDAY. AND BOTH LAMENTS ARE AS MUCH FOR JESUS' OWN PEOPLE AS THEY ARE FOR THE CITY ITSELF.

IN HIS LAMENT, THE SAVIOR SPEAKS FOR GOD, EXPRESSING GRIEF OVER THE UNWILLINGNESS OF HIS CHILDREN TO COME TO HIM, TO RECEIVE HIS PROTECTION AND GRACE.

TRULY IN THIS WAY PEOPLE CAN BE LIKE INSOLENT CHICKS RUNNING AROUND THE BARN YARD IGNORING THEIR MOTHER'S PLEAS TO COME TO THE SHELTER OF HER WINGS.

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE IS -MOST ACTUAL CHICKS HAVE MORE SENSE THAN PEOPLE, BECAUSE THE CHICKS ARE LESS REBELLIOUS.

EVEN SO, GOD CONTINUES TO CALL TO US. BUT GOD WILL NOT FORCE ANYONE TO COME INTO HIS PRESENCE AND CARE.

SADLY, WE OFTEN DO NOT LISTEN OUT OF EITHER FEAR OR PRIDE.

SOMETIMES PEOPLE DO NOT COME BECAUSE THEY KNOW THEY ARE UNRIGHTEOUS AND EXPECT REJECTION.

OTHERS FAIL TO HEED GOD BECAUSE IN THEIR PRIDE OR SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS THEY THINK THEY DON'T NEED ANYTHING FROM THE LORD.

BUT THE BIBLE TELLS US ALL ARE IN NEED OF GOD'S GRACE, WHICH IS WHY GOD SENT JESUS TO GATHER US IN, IF ONLY WE ARE WILLING.

HERE IS THE DILEMMA OF HUMAN FREE WILL: IT IS AS IF JESUS STANDS BEFORE A GREAT WALL THAT BLOCKS HIM FROM REACHING OUT TO SHELTER THOSE WHOM HE LOVES.

OUR FREE WILL IS THAT WALL. NOTICE, LAST WEEK WE RECALLED JESUS BEING IN THE WILDERNESS, AND HOW HE COULD NOT BE DEFEATED BY SATAN.

HOWEVER, THE ONE THING THAT CAN DEFEAT JESUS IS THE SAME THING THAT DEFEATS GOD THE FATHER, WHICH IS OUR FREE WILL.

JESUS ALSO WILL NOT FORCE US TO COME UNWILLINGLY TO HIS SHELTER, NOR MAKE US ACCEPT THE SALVATION HE DIED TO SECURE.

INSTEAD, HE SPREADS HIS WINGS AND CALLS TO US, LIKE A HEN WOULD HER CHICKS WHEN SHE SENSES THEY ARE IN DANGER, BUT JESUS WILL NOT FORCE US TO COME.

MARTIN LUTHER SUMMARIZED THE GOSPEL PASSAGE THAT RECORDS JESUS' LAMENT IN THIS WAY:

"FOR THINE LOVE IS IN THE HIGHEST DEGREE A LOST LOVE. POURED OUT ON THOSE WHO REWARD IT WITH INGRATITUDE."

INGRATITUDE IS WHAT GOD CONTINUALLY EXPERIENCES IN HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH THOSE WHOM HE CREATED AND LOVES.

AND YET, LET US REMEMBER THAT JESUS CHOSE TO DIE EVEN FOR UNGRATEFUL CHICKS THAT RUN FROM HIM- RATHER THAN TO HIM.

THE GOOD NEWS IS THE SAVIOR CONTINUES TO CALL TO EVERYONE TO COME UNDER THE SHELTER OF HIS WINGS.

HE INVITES THOSE WHO IGNORE HIM, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO RUN AWAY BECAUSE THEY ARE EITHER- AFRAID THAT THEY ARE UNWORTHY, OR CONFIDENT THEY DO NOT NEED THE SALVATION HE OFFERS.

WHAT THEN CAN WE LEARN FROM BOTH THE PSALM AND THE LAMENT OF JESUS THAT MAY BE HELPFUL IN OUR OWN LIVES?

THE PSALM GIVES US THE ASSURANCE THAT IT IS NORMAL FOR FAITH AND FEAR, TRUST AND DOUBT TO STRUGGLE WITHIN US.

SUCH CONFLICT SHOULD NOT CAUSE US TO DRAW AWAY FROM THE LORD BUT CLOSER TO OUR GOD AND SAVIOR.

THIS IS REVEALED EVEN MORE CLEARLY BY CHRIST'S LAMENT OVER THOSE WHO CHOOSE NOT TO COME TO HIM.

MAY WE TAKE TIME DURING LENT TO TURN BACK TO JESUS, OR TO STRENGTHEN OUR TIES WITH HIM.

A METAPHOR FOR HOW WE CAN DO THIS IS FOUND IN THE IMAGE OF BICYCLE RIDING WITH JESUS.

WE MOST OFTEN RIDE ON SEPARATE BIKES, BESIDE ONE ANOTHER, OR WITH ONE OF US AHEAD OF THE OTHER.

BUT WHAT THE SAVIOR REALLY DESIRES IS FOR US TO BE WILLING TO SHARE A BICYCLE BUILT FOR TWO, WITH HIM SITTING ON THE FRONT SEAT.

THE QUESTION IS-ARE WE WILLING? THIS IS THE CHALLENGE FOUND IN BOTH SCRIPTURE READINGS, AND ONE OF THE QUESTIONS LENT INVITES US TO ANSWER.

WE ARE CALLED TO TRUST IN THE LORD OUR LIGHT AND SALVATION-TO SEEK THE SHELTER OF CHRIST'S WINGS, AND BE GUIDED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WITHIN US. MAY WE LEARN TO DO SO ALL THE DAYS OF OUR LIVES. AMEN

SERMON SUMMARY: PSALM 27 AND LUKE 13:31-35

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