

August 19, 2018     In God We Trust Pt. 1     Psalm 27:1-2

From time to time I get asked the question, what is it that you enjoy so much about preaching and teaching in series. It's a good question. I always seem to put together a series in the summer, sometimes two of them. I always work a series in Advent as we approach Christmas, and in Lent in preparation for Easter. There is an extra layer of discipline that a series requires for me. Which is another way of saying I always profit from working a series. I learn stuff, I did not know before, I discover things I had not seen before. The learning takes on a different level of intensity. The way my mind works, means that in a series, I discover things about the Lord that make me passionate. And passion for the Lord is what preaching is about from both sides of the pulpit.

I also like this about a series. Inevitably a series takes me places where I would not normally choose to go. A series starts with a faith insight. But especially when the series involves working through a portion of the Bible verse by verse, I lose control of the agenda. In such a series as this one on Psalm 27, I start out with an insight I believe to be worthy of sharing. But I wind up travelling a path as the verses unfold that take me into territory, subjects and themes that I would not choose to explore. In other words, the Spirit of God, and HIS Word tend to take control of the thing. And that I believe, is good for me, is good for you, and is best for us. We are going to spend 7 weeks

exploring Psalm 27. I will be attempting to deal with 2 verses each time we meet.

Psalm 27 opens with a tremendous confession of faith. For its author, David the King of Israel....it was probably the best part of a good day. "The Lord is my light and my salvation.....whom shall I fear?" There is a truism about going for a walk. It helps if you understand something about the territory through which you are walking. When Barbara and I are about to head for bed at the farmhouse, the second last thing we do, is we leash the dogs and we take them outside. It is for most of the year dark outside by 9:30 to 10:00 o'clock at night. We turn on a yard light and sometimes I carry a flashlight in addition so that we can see where we are going.

David is very aware of the nature of the world in which he is serving as King of Israel. It is a dark place. It is a dangerous place. Sin and evil are real forces. If we are careless, it is too easy to come to harm. Not long ago I fell on the grass at the farmhouse. I was going to cut a board and my mind was on several things at once. I was hauling my cut off saw out of the shed where I store it and I tripped over the material I was going to cut. The image of the first lines of Psalm 27 describe our environment. We are walking and wandering through darkness in which it is easy to stumble and fall. There are forces in play that can do real harm to us, if we are not careful. "The Lord is my light and my salvation."

For us as a people who believe those are important statements of fact. The way is illuminated for us, not by us. The presence of God is a real factor. The person of Jesus is a real presence as we make our way daily in this world. The world is not the safest place to be. Fail to pay attention to our surroundings and we can trip over a coffee table. We can fall in our bedrooms. Places we would tend to think that are safe. Places where we assume security. David wrestles with the darkness. So do we. And the Lord, Jesus Christ the redeemer is both our light and our salvation.

Therefore, “whom shall I fear?” It is sometimes easy to reply to the question. No one! No one shall I be afraid of. You know I like western movies. In the Clint Eastwood classic, Pale Rider there is a marvelous meditation on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. A 14 year old girl is burying her dog, who was killed by a raiding party. “I will fear no evil” she recites. And as she meditates she adds... “But I am afraid. Lord if you don’t help us we’re all gonna die.” Living is serious business. The world is a dangerous place.

Psalm 27 repeats those sentiments in the second line. “The Lord is the stronghold of my life....of whom shall I be afraid?” Two insights. A stronghold is a fortress. Something like a Norman Castle. Stone walls and windows that are not glass. David’s statement of faith is that God alone provides such a sanctuary in the real world. He declares that God alone causes us to be able to overcome the paralysis that comes of

fear. He is our light in the darkness. He saves us. Even when we die. Or are wounded. Or have suffered hurt.

Verse 2 makes 2 points. The first is that this is not idle thinking. It is not a matter of his over active imagination. There are “evil men who advance against him and Israel which he serves as king. The goal of the opposition is to “devour his flesh”. That is, they are not coming to play or to talk. They mean to kill him. And it is by means of faith clearly focused on God, David’s savior, that he sees what is going to happen, because he has had this experience before...”when my enemies attack me, they will stumble and fall.”

I repeat myself. This is not the product of an overactive imagination. It is not a pipe dream. He is putting the whole experience under the glass of past experience. When David faced Goliath the odds makers would not have put their money on David. Goliath was the seasoned warrior. Goliath was big and he was strong. He was well armed. David’s handlers tried to deck him out in armour and with a sword he could hardly lift. The fact is, David had the good sense to leave the sword and the armour behind, trusting in God and his genuine skill with a slingshot. There is Biblical evidence that Saul expected the kid to get himself killed. Saul was hoping the diversion of David’s death might provide a tactical opportunity.

But God is in the saving business. And the God whom we have met and know by faith in Jesus Christ is also in the miracle business. You know the rest of the story. David

went out armed with faith and a handful of smooth stones. He only fired one. Goliath went down. As David faced new challenges he brought to mind the deliverance of God in the past. David's prayer was what our prayer ought to be as well. Lord be with me this time, even as you were with me then. Lord be with me in these circumstances even as you were with me there.

As you know, the words, "In God We Trust" are inscribed on the American penny. It is my initial insight that those words say in a nutshell what Psalm 27 says at length. And it is that proclamation which will be the theme of this series. The Lord God asks one thing of us no matter what it is that we are facing. He calls us to believe in Him. He promises to be the light we need in our darkest hours. He promises to be our salvation regardless of whether or not we live or die. He promises to be the castle keep that will defend us.

There was a little girl. She had her first baby when she was 12. She had her second by the time she was 16. She was married to a man who was physically abusive. But by the time she was 16 she had her first long play record out. She personally paid for much of the work done by Dr. Martin Luther King. She sang for 3 American Presidents. And she never stopped singing in her black church. The late Aretha Franklin believed these words, as I pray do I. "the Lord is my light and my salvation." God the Father, Jesus the Son of God, the Holy Spirit. In God We Trust.

Let us pray;

Lord we praise YOUR name. It is the name above all other names. We confess that the world we live in can be a scary place. When we focus on our own well being we dim your light, and we lose sight of the means of our safety and security. When we focus on YOU we can do so much more in YOUR strength than we could ever do in our own. Be with us. Let YOUR light shine in us, on us, and through us to others.  
Amen