

September 2, 2018 In God We Trust Pt. 3 Psalm 27:5&6

In the first 4 verses of Psalm 27 it becomes clear that David is in trouble as the King of Israel. There are problems within the Kingdom and there are problems without. The foreign affairs department is working overtime. There is the distinct possibility of war. And there is division within the Kingdom and David's government. In fact, the problems David faces sound remarkably modern. It looks as though, if David makes the wrong decision as to how to handle things, he could be replaced by opposition within. If he goes to war and loses, he will definitely be replaced from without.

In verse 4 David manages to reduce all of the current series of problems to a single priority. It may surprise some of us, who are familiar with the witnessing of political wrangling, and sniping witnessed on a daily basis, but the one thing David has figured out that is at the top of his priority list, is that he be able to continue to worship, the Lord his God, in the primary worship center in Jerusalem. That too sounds remarkably current.

Once a month Barbara makes a trip into Oshawa to have a meal with friends from "the good old days" when she was teaching there, and I was in full time ministry next door in Pickering. When it works out we go together. I am familiar with this group of former teachers and they have learned that the Presbyterian minister in their midst does not bite, has a sense of humour and can even turn out to be a decent

counsellor in times of trouble, pain and grief. Thursday we went to Oshawa to have lunch with the group. A member of that circle is a long time, devout and devoted Lutheran. Her church has been averaging 6 people at services over the summer. Like David, she sees her personal crisis as the potential loss of being able to worship the Lord Jesus, in the church facility she has called home for the balance of her adult life. Being in the midst of Psalm 27, I rediscovered the folksy insight of the late Yogi Berra, "It's deja vue, all over again."

David does not want to lose this principle symbol of support, peace, and confidence: his local place of worship. None of us are fans of constant change. And all of us can identify changes that we would resist with heart, mind, soul, and body. One of those for us as well as David, is the setting in which we regularly worship and gather for fellowship as the people of God. We don't want to lose our local "holy place" with its sense of Holy space. And the fact is there are real reasons why that is so.

In verse 5 David turns to the reasons he does not want to lose the experience of worshipping God in what he calls the temple. "For in the day of trouble, HE will keep me safe in HIS dwelling. HE will hide me in the secret of HIS tabernacle." I remember the day Margo was diagnosed with Leukemia like it was yesterday. The doorbell rang at the manse. It was one of the young mothers in my congregation. She had held it together at the doctor's office. She had held it together

bringing her 10 year old daughter home. She held it together when I answered the door....but then the dam broke loosing a flood of fear and panic.

“I need the key to the church,” she said. It so happened I kept it right at the door. I handed it to her and she ran down the steps and across the lawn, emitting a howl of pain. I lit out after her. Barbara lit out after me. We found her collapsed over the communion table at the front of the sanctuary bawling out her grief and pain. I learned an important lesson that day. Just being in the church, can be tremendously important to faithful people when their world collapses and they are convinced they are going to lose a young child.

David is certain that the sanctuary is the place where God will hide him in his hour of deep, and great need. Where else would the faithful hide in God, if not in the upper room of God’s house? The language of David in verse 5 of Psalm 27 calls to mind the experience of Moses when God covers him with HIS holy hand in the cleft of the rock, and passes by him. God gives Moses an up close and intimate experience of the holy presence, in such a way that HIS servant not only remains unharmed but is hidden from everything HIS servant fears.

“In the secret of HIS tabernacle shall HE hide me. He shall set me upon a rock.” Hiding places appeal to a corner of our mind. I suppose it goes back to when our ancestors

hunted in the jungle. If we can find a dark place to hide, where the shadows and the lion will not find us, we shall be safe. Such is the experience of the believer in the presence of the Saving God of all power, when we are terrified by the experience that breaks upon us in the world.

Many of you know Brandi, our little blonde bull dog cross. She defends us valiantly from leaves blown by the wind, from squirrels and cats, and people who ring the doorbell and come up our driveway. But...she hears the rumble of thunder long before the storm breaks and long before we hear thunder or see lightening. And thunder storms arouse in her the desperate need for a place to shelter and hide. Under the bed will do. A closet will do. But she also favours wrapped in a blanket held by Barbara's loving arms while she trembles in fear before the storm that is about to break. David says that finding a hiding place in the presence of God, he is assured that God will set him upon a rock. Safety. Security. Confidence. The fear simply dissipates standing on ground that will not move or be washed away.

And it is the experience of David that this hiding in God is a transformative reality. In verse 6 David says "his head will be exalted above the enemies who surround him." Here is the picture he is drawing for us. He is still surrounded by the enemy. It is not that he has forgotten the reality of his condition. But it is as though he has grown taller. And is become the biggest warrior in the room, with all that that

implies about the potential outcome. He is miraculously ready to do battle. So much so that he worships God. He offers as his sacrifice, shouts of joy. His trembling hand is steady. So much so that he sings and makes music to the Lord. He sings Hymns and choruses,...."Through it all...through it all...I've learned to trust in Jesus. I've learned to trust in God."

I am sure there are those who would read this and quickly discard what they think is a simple mind game as David pumps himself up and prepares himself to face the worst his enemies can throw at him. However, that's because such people fail to appreciate that God is not a fairy tale. And the Bible is not a book for the weak minded. The failure of Goliath to take God seriously, the living God...is precisely why the Philistine advance broke before David, his sling shot, and the army of Saul.

True story. We came within minutes of losing Margo the ten year old who had Leukemia. We prayed for her and she not only survived Leukemia, she survived the treatment, which at the time involved experimental drugs and protocols, that are now standard treatment for childhood Leukemia. She was told as a teenager her cancer treatment had left her sterile and that she would never have children. She is married and the mother of three. And when her mother was diagnosed with breast cancer, she marshalled the friends and believers she knew, including us, to pray for her mother who as a senior has emerged from treatment.

In a crisis, David knows as a man of faith what he wants. And it is not that he simply wants God in his corner...rather he wants to be in God's corner of the troubled world in which he serves Israel as King. Worship changes things, because being with the Lord changes us. In God we trust!

Let us pray;

Sometimes Lord we wonder if we are wasting our time, reading from the Bible, singing from the hymn book, learning by memory verses of Scripture and choruses of praise. YOUR word teaches us that doing those very things, when our hearts are set on worshipping YOU, are like putting money in the bank against a rainy day. We thank YOU for words that encourage us. We thank you for songs we sing as we seek YOUR face, and grow in YOUR presence. Amen