

October 7, 2018    In God We Trust   Pt. 7   Psalm 27:13&14

When I was planning this series back in the hot and humid days of summer, I was aware that we would arrive at this point on Thanksgiving Sunday. From my perspective, it is very appropriate that the theme of our service should be “In God We Trust” at Thanksgiving. There can be no question that the summer is over. While it is not here, there is a cool inevitability about the coming on of winter. Snow may not arrive for us here, until well into December. But the Trans Canada Highway was closed for 14 hours this past week in Northern Ontario, because of snow. We may and often do get marvelously warm days from time to time in October and November, but there is as I said, an inevitability in the air...winter is going to come. Toques, mittens and gloves, scarves and much warmer coats will be worn by us all. It is now just a matter of time.

I do not say any of these things to depress you. Winter has never been a depressing season for me. Christmas and the New Year will wind up December. In February I will celebrate another birthday, presents and cake! And this winter I will not be shoveling the snow. Barbara won that argument, and we are contracting that out to someone else. For the moment I look forward to the turkey dinner with our family and friends, at the farmhouse. As it says in Psalm 27:13, “I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord, in the land

of the living.” That is what this season reminds us of... “we will see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living.”

There is something that distresses me. So very few will embrace the teaching of Psalm 27 verse 13 this weekend. Most of the population of Canada will claim to celebrate Thanksgiving. And yet the truth is few will actually give thanks. For some the essence of Thanksgiving is a long weekend. Monday is a holiday. Even the shopping Mall in Belleville will be closed on Monday! For some what this weekend is about is a particular kind of feast, a favourite meal luxuriating in the fresh produce that has come from the harvest season. Many will and have watched hockey games, and will watch football games. I will. But those activities in themselves are not thanksgiving whether you spell it with a capital T or not. My favourite sportscasters will say “we have so much to be thankful for.” That’s a nice idea. But the fact is, it is not an act of thanksgiving until you give the thanks, with a conviction about who it is that is to be thanked in the first place.

So here we are looking at the meaning of the day, this weekend, with leftovers that could involve the balance of the week, a season that we should see, must see through the lense of Psalm 27 verse 13 and 14. It begins with “I am still confident in this.” A statement of personal conviction. A statement of personal faith. I am, as I have been, confident in this.

And what is David confident about? What should we be confident about on this weekend of all weekends? David states it for us boldly. He states for us clearly. He states for us with a song of praise on his lips. And so should we. "I am confident in this: I will see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living." This is first and foremost a faith statement: words that belong to people who believe. "I will see the goodness of the Lord, in the land of the living." We have hope, which I claim is a solution of one part faith, and one part experience. Notice David does not say, "I am confident in this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in heaven." No, he says, I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Right here. In my own home. In my own land. Regardless of the weather.

We have seen in some detail in this journey through the 27<sup>th</sup> Psalm, that David has "Problems". There are people in his government who are playing political games, trying to figure out whether they should back the king, obey the king, or oppose the king and his policies. There are armies that are gathering to threaten the sovereignty of Israel. To put it plainly his career, if not his life are in danger. And yet as he has engaged in praising God and praying to God the Lord who made him a king in the first place he has arrived at a state of mind in which he is confident about this: he will see the goodness of God on earth, in Israel, as a man who is still alive and has miles to go before he sleeps.

So. Surprise, surprise! Dr. Mitchell says make this your Thanksgiving ambition. Say a prayer, sing your favourite hymn, say grace at the meal table and remember... the spirit of thanksgiving has to do with being confident, you are going to see the goodness of God in the days to come, as a man, as a woman alive. Give God the glory. Praise the name of Jesus. Bask in the light, the joy, the hope of the Holy Spirit present with you, guiding your steps, giving you strength to employ your knife and fork and spoon, as you enjoy the feast. Give thanks. I tell you, too many will name the day, name the weekend but never recognize the Lord God who has given us every blessing we enjoy, from the light of the sun, to butter tarts and pumpkin pie!

We are alive. We have come through whatever the challenges have been to this point, by the grace and the love of the redeeming God whom we know in Jesus Christ! Take a deep breath. Hold it. Breathe out. Did you hear it? That is the sound of life in the land of the living. Your life in the land of the living.

Before I pass on the verse 14 you really need to hear the word for word translation of verse 13 as it is written in the King James Version. "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." We do have the promise of heaven, but as we celebrate Thanksgiving, we do so here and now with food we enjoy, and people with whom we share the journey of living.

Verse 14. “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart, and wait for the Lord.” And I confess, I like that verse in the KJV too. “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord.” The differences may be subtle but they are very significant differences.

First of all, “Wait on the Lord.” David is saying to himself and to us, you are believers, I am a believer. Let’s act like believers! Wait on the Lord is like saying believe. You and I are disciples of Jesus. God has touched us with all the richness of salvation. Believe it! And do you know what I heard in the back of my mind when I read that during the week? It was a question. Really? You know sometimes it is not that easy. So I reached for my John Calvin on the Psalms. What did the reformer have to say on the words before us. I quote: “It is my opinion that David applies this to himself, the more to encourage his confidence in God, lest at any time his heart should faint. He was conscious of his weakness, and knew that his faith was the great means of preserving him safe. He seasonably strengthens himself for the future.” Wait on the Lord. Put yourself in the hands of God. Let Jesus that great shepherd of the sheep wrap his arms around you, and give thanks.

Secondly. Take real notice of this. David does not say, believe and make yourself strong. In the word for word translation of the KJV we have this: “Wait on the Lord. (We can

do that). Be courageous, be brave... (it is not easy but we can do that too). And he (the Lord) will strengthen your heart.” David is not asking or telling us to strengthen ourselves. He is making us a promise. A promise we should indeed be thankful for. If we do what we can do, God will strengthen our hearts. “Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and He will strengthen your heart. It is the promise that God who saves, will save us from the things that threaten to break us in life.

To me that is the real meaning of this Celebration, this weekend, this season we call Thanksgiving. I enjoy so much of what happens at Thanksgiving. The hockey season is back. The football seasons (CFL, College Football, NFL), the baseball playoffs leading up the World Series, the food and the meal time with family having come together to share it. But all those things are the trimmings, the decorations. The heart of the thing is being with people like you and doing what we do together. We wait on the Lord. We try to be of good courage because the fact is we all have problems and face pressures that we would rather exchange for what we think might be better. And in the midst of all that, as we give thanks, the love of God that passes beyond understanding, touches our hearts. HE makes us stronger than we ever thought we were. Stronger than we even sometimes notice we are!

So David sums up everything he has said and thought by saying, “Wait, I say, on the Lord.” Do not let our culture reduce Thanksgiving to a point of time on the calendar, or food,

or a television programme or even a walk in the woods. In God we trust. Say it on this marvelous beautiful Fall weekend. "I trust God." Wait, I say, on the Lord!

Let us pray;

Lord Jesus hear us when we pray. Heavenly Father, hear us as we thank YOU for what we have and what we are, and where we are, and with whom we share the experience. We thank YOU for our families. For our friends. We thank YOU for the coloured leaves, and crisp cool air. Skies that are so blue, and night skies filled with stars. Touch our hearts. Make YOUR Spirit strong in us. And help us to remember when the way seems rough, that YOU are our shepherd. We are the sheep that belong to YOU in the land of the living, and eternally. Amen