

Introduction

Check-in & Introductions

Sermon Reflection Notes

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine! O what a foretaste of glory divine! Heir of salvation, purchase of God, born of his Spirit, washed in his blood. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long; this is my story, this is my song, praising my Savior all the day long.

Psalms and songs...they give voice to our pain and light our way in darkness. Psalm 27, like *Blessed Assurance*, like *Amazing Grace*, like *It is Well with My Soul*, are songs of trust. They give us the words to say: things are bad, and they keep getting worse, and yet—and yet, we trust in God, the God who is always with us.

Many psalms are psalms of lament; they move from dark to light, from bad to good, from uncertainty to certainty (except for Psalm 88). They might make better sermons and be easier lessons to teach. However, that's not how life works. It is not how faith works. Dark, light, good, bad...orientation, disorientation, reorientation to something new: this is cycle that we live again and again. In some psalms the author asks for divine intervention, asks God to 'smite the enemy' or intercede in some way. Psalm 27 begins as a plea for patience and trust, for endurance, for seeking God's sustaining presence. The plea is not for God to change or fix or punish; instead, it is for God's presence...to live in the Lord's house all the days of our lives.

Pastor Andy told two different stories in this week's sermon, the first of which was about being with his mentor at the bedside of the mentor's rabbi friend. The rabbi had a chronic condition which would be fatal; Pastor Andy spoke of the power he felt as he read Psalm 27 aloud to that rabbi who mouthed the words along with him. That moment was full of God's presence.

Pastor Andy asked us to consider how we experience the presence of God. He suggested that experiencing the presence of God is foundational to real faith and trust. Faith is not the specifics of individual beliefs, or adherence to a particular doctrine or specific way of worship. Faith is the truth of knowing God is with us through all the mysteries and awe and pain and grace. Faith is the sum of all our lived experiences with our God.

Which is not to say that faith removes questions, or urgent pleas, or needs, or even doubt. Faith and trust coexist with these things. They go together. God is with us, in everything. The second story Pastor Andy told was of visiting with Don Erhardt this past week for a time of prayer, communion, and singing. One of the important things Don shared with the pastors and lead team before they left was a plaque that reads: "God isn't asking you to figure it out. He's asking you to trust that He already has."

That is not a deterministic saying or a trite one. Instead, it calls us back to the original Hebrew meanings of 'light' and 'fear.' Psalm 27 begins with a play on words because in Hebrew light and fear don't mean what we associate with them today. Instead, light means: to bring order from chaos. Fear means: to have awe or reverence. In other words, we stand in awe of the One who brings order out of chaos.

We don't have to 'figure it out' because the things that matter most are already figured out. And as we stand in awe of the One who brings order out of chaos, the important things become even more important...and the chaos is put to rest.

Perfect submission, all is at rest; I in my Savior am happy and blest, watching and waiting, looking above, filled with his goodness, lost in his love.

Let us remember our story, our song, and trust our God who is always with us, bringing order out of chaos. Let us live our faith out loud.

Scripture

Psalm 27 (CEB)

¹The Lord is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone?

The Lord is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything?

²When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up— it's they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall!

³If an army camps against me, my heart won't be afraid.

If war comes up against me, I will continue to trust in this:

⁴ I have asked one thing from the Lord—it's all I seek:

to live in the Lord's house all the days of my life,
seeing the Lord's beauty and constantly adoring his temple.

⁵Because he will shelter me in his own dwelling during troubling times;
he will hide me in a secret place in his own tent;

he will set me up high, safe on a rock.

⁶Now my head is higher than the enemies surrounding me,
and I will offer sacrifices in God's tent—sacrifices with shouts of joy!

I will sing and praise the Lord.

⁷Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out—
have mercy on me and answer me!

⁸Come, my heart says, seek God's face.

Lord, I do seek your face!

⁹Please don't hide it from me!

Don't push your servant aside angrily—you have been my help!

God who saves me, don't neglect me! Don't leave me all alone!

¹⁰Even if my father and mother left me all alone,
the Lord would take me in.

¹¹Lord, teach me your way;

because of my opponents, lead me on a good path.

¹²Don't give me over to the desires of my enemies, because false witnesses and violent accusers

have taken their stand against me.

¹³But I have sure faith that I will experience the Lord's goodness
in the land of the living!

¹⁴Hope in the Lord! Be strong! Let your heart take courage!

Hope in the Lord!

Discussion Questions

1. Here is an exercise you may not have done since high school English class. Let's scan the structure of this psalm/poem/song and see how understanding the structure of the verses informs our understanding of its message.
2. Why or how does the structure of a psalm mimic the structure of our lives?
3. The psalms are the prayers of God's people. They affirm and validate our emotions and experiences. Let's look at Psalm 13 which was used as a psalter this week. What is the poet experiencing and feeling?
4. Andy explained that in Hebrew 'light' means 'to bring order out of chaos.'
Think of the most chaotic closet or drawer in your personal space (*you know you have one.*)
How do you bring 'order' to that closet or space?
5. What does God's 'closet' look like when it's all put in order?
How do we experience the presence of God?

Closing Prayer

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills—
 from where will my help come?
My help comes from the Lord,
 who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved;
 He who keeps you will not slumber.
He who keeps Israel
 will neither slumber nor sleep.
The Lord is your keeper;
 the Lord is your shade at your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day,
 nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
 He will keep your life.
The Lord will keep
 your going out and your coming in
 from this time on and forevermore.
Amen.

"We stand in awe of the One who brings order out of chaos."