

3rd Sunday after Epiphany
January 26, 2020
Lincoln Heights Lutheran Church
Whom Shall I Fear?

Psalm 27 (NIV84)

Of David. ¹ 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 evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. ³ Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident. ⁴ One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon 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 tabernacle and set me high upon a rock. ⁶ Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD. ⁷ Hear my voice when I call, O 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, O God my Savior. ¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will receive me. ¹¹ Teach me your way, O 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, breathing out violence. ¹³ I am still 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.

Dear Friends in Christ,

King David asks this question today: Whom shall I fear? The answer in this Psalm of David is: no one. We should not fear anyone or anything because the Lord is our light and our salvation. I suppose I could simply say Amen right now. The sermon could be over since we know that Jesus is our Light and our Salvation. All our fears should be gone. But the sermon will continue because there are still fears in our lives. The reality is that Christ has overcome everything we would fear, but the reality is that we still experience fear.

Maybe our fear has to do with God himself. We are afraid of God and what he thinks of us since God knows our deepest and darkest secrets. Maybe our fear is fear of the future, the unknown. What is going to happen with the economy? When and where will the next terrorist attack or natural disaster strike? Who is going to get sick next? Fears are part of this life on earth. So what do we do with fear? How can we follow David's example and say with confidence: Whom shall I fear?

David's confidence is found in the Lord. He knows that the Lord is his light and his salvation. And David knows that when the fears of this world trouble him, he can approach the Lord in prayer and wait

for the Lord to bring about something good.

The Lord is Our Light and Our Salvation

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 evil men advance against me to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes attack me, they will stumble and fall. ³ Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear; though war break out against me, even then will I be confident.

David had plenty he could have been afraid of in his life. He should have been afraid of God when he took another man's wife to be his own wife and had the man killed on the battlefield. David was in such a dark place for nearly a year that he didn't even seem to realize his great sins. But when he was brought to repentance by the Word of God through the prophet Nathan, David was not afraid of God's anger then either. David could have wallowed in guilt and shame for his adultery and murder but he took the absolution announced by Nathan as true. Nathan told the repentant David that his sins were forgiven. The light of the gospel was David's salvation. The light of the gospel took away David's fear of God's punishment and anger.

Is there a sin buried in your past that still troubles you? Maybe shame and guilt surround that sin. Maybe you wonder if God is still mad at you, still making you suffer to make up for that sin. Maybe that sin is something that is still going on, hidden from the people around you, but you can feel the guilt deep within yourself. When is God going to get me for this? Follow David's example and repent. Turn away from sin and hear the absolution of the Lord. In Christ, your sins are forgiven. Take the announcement of Christ's forgiveness to heart for the Lord is your light and your salvation. He is not out to get you or scare you or cause you to live in fear. Christ came to save. Believe his absolution and live in confident faith before your God.

David did not just have to deal with sin of his own. He also had enemies who sinned against him and wanted to destroy him. The lion and bear attacked his sheep but David was not afraid of them. Goliath caused the entire Israelite army to fear, but David was not afraid. Saul tried again and again to kill David. David's son, Absalom led a coup to remove David from his throne. The Philistines and others continued to be a threat. But David is still not afraid because the Lord is his light and his salvation. And David has a safe place to go.

One thing I ask of the LORD, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon 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 tabernacle and set me high upon a rock.

David's safe place is the house of the Lord. Now, Solomon would build a magnificent temple of stone and wood and gold. That would be a physically safe place since it was built of such strong materials. However, the house of the Lord at David's time was a tent. David had the ark of the Lord brought into Jerusalem and pitched a tent for it. There is not much protection in a tent. However, David's confidence was not in the building but in the Lord who promised to be there with his people. Wherever the Lord

promised to be was David's safe place. No enemy could do him any real or eternal harm if he was close to the Lord.

Where is your safe place when the devil prowls around like a lion seeking to devour you, when the secular world seeks to destroy your faith, when wars and rumors of wars swirl around us, when opportunities for fear abound? Our safe place is where God promises to be. This is no longer a tent in the wilderness or temple in Jerusalem. Our Light and our Salvation promises to come to us in the Word and in his Sacraments.

In Baptism, the Triune God put his name on you and claimed you as his treasured possession, adopting you as his child. Whom shall I fear if I am claimed by God? In Holy Communion, the Lord Jesus gives you of his very flesh and blood for the forgiveness of sins. Christ is truly present when you eat and drink. Whom shall I fear when Jesus is with me? In the Word of God, our Light and Salvation makes promise after promise. He will be with us always. He will never forsake us. He will work out everything for our eternal good. Whom shall I fear when God has promised us such things?

Stating confidently that we have nothing and no one to fear is not boasting about ourselves. It is boasting in our Savior-God. Knowing all our God has done leads us to respond in a similar way to David: *At his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the LORD.*

Wait for the Lord

our faith may waver, our hearts may doubt, friends and family may fail us – we may fear even though Christ is our light and salvation. Then we seek the face of the Lord in prayer.

Christ was forsaken by his Father so that we can be confident that God will never forsake us.

Seek the Lord in his Word – learn his ways so when enemies sow the seed of doubt, we know the truth.

Though enemies seem to be winning in this world – sin abounds, evil prevails, death comes not only to the old but to the young, not only to the wicked but to the innocent, when it looks like all goodness is gone– wait for the Lord. Do not fear any enemy. Believers will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

Amen