

Thoughts for North Bridge Baptist Church

Sunday, March 22, 2020

For the next couple of weeks and perhaps even beyond that, I thought it would be good to do something in common for a Sunday worship time. We will not be together in person, but we can remember each other in prayer, and center our thoughts with a common passage of scripture. My thoughts are that we look at a Psalm together each week. They are rich in emotion, and many of them deal with fear, isolation, loneliness, hopelessness, and many other emotions that may be common at this time. My prayer is that process will help to guide you spiritually through the coming weeks.

For this Sunday, I have chosen Psalm 27. I want to encourage you to stop at this time and read the Psalm. It would even be good if you could read it out loud. Remember, these are really words that were meant to be song. If you can put these words to music, you could even sing it out loud!

Psalm 27 “The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation”

Part 1 verses 1-3 God is our light and stronghold

The writer (we believe it to be David) begins this Psalm with two powerful faith statements. The first statement is that God is the light of our salvation. Three weeks ago in worship we looked at the words of Jesus in the context of healing the blind man from birth when He said “I am the light of the world.” This gives a powerful image of God guiding our paths so that we know the direction to go, but also to keep us from stumbling. It gives us a unique perspective as believers that the world may not understand. What a great blessing it is to be guided by God’s light.

The second image in verse one is that of stronghold. This is a place of refuge that gives us a sense of calm and security. It is not based on our strength, but God’s. He has graciously provided this for us.

The response of the writer with both of these statements of faith is “whom shall I fear? I have nothing to be afraid of in this world. God has already provided for me. There is a perspective of letting all fear go and simply resting in God’s provision. In verses 2 and 3 he talks about the enemies that one might face in life. I found it interesting some of the terms that the writer used. In verse 2, he mentions the enemy that wants to eat up my flesh. In verse 3, he mentions the war that is rising against him. There is no way that David knew about the covid-19 virus. However, it is interesting how these verses use language that many are using today in response to the pandemic. My understanding of the virus is that it literally destroys the lining of the lungs and often this week our leaders have mentioned that our response to covid-19 is lack that of going to war. What a great promise it is that God is our light and stronghold, and because of this there is nothing to fear.

Part 2 verses 4-6 Dwelling with God in His House

David goes on to express a great yearning of faith. The thing that I will seek after is that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Keep in mind that his words are not in future tense. This is not referring to a heavenly place at the end of life, but a presence with God in the present day and for

the continuation of all the days of this present life. This is a face to face place with God, so much so that we may gaze upon his beauty. Keep in my mind that when this Psalm was written the temple had not yet been built. The best place of worship was a tent.

In reality, we can meet God in our church building, but we can also meet God any place that we choose to worship. And as we come to God face to face, there are two things that He provides. In verse 5 it mentions that "he will conceal me under the cover of his tent". He puts a cover of protection over us. And not only that, but he lifts us up and puts us upon the rock. He places us in the secure place. This is a place of confidence while in his presence. It is no wonder that he responds by singing and making a melody to the Lord.

Part 3, verses 7-12 Praying our hearts out before God

The writer moves forward with an intense, personal, face to face time with God. He is not unlike many of us. We assume that if we mention it one time to God that all will be right. But, the practice in the Psalms, in the New Testament, and with many in the present day is that the time of prayer is intense. This is why we are on our knees, or face down before God. Yes, God will answer, but it is never according to our timing, but His. It is not about our glory, but His. I am reminded of the time of Jesus in the garden. Luke 21:44 reads "And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground". In contrast to this, we find the disciples asleep. What a contrast! The man, Jesus, who had the strength of God, was intense in his time of prayer. Those who were weak (like many of us) were asleep when they needed God's strength the most.

So we find David seeking God in a very intense and personal way. It is not just a prayer that he is uttering, but a cry according to verse 7. I can only imagine the intensity of David. His life most likely literally depended on God's provision. At the same time as this prayer he is seeking God's face. He is yearning to draw near because his only answer ultimately is God. He had no one else to trust in or to depend on for his life.

Then in verse 11 there is a turn. He moves from the yearning to making a faith statement. He simply says "teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies." One of the least understood aspects of prayer is that we are changed because of it. There was certainly a change in the perspective that David had. We often do not spend enough time with God to allow him to change us. But, scripture is clear that as we seek God, He molds and shapes us. He also is faithful to never turn us away.

Part 4 verses 12-13 Wait for the Lord

These last two verses give us two more thoughts to ponder. The first is a great faith statement. "I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living!" This is certainly not referring to the future. He intentionally mentions the land of the living. But simply, gives a statement affirming that I know that God will provide. He does not know how or when. He simply trusts God for his provision.

Then the last verse ends and begins with the same phrase, "Wait for the Lord." Many years ago I read a classic book that has impacted my perspective of this thought greatly. The book is entitled "Waiting on God" by Andrew Murray. It was originally written in 1896, but is still in print and can be found in many places. We often think of waiting as a passive endeavor. We wait for an appointment, or for a bus, or a piece of mail to come. All of these are passive. The thought behind this Hebrew term is a very active endeavor. We are pleading, urging, begging of God for his protection and provision. We do not simply rest, but we are active in our petition with God. It most likely is something that happens over a period of time and contains the New Testament of praying without ceasing. In some translations Hope replaces the word wait. This is a hope that is active and believes that God will answer.

So in the midst of the crazy world that is all around us, we learn from Psalm 27 ways to trust in God and handle any enemies that come. These may be enemies from the outside or the inside. We ultimately have no one else to trust but God and he is faithful in his response to us. I am reminded of the words from Isaiah 40:31 "but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."