

2 Lent Year C

3/13/2022

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18; Psalm 27; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 13:31-35

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Our collect today is one that always stirs my soul...

It has much to teach us in the way of God.

Listen to it...

*O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy...*

If you ever wonder what God's emotion toward you is...

No matter what you have done...

It is to have mercy.

That does not mean there is not justice or consequences to sin...

But it does mean that he has mercy upon you.

And because of that mercy...

We pray in our collect:

*Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways,  
and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace  
and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your  
Son...*

The ones who have gone astray...

For the ones we pray for...

The children that no longer serve the Lord...

For the friends and loved ones that have not confessed Jesus Christ...

We pray...

Because God's glory is to always have mercy...

We pray...

That God will bring them back to embrace Jesus Christ.

My friends...

That is a good prayer...

I encourage you to pray it all week.

Take that bulletin with you today...

Pray that collect so that it becomes formed in your thinking.

We worship a merciful God.

Our Psalm today...

Psalm 27...

Is a lament Psalm that encourages us...

toward trust in God.

In the first three verses...

Fear and being afraid are mentioned three times.

Fear is something we all grapple with...

Fear of being alone.

Fear of others.

Fear of what may happen to us.

Fear of losing what we have gained.

Fear of what may happen in this world.

Fear of what may happen to those we love.

Fear is an emotion that can consume us, change us, and stop us in our tracks.

We can simply freeze... motionless...

because we are so gripped with fear.

And here in Psalm 27...

The psalmist says that although there may come an army against us...

Because of our Lord God we shall not be afraid...

Because our trust is in him.

The first verse of our Psalm says:

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—  
whom shall I fear?*

Light being used here as a way of describing God.

Light means different things...

It means knowledge, insight...

It can also mean Joy.

In ancient times light was a way of describing safety in contrast to night or darkness.

Bad things happened at night.

Many cities closed their gates at night, and no one was allowed to go out or come in.

Darkness was associated with disorder, confusion, evil, and it would bring fear.

Even today there remains a stigma at night.

We lock our doors at night.

We put lights around our houses hoping to discourage people that are up to no good.

Haunted houses are usually in the dark.

The scariest parts of horror movies are in the dark.

Most violent crimes are at night.

87% of DUIs are at night.

Darkness is still something that can cause fear, anxiety, and even danger.

Nevertheless, in Psalm 27 God is our light and salvation.

God is the God of light.

He created light...

He created the moon and stars that shine at night.

And as Christians we understand that Jesus is the Light.

So many verses in our Bible describe Jesus as the light.

One of the great messianic prophecies from Isaiah describes the light of Christ.

In Isaiah 60.1-3:

*Arise, shine;*

*for thy light is come,*

*and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

*For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,  
and gross darkness the people:  
but the Lord shall arise upon thee,  
and his glory shall be seen upon thee.  
And the Gentiles shall come to thy light,  
and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Even Jesus himself declared he was the light.

He said:

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in  
darkness, but will have the light of life.*

(John 8.12)

Again, Jesus said:

*I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me  
should stay in darkness.*

(John 12.46)

St. John in his epistle declared boldly:

*This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you:*

*God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.*

*If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth.*

*But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

(1 John 1.5-7)

When we humble ourselves...

And we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior...

The light of Christ fills us and begins to change the way we view the world.

Belief in the cross of Jesus Christ and the resurrection of our Lord brings light, a new understanding, a transformation in our life.

C. S. Lewis famously said:

*I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else.*

The light of Christ changes the way we view everything.

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

Jesus is the light of the world, and he has come to bring us out of darkness.

And as believers of Jesus Christ...

Jesus says that we are the light to others...

Listen to what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount:

*You are the light of the world.*

*A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.*

*Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.*

*Instead they put it on its stand,*

*and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

*In the same way, let your light shine before others,*

*that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

(Matthew 5.14-16)

So, as we press in more fully during this season of Lent...

Pushing against anxiety and fear...

Trusting in Jesus...

Running to him as he is our light and salvation...

As we are called in this world to be the light of Christ in our community.

Two practical ways to walk in the light of Christ and not the fears of this world can be found in our appointed psalm.

First, the psalm says:

*One thing I ask from the Lord,*

*this only do I seek:*

*that I may dwell in the house of the Lord*

*all the days of my life,*

*to gaze on the beauty of the Lord*

*and to seek him in his temple.*

*For in the day of trouble*

*he will keep me safe in his dwelling;*

*he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent*

*and set me high upon a rock.*

These two verses are in obedience to the principles of Jewish religious law...

In times of trouble, one is to go the house where the Lord is present and appeal for favor and help... to seek the face of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> James L. Mays, *Psalms, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1994), 131.

The place to find the light and be in the light is in the temple of God.

The lesson here for us is to gather with God's people for worship in the house of the Lord.

We usually call this church.

To be faithful in church is one of the ways we are encouraged so that we remain walking in the light of Christ.

To try to walk in the light of Christ alone... is very, very difficult.

We are called to worship together.

Since the founding of the church at coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost the church gathered together for worship and have done so weekly for centuries even millennia.

The writer of Hebrews declared:

*And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,*

*not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,*

*as is the manner of some,*

*but exhorting one another,*

*and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*

(Hebrews 10:24-25)

It is so much easier to give into fear when you are alone and away from your church family.

The second way are psalm encourages us to remain in the light of God is when it says:

*Hear my voice when I call, Lord;*

*be merciful to me and answer me.*

*My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”*

*Your face, Lord, I will seek.*

*Teach me your way, Lord;*

*lead me in a straight path*

The psalmist is calling out to the Lord...

A practice that we should have daily.

It is hard to walk in the light of Christ if we don't spend time with Jesus Christ.

The lesson here is to be faithful in your personal devotion to God...

Your daily prayers,

bible reading,

the seeking of God...

Spending time in the light helps us to walk in the light.

Psalm 27 is a reminder of how God is our protector, our refuge, our salvation, and our strength... God is our light.

As Christians, the light of God has entered into our life through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Jesus is the light within us.

When we spend time with God in the gathering of his people for worship...

When we spend time with God in our daily disciplines of prayer and Bible reading...

We find strength against the fears that run wild in this world.

May we follow this encouragement today...

to live faithfully in the light of Christ

and to declare the light of Christ in this world...

even in its darkest places.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation;*

*Whom then shall I fear?*

Amen.