

January 22, 2023

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

“Sing the Faith: Follow Your Heart”

Today we have a powerful Psalm before us. I am sure people in Ancient Israel loved to sing it. *The Lord is my light and my salvation.* We have heard this before. But in truth – the imagery of light for God isn’t all that common in the Hebrew Scriptures. In creation God speaks light into existence. Light isn’t equated with God – but *can be a characteristic of our relationship* with God. The most important things we know about God **are all about relationship.**

The Lord being our light stands in contrast to the darkness which can overwhelm our lives. Darkness might be *depression* – in which our minds can’t see past the pain of the moment. Darkness might be our being enmeshed with *a self-defeating pattern of behavior* that we have *so equated with ourselves* we don’t understand how it hurts us. Darkness can be *our inability to see* what and who we are living with. Light in the darkness helps us to **see**, helps us to **change** and helps us **connect** to others. When the Lord is our light – we do better by nature.

The Lord is the stronghold of my life – whom shall I fear? This is one of those questions that implies there are *lots of things* out there *we might fear* – and even do. Fear **keeps us** from *settling into life*. Fear gives us the *wrong measures* by which to decide what to do. Some envision the stronghold of my life as a castle with a courtyard where one is safe to live without fear of all that resides outside the wall. God giving us a place to be and grow and become. But we don’t live in a castle, and we are surrounded by a chaotic world. When we live as God’s children it *changes how we see* things. It changes *how we choose* in life, and it *diminishes fear*. Because we are God’s we measure the threats around us differently – with less fear.

We are not brave in life because God’s reality banishes threat. We are brave because living with God’s life in us and seeing the world by God’s light gives us *the power to overcome rather than succumb to threats in life*. I have always found Jesus harsh when **he reprimands the disciples** for waking him in the boat when the waves were coming over the side and beginning to sink it. But this Psalm helps clarify that. The Lord is our light and salvation *in all circumstances* – not just when the sky is blue, the wind is calm, and our lives have smooth sailing.

Forgive the pun – but for me the heart of this passage is verse eight. *“Come, my heart says, ‘seek God’s face!’ Your face, LORD, do I seek.”* There is buried in this affirmation the question, “How did my heart know what to do?” Our hearts can lead us in life giving ways. How? ***By being the place in which we meet God.*** We are not God’s children because we are smart enough to know a good thing when we see it. We are God’s children because ***we have been claimed by God who loved us long before we ever imagined the idea of God.***

This is the place we can safely follow that old advice - *“Follow Your Heart.”* The Psalmist’s heart leads them to the house of the Lord – to behold the beauty of the Lord. Which is to say...our hearts as God’s children are ***tuned to the presence and the ways of God***...and the more our hearts are attracted to God and love the things God loves and wants to do the things which please God the more helpfully our hearts lead us.

In the book of Galatians Paul uses the image of the fruit of the spirit...things which *grow in us when the spirit is in us.* This Psalm brings a similar image. Love, Joy, Peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, self-control – these things take over the **default settings** of our lives when our hearts seek to *connect to God instead of control the world* around us. When we are confident not in making others do what we want – but when ***we yearn to do what God wants.***

This is where that, *“live in the house of the Lord”* thing still makes sense. None of us live in this building – and honestly don’t want to. But we do want to live as God’s children and know we are in God’s care everywhere we go. ***We want to spend time with people who matter to us.*** To see our children my wife and I must fly to California, Scotland, and Texas. And we are pleased when they travel to visit us for Christmas. To reconnect, we go to where they live. God’s life and love are everywhere – *but a focal point is helpful* – and that’s why we gather for worship and think of church as God’s house. We need the help discovering connection to God – not the other way round.

Let’s open ourselves to the one who is everywhere – encounter God who loves us in our life together – and follow our hearts as God’s faithful children – always.