

“Pointing to the Kingdom!”*Psalm 27: 1-14*

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***The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?***

The LORD is the stronghold^[a] of my life;

of whom shall I be afraid? (Verse 1) Every one of us goes through some dark and fearful times in our life. If we or a loved one has a serious injury or illness, we would have times of stress. Conflict at home or on the job can cause despair. Pressures of deadlines at work or as a student can put us under a tremendous amount of pressure.

Here's a story from Max Lucado: *This is a chapter in the life of Chippie the parakeet. Chippie's owner decided one day to clean out his cage....with a vacuum cleaner! As she started the phone rang. She turned around to answer it, but before she knew it, Chippie disappeared. She tore open the vacuum cleaner and found chippie barely breathing in the bag. Chippie was full of dirt so she took him to the sink and rinsed him off. Chippie was shivering so she dried him with the hair dryer. A few days later a friend asked how the Parakeet was recovering. The owner said, 'well, he does not sing that much anymore. He just sits and stares.'* And that is what fear does - it constricts - limits our potential. Love allows us to grow, mature and have joy. David, the Psalmist, declares that the Lord brings light and salvation. When you have that, why be afraid? Good point!

***One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:***

to live in the house of the LORD

all the days of my life,

to behold the beauty of the LORD,

and to inquire in his temple. (Verse 4) David the Psalmist asks for only one thing. In our curiosity we wonder what that is. The writer (David) asks to live in the presence of God – to live in the house of the Lord all the time for the rest of his life! The writer wants God close. He has experienced that God is love, and with God close by, fear is controlled.

While living in God's house he desires to behold (contemplate) the beauty of the Lord all around him. Children tend to be more inclined to stop and see the beauty of the Lord. As we know they can stop and gaze at a flower for a long time. The natural world we live in is so amazing but at the same time complex. We certainly have the help of science to begin to understand, which is so helpful for us to appreciate the complexity of this mystery. But we lose so much of that sense of awe, mystery, the curiosity and the delight as we get older. Life easily becomes normal and mundane in our busyness. On the contrary, to contemplate on the beauty of God's creation gives us joy and imagination.

In being in the presence of God, David also wants to learn more and study at God's feet. David is saying that in the presence of God in worship and with others (as we are today) he wants to learn more about this God whose nature is love. Love means we become an observer – a student if you will, of the one we love. We want to study the things of God.

Childlike trust really matters in life. Listen to what Jesus says from Matthew 18: 1-5: *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"*² *He called a child, whom he put among them,*³ *and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*⁴ *Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me".* We so desire for our children and for ourselves to keep that child-like trust and curiosity close by *beholding the beauty of the Lord!* As good parents we want our children to develop habits to eat vegetables and have good manners. Even more importantly, it is important that we nurture them in the knowledge that they are enough, they matter and are loved by God (even when others reject them). This is a gift we can pass on to them. Encourage them to grow in the knowledge of God! Growing in the knowledge of God means God and God's love is central to their lives. In Baptism we acknowledge God's totally unconditional love for our children and promise to point to them in the way of love for God and for our neighbour!

We nurture this in our children so they can be agents for the Kingdom of God – which can be defined as the reign of God's Grace in the world. In this time of Lent we reflect on what Christ suffered to win the final victory over injustice and death. The good news is that on Easter Sunday we celebrate the victory of God's reign over fear and death and anything that leads to death. Our children need to know love has the final word – not fear! We point them to God's Kingdom of love so they can also pass it on.

Now my head is lifted up

***above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent***

sacrifices with shouts of joy;

I will sing and make melody to the LORD. (Verse 6) Music helps us express thanks for God's love. Music is a gift from God which gives us pleasure and joy. Music and singing brings us together as God's people and strengthens us in faith, hope and love - not fear!

Take it to the Lord in Prayer! Though God is his solid rock, David is in a difficult time because of persecution by his enemies. These verses from verse 7-12 are a prayer of lament because of his dire circumstances. This prayer is also a reaching out in humility and trust as a child asking God to teach him God's way. One could say that in this prayer David is asking that his emotions be level and not in despair because of his enemies around him. In the midst of the challenges - we have the gift to come to God in prayer. Let us sing verse one of 'What a Friend we have in Jesus'!

***I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.***

¹⁴ ***Wait for the LORD;***

be strong, and let your heart take courage;

wait for the LORD! To wait also means to hope. We do not need to live in fear as little Chippie the parakeet, but take courage because God has won the victory in Jesus who defeated death. That news helps us and our children to point beyond our-selves to his Kingdom. Amen.