

Sunday June 30, 2019

First Lutheran Church

Psalm 27

Pastor Doug Larson

Dear Friends in Christ, grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

I've been told that the island of Manhattan in New York City is solid rock. For that reason it is able to support so many skyscrapers. We look for that kind of support in our lives. One of my members some years back was diagnosed with kidney cancer. The treatment was surgery. The surgery was successful but for some reason, this person's body shut down and she spent the next ten weeks in ICU. At one point she came to and her husband asked if she was afraid. She responded, "I trust in my God." She had a support in that time and she lived that out in the rest of her life also.

One day in church, I watched a man come in and down the aisle. He had a nice looking sports coat, tie and shirt and he carried a cane. He was about 80 years old and he came alone. I made some guesses about him and of course, they could have been wrong. I thought here is a man who has lived a lot of life. He no longer has a wife, is alone a lot and he has some physical limitation. I looked at him and said that for all he has experienced, all that he has been through, being in church is still important and he was coming because God had been with him through all the years and experiences. God was his stronghold.

What is your support, your light and salvation, your stronghold? Maybe for most of us it is the same as the writer of Psalm 27, it is the Lord. John Yvilsaker has taken this psalm and put it to the words of "Do Lord". It is a fun song to sing. This song is a song of celebration. This may be a song we can say we have always sung. Or maybe it is a song that has become our song as we have moved through life.

I think of a man who was a sales representative for a company. He was far from home. He had just finished a session with a buyer over supper and as many drinks as he could get the buyer to drink. Sitting in his motel room, he began to feel disgusted with his life. He was fed up with what he was doing. He then began to think about God, began to pray and decided he wanted to live differently. He came back home, told his family he wanted to go to church every Sunday and live out his Christian faith more fully. He got involved in a small group faith and Bible study session. When he heard that teachers were needed for a junior high Sunday School class, he volunteered. God had become his light and salvation, a rock.

In the hymn "What a Friend We Have In Jesus" we say that we forfeit so much when we don't take things to our Lord and God. We carry pressure and pain that we don't have to. Take it to the Lord in prayer, the hymn says.

The 27th Psalm is really a love song to God. Love songs tell how wonderful the other person is. They say the other person is their everything. "Run and find the one who loves me" is one phrase. Here in this psalm the writer is sharing how wonderful God is to them.

Yet, as wonderful as this psalm is, it is also possible that it can be deeply disturbing. Pastor Jim Nestigen said that we think John 3:16 is pure Gospel and makes us feel good. But what if we are sitting in a church hearing "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son that whoever believes in Him

should not perish but have eternal life” and you realized that you don’t believe. Now you feel scared because you don’t have that promise.

What do we do in that case? The disciple Peter was told by Jesus to step out onto the water. The tax collector Levi was told to leave his tax tables and follow Jesus. We are invited to step and put our trust in the Lord. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. Take it to the Lord in prayer.

We can also let others surround and support us in hard times. We can let down our guard and share what is going on with us. Let others help. Let them pray for us, care about us. We don’t have to go it alone in life.

A man named Augustine finally found that God was good and a help. He had resisted for years having anything to do with God. But then he dropped his guard and later expressed that “Our hearts were made for thee, O Lord and they shall not rest until they rest in thee.”

If Psalm 27 is a love song, then it’s an invitation for us. It’s an invitation to celebrate our relationship with God. Yes! He’s my rock and my salvation!

It’s an invitation to let ourselves be loved by the God who promises to take care of us. It’s an invitation to do as in the Beatle’s song, “Let It Be”. Yes, let it be, let it be, let God be in my life.

It’s an invitation to commit ourselves to the Lord. Lord I want to live with you, to live in your house. Help me Lord! And the Lord will!