

031322 "The LORD is My Light and My Salvation" Psalm 27:1-6

As a child, I learned calligraphy at school. I was not good at it – it looked like a mess when I did it myself. But when the teacher grabbed my hand and wrote the letter with me – really, for me – it was beautifully written. Likewise, if we live according to our own needs, our own plans, our own desires, it is difficult to live with beautiful fruits in the sight of God. But if we live according to the word of God and longing for the presence of God, then God will guide us and lead us to write a beautiful message to our neighbors and to the world.

In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."

Today is the second Sunday of Lent. Lent has its origins in the early church, when believers fasted to remember the suffering of Jesus in preparation of the Holy Communion. During Lent, fasting and abstinence, as well as charity and giving were encouraged; some read or transcribe the Bible, praying for others and sharing the Gospel. Thus, each day of the Lent is spent with a longing heart. How are you spending Lent meaningfully?

In today's psalm, we read a person's longing heart. What kind of wishes do you have? Most common desires of today's world are family members' health, material prosperity, romantic love, and promotion/academic success. But look at the wish of David in today's passage. Even though he was going through difficult and challenging times that naturally would have led him to want rest and peace, he was only longing for God. David sincerely prayed that he would have a constant relationship with God (verse 4). "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." Are you ready to use your own wish on gazing the beauty of the Lord if there is only one wish you can ask?

In verses 4-6, David seeks a place of refuge. We see that for David, the presence

of God is refuge itself. Notice also that David says he loves the beauty of Jehovah – ‘beauty’ is used interchangeably with ‘grace’ here. David is absolutely confident that God will protect and save him even in times of great pain and suffering. As Oswald Chambers once said, “Perseverance is more than endurance. It is endurance combined with absolute assurance and certainty that what we are looking for is going to happen.”

For David, God is a shining light, salvation, and a safe shelter; David hoped and was confident in the God of light, the God of salvation, in the moment of his fear. God created light before anything else when God created this world. The Bible also uses ‘light’ to describe the appearance of God – a fantastic light! When Jesus’ body was transformed at Mount Transfiguration, He was a strongly emanating light. When Moses came back from 40 days in Mount Sinai during which he received God’s commandments, his face was shining with light. When we draw near to the light of God, there are two possibilities: we either die, or embody that light in our face and in our life.

Psalm 27:4 says, “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.”

“The beauty of the Lord” in today’s passage doesn’t solely refer to the outer beauty of God’s temple. It also refers to the grace and mercy of God and the word of God. In Hebrew, what’s translated as ‘beauty’ here is [loam] and it also means ‘goodness, lovingkindness, and grace.’

So even in his toughest days, David trusts that the good, graceful God will protect and save him. David trusts that when he has a relationship with God, the absolute safety and grace that God provides him will keep him from faltering or failing. David trusts that the temple of God will hide him, making all the suffering and difficulties bearable. I pray that we all seek truthful relationship with God in this season of Lent.

To 'dwell' in the House of the Lord means to consistently enter the temple. This is not about eating and sleeping at the temple and never going out of it. In other words, dwelling is persistently seeking God's presence in one's life. See Luke 24:52-53, for instance, describing the Disciples after they witnessed the ascension of Jesus into heaven: "Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God."

The New Testament teaches us that our human body is a temple. 1 Corinthians 3:16-17: "Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple." By dying on the cross and being resurrected, Jesus allows us to have the Holy Spirit in our bodies, transforming us into temples of the Lord.

"One thing I ask from the LORD; this only do I seek." In other words, a continuous relationship with God is David's one and only wish. This tells us about his priorities, challenging us to reflect on what we place the highest value in our lives.

Recall also the story of Mary and Martha in Luke: Martha was busy in her heart doing chores, while Mary sits at the feet of Jesus listening to him instead of helping her sister. To this, "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:41-42). The one thing that Mary chose to do was to draw near to Jesus and listen to His word with admiration and love. Mary wasn't perfect, but our Lord delighted in her wish and commended her for it.

Similarly, Paul the Apostle said: "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14).

Thus, when we look at the one wish of role models of faith in the Bible, there is one commonality: they had a lifelong relationship with God in any situation. We all have different wishes and desires in this world, but I pray that our utmost wish – like that of David, Mary, and Paul the Apostle - is to know Jesus intimately and to walk with Him the rest of our lives.

An anonymous writer has said, "My small son and I were taking a walk. In the far corner of the field, we found a small patch of beautiful and fragrant flowers. They were in the middle of weeds, almost completely hidden, yet these flowers were blooming in full beauty and we sensed their fresh fragrance. All of us have met persons unnoticed by many, but who in the middle of their own struggle and unlikely surroundings far from the center of attention, live lives of beauty and fragrance. And living lives which seemed obscure they faithfully fulfilled God's calling for them. God's question on the last day will not be, 'How much were you noticed?' or even 'How much did you do?' Rather, his question will be, 'Were you faithful in fulfilling your calling where I placed you?'"

Are you anticipating saying, "yes?" We can't get to the kingdom of God because we did stuff, or because our grandmother was a saint, or even because we came to church every Sunday and sat through a lot of sermons! We must be persistent in seeking Jesus everywhere and in everything we do.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, I pray that you will live in the presence of Jesus Christ this week of Lent. Let's go out and walk with Jesus today and everyday. Fairfield Grace, May God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you and your family, and your business, and your studies, and with the lives of your children. Amen.