

The Lord is my...

Psalm 27

1/23/11

Please finish this statement – *The Lord is my...*

The psalmist would finish the statement with –

The Lord is my light and my salvation (helper); the stronghold (safe place, refuge) of my life.

How does that answer help you in life?

List some answers –

- When I am afraid, he gives me courage
- When I am lost, he finds me
- When I feel unworthy, he reassures me I am lovable
- When I have sinned, he forgives me
- When I am anxious, he gives me peace
- When I am grieving, he comforts me

The writer of this Psalm is being threatened by enemies called evil doers, adversaries, and army. It all amounts to false witnesses in verse 12.

Read verse 12

False witnesses were a serious threat in those days. There were no attorneys in court to prosecute or defend. Imagine that - no lawyers!

A minister, a scientist, and a lawyer were adrift on a life raft in the tropics. At last they saw land but the wind died down while they were still a short way off the beach. The lawyer volunteered to go ashore with a line and pull the raft to land. The minister knelt and prayed for his safety. Then the lawyer dove in. His companion saw a black fin of a shark heading straight for the lawyer. The shark disappeared, and then came up on the other side of the lawyer and kept swimming. Then they saw an even bigger shark darting toward the lawyer but this one also swam under him and kept swimming not harming him at all! After the lawyer had reached shallow water, the minister said to the scientist, "There, you doubting Thomas, there is the proof of the power of prayer." "Power of prayer, my foot! That was just professional courtesy!"

With no lawyers to defend a person, the witness played a dominate role in how the case was ruled. A false witness could put in question a person's status in the community and relationships with God.

The Psalmist prays for God's help – be gracious to me, answer me, do not forsake...

The Psalmist is afraid. Fear is mentioned three times in the psalm.

I want to tell you two very similar stories then I want you to notice the difference.

Story One

There once were two brothers. They lived on adjoining pieces of property and together worked the family farm they had inherited from their father. One brother was single and lived alone. One brother was married and had four children. The brother who lived alone thought, "I am single. My brother has a large family to take care of. I have plenty. It is not right that I should get the same share of the farm as my brother when he needs it far more than I do."

So, each night, after he was sure his brother had gone to bed, he snuck over taking a bag of grain from his barn to his brothers. In a similar manner other brother thought, "I have a large family. As I get older, I will have my wife and children to help take care of me, but my brother has no one. It doesn't seem right that he and I should get the same share of the crop when he will need the money from the farm more than I." So, each night, after his family had gone to sleep, he snuck over taking a bag of grain from his barn to his brothers.

Then, one night, the two brothers bumped into each other as they were carrying grain each a bag from his barn to his brothers. They laughed immediately knowing what the other was doing and embraced.

Story Two

There once were two brothers. They lived on adjoining pieces of property and together worked the family farm they had inherited from their father. One brother was single and lived alone. One brother was married and had four children. The brother who lived alone thought, "My future is uncertain, I am single. My brother has a large family to take care of him should something go wrong. He has plenty. I likely won't have enough. He is selfish to take an equal share of the crop with me. I should get more. It's only right."

So, each night, after he was sure his brother had gone to bed, he snuck over taking a bag of grain from his brother's barn and stored it in his. In a similar manner other brother thought, "I have a large family. I need more of the farm to take care of my family. It isn't right that my brother who is single gets the same amount as I do for he only has to take care of himself. How can he be so selfish when he knows my situation? With an uncertain future, what if I don't have enough?" So, each night, after his family had gone to sleep, he snuck over to his brother's barn and took a bag of grain and then took it back to his barn.

Then, one night, the two brothers bumped into each other as they were carrying grain each a bag from his barn to his brothers. They immediately knew what the other was doing and began to fight. Each bought guard dogs, locked their barns, refused to talk to each other.

What's the difference in the two stories? The two different families?

The brothers in the second story are terribly anxious about the future.

The difference between fear and anxiety is simple. Fear has a particular focus, anxiety is broad and general. If you walk out on the playground, and you see a snake, and the snake rattles at you, and you are afraid, then that is fear. You are afraid of that particular, tangible snake. If you walk out on the playground and are afraid of snakes simply because we are by the river that is anxiety – snakes out there, but more in your head.

The writer of this prayer is anxious what the false witnesses will do to his life.

And yet listen to his confidence –

Read verses 1-3 The Lord is my life and my salvation; who shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Where did his anxiety go? What did he do with his fear? No where!

I want to suggest he did nothing with his fear and anxiety. There is not much we can do with feelings that come from the known or unknowns of life. The writer of this prayer turned his focus onto God – off of fear and anxiety of what damage a false witness could do to him and onto who God is and what God can do.

One thing I ask of the Lord and that is what I seek - lives in the house of the Lord and look at his beauty (v. 4). Your face Lord I seek (v. 8).

To seek something means to go after it with more than just your mind. The word describes a deliberate striving and deep desire of the will. It involves the whole person – body, mind, and soul.

It reminds me of an Olympic trainer, a great musician, painter, or naval seal (Special Forces). There is singleness of purpose.

To seek God is to worship God. (talk about our worship on Sunday mornings)

This is how the writer of this Psalm faces his anxiety and fear with confidence. It is not confidence in himself but in his relationship with the Lord. Nowhere else in the Bible is the phrase, “The Lord is my light” used. It is very personal and intimate. He knows God is with him and loves him.

It is in worship that person learns more about God – teach me your ways, O Lord.

It is in worship that he can wait in strength for God to work in him and in his adversaries.

Seeking God is a singleness of purpose – a preoccupation with Jesus Christ. Nothing else distracts you because Christ is your priority.

Our worship is what we think, say, and do in response to what Jesus had done and continues to do. The disciples worship Jesus after he calms the wind and sea. Their fear is replaced with awe – their full attention and following.

Wait for the Lord, be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!

Practical suggestions for the week:

1. Read Psalm 27 every day

2. Finish the statement several times a day – the Lord is my ...
3. Learn to seek Jesus in the routines of day by asking, “Where is Jesus.”
4. Know the anxiety is lurking in the shadows but God is bigger and loves you.