

“God’s Silence Isn’t Desertion”

Message by DD Adams

2nd SUNDAY IN LENT

Providence United Methodist Church

February 21, 2016

The Old Testament lesson for today is Psalm 27. I’m reading from the *Common English Bible*. “The Lord is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone? The Lord is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything? When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—it’s they, my foes and my enemies, who stumble and fall!”

“If an army camps against me, my heart won’t be afraid. If war comes up against me, I will continue to trust in this: I have asked one thing from the Lord—it’s all I seek: to live in the Lord’s house all the days of my life, seeing the Lord’s beauty and constantly adoring his temple.”

“Because he will shelter me in his own dwelling during troubling times; he will hide me in a secret place in his own tent; he will set me up high, safe on a rock. Now my head is higher than the enemies surrounding me, and I will offer sacrifices in God’s tent—sacrifices with shouts of joy! I will sing and praise the Lord.”

→ “Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out—have mercy on me and answer me! Come, my heart says, seek God’s face. Lord, I do seek your face! Please don’t hide it from me! Don’t push your servant aside angrily—you have been my help! God who saves me, don’t neglect me! Don’t leave me all alone! Even if my father and mother left me all alone, the Lord would take me in. Lord, teach me your way; because of my opponents, lead me on a good path. Don’t give me over to the desires of my enemies, because false witnesses and violent accusers have taken their stand against me.”

→ “But I have sure faith that I will experience the Lord’s goodness in the land of the living! Hope in the Lord! Be strong! Let your heart take courage! Hope in the Lord!” The gospel lesson is from the book of Luke, chapter 13, verse 34b. “How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn’t want that.” This is God’s word for God’s people. Thanks be to God.

Let’s pray. God bless the reading, hearing, understanding, and doing of your word. Well up in us springs of hope and confidence as we hide your word in our hearts. Let the words of my mouth and the mediations of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. Amen.

Peace be with you! Psalm 27 and Luke 13:34 fit together in a rather unique way. In Luke, Jesus cries over the people of Jerusalem because they’ve rejected him and his salvation. The opposite occurs in Psalm 27 verse 5. The Psalmist accepts God and his salvation and cries out, the “[Lord] will hide me in a secret place in his own tent; he will set me up high, safe on a rock.”

When we draw near to God he draws near to us. We’re safe, and he hides us in a place where the enemy can’t touch us. We’re given hope and joy in times of trouble and fear, and we’re reassured of God’s constant presence.

The season of Lent is about self-examination and reflection. We look inside ourselves. We’re introspective. We return to God once again, and we see our need to understand more clearly who we are in the midst of difficult times.

In Psalm 27, you can hear the emotions of the Psalmist go up and down. At first, David is confident and filled with trust, and he’s assured of God’s protection. Then a few verses later he pleads with God and cries out “Have mercy on me. Answer me! Don’t hide your face from me! Don’t push me aside angrily. Save me! Don’t neglect me. Don’t leave me alone.” At the end of the psalm David confesses

his trust once again despite God's seeming abandonment. Silence isn't desertion; it's silence. How do you handle it?

In this psalm we see David going back and forth between trust and cries for help in the face of fear. It's the human condition and our natural bent. We pray and express our appreciation and praise to God, and then we turn right around and cry out to God and say, "God, where are you?! Don't leave me alone! Can't you see I'm drowning here!? The enemy is close at hand. Lift me up high God!"

What's your response to fearful things? How do you handle what you hear when you listen to the news? Do you look for a bandaide to pacify the pain? Or maybe you ask a professional for an explanation that brings rest to your fearful soul? At times fear will play a part in our lives because of our fallen nature. But our goal as Christian disciples should be to find a way to lessen the effects of fear. We should be striving to grow in our trust of God's promises instead of accepting the fear.

Trusting God is a journey that's progressive. One *encourages* their faith to become more excellent. They nurture and cultivate an attitude of God-sufficiency. The first 2 verses of Psalm 27 say a lot. Listen to it again. "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Should I fear anyone? The Lord is a fortress protecting my life. Should I be frightened of anything?"

The verses are clear and understandable. We don't have to be afraid of anyone or anything! The Lord is on our side, but the Lord wants our obedience. So what's the response? Do we entertain fear and yield our emotions to the enemy of our soul? Or do we trust in the faithfulness of God? Trusting in God is walking in the light and path of God's word. Prayer and seeking God's face is God's goodness in the land of the living! We have choices to make daily.

The way to a strong hope is a hope in the Lord! It's being strong and getting courage through prayer. Take your Bible with you to your prayer closet. Pray the

promises of God. Remind yourself who God is, who you are, and where this secret place is that will hide you in troubling times. Listen to Psalm 91 verses 1 and 2. “You who live in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.’ Where is this secret place we’re kept safe?

God may seem silent at times, but that doesn’t mean God has deserted you. God tries our hearts to show us who we are and who we need. Our adversary the Devil whispers fearful things to us, but it’s our choice to trust the promises of God.

Let’s focus on God rather than the enemy. Let’s open the door and receive the goodness of the Lord not the evil from the enemy. And when we’re in a time of trouble and fear rises up within us, let’s choose to be strong and take courage. God may seem silent, but wait for the Lord. Wait until the light of God pours into your heart and mind. God promises to never leave us, and his presence is constantly around us. Center and focus your mind on the goodness of God and hope in the Lord!

Let’s pray. God fill us with the confidence of knowing that you shelter us during a troubling time in a secret place when trouble comes near. When you seem silent to us in the midst of difficult circumstances, brace us up to trust you. Move in us to seek your face, to be strong, and allow you to make our heart take courage. Fill us with hope and shouts of joy to praise you. Amen.