

### **3-29-2020 SERMON CCI ONLINE Psalm 27 The Lord is the Stronghold of My Life**

I want to begin our reflection on Psalm 27 by reading a meditation on it by Rev. Dr. Roy Medley. Rev. Medley was a previous General Secretary of the American Baptist Churches USA. In a time when we receive so many mixed messages, it's a sure message.

The darkness of fear weighs upon us like a pall covering every social interaction, every report of more infections and deaths. My family live near the Jersey shore where several lighthouses still stand, sentinels from another era when, without GPS, ships plied the tumultuous waters of the Atlantic. Their light offered to anxious sailors a sure bearing and the promise of safe passage.

The coronavirus pandemic has shut down so many of the markers by which we navigate our lives- the routine of daily work and Sunday worship, a stock market that moves ever upward, hopping in our cars or on a train, ship, or plane to go wherever we choose when we choose, outings to our favorite restaurants, hitting the stadium, ballpark or arena for a game, high school proms and college graduation ceremonies, family gatherings or hanging with friends, even our confidence in modern medicine to quickly offer a wonder drug or vaccine to subdue this pestilence. All these have been taken from us. Not since the AIDS epidemic has a silent, secretive killer threatened us like this and disrupted our sense of safety and invulnerability.

Though far removed from us in time, the {young man,} David, who had been anointed king, struggled with fears as terrible as our own while he hid from the peril of death at the hands of {King} Saul's soldiers. {King Saul knew God had called David to take his place as king and so he tried to kill him first.} Perhaps it was in the darkness of a cave where he had fled, breathless with fear as armed men closed in upon him, that Psalm 27 began to form in his heart, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

Even as we shelter in place, I work my garden and flower beds, sowing seeds as an act of hope and faith.

When all other means of navigating our daily lives succumb to the onslaught of COVID-19, this is our sure, true bearing, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" May the light of Christ shine upon your way and guide you in the path of compassion and love for all who suffer. May the light of Christ {like those lighthouses on the shore} illumine your heart and grant you peace.

Good words to guide us through these difficult days.

Two times in Psalm 27, David asks, "Who should I fear?" It's so easy to let fear become our stronghold in troubling times. We see fear driving people to buy up all of everyday supplies like toilet paper, face masks, and hand sanitizer and hoard it for themselves. What do they fear? Being vulnerable like the rest of us? Over toilet paper? As God's beloved people we are invited instead, to trust the God who faithfully, sometimes miraculously, provides what we need. Isn't that what we pray in the Lord's Prayer- give us this day our daily bread. Not enough for 6 months even though it leaves none for others, but our daily bread. Daily bread here stands for all that we need, even toilet paper. Maybe, during Covid 19, we should add to the Lord's Prayer as a reminder - something like, *Give us also this day our daily toilet paper- or something akin to it.* Trusting God to meet our daily needs, big and small, takes away the fear of being vulnerable, and lets us freely share with others.

For some people, the opportunity to make a profit from this crisis is the stronghold that drives them. So we hear about the young man who drove a 1300 - mile round trip buying out toilet paper and other supplies, not for his own safety, but to sell them at a dramatic profit on Amazon. He still has 17,000 bottles of hand sanitizer. Praise God, Amazon management had the moral bearing to shut down such people's accounts to protect the public.

We can also drive ourselves crazy with the fear of becoming ill with the virus. Let's face it, most of us in this congregation are in the age range that is most at risk of dying from this virus. Even me. I laugh, remembering that Lynie told me last week "You're no spring chicken either, you know." And she was right. I responded, "Yeah, but I'm only a summer chicken." And the Lord is the stronghold of this summer chicken's life, so I can shelter in place, take the recommended precautions, and live without fear- not because I believe God will protect me more than all the others who get infected as though I'm somehow special, but that God is my stronghold and my salvation no matter what comes. Friends, if this life ends for us, we will merely change our home address to our Father's home. Where there is plenty of toilet paper and no need for hand sanitizer, gloves, masks, or ventilators. When we trust our lives, **and** our deaths, to our good and gracious God, we find the peace we long for.

So let us let the Spirit of Christ guide our way, our thoughts, our actions, and even our emotions. That's where we find life and hope in troubling times. Here's a project for us this week and next: Those among us who are any kind of gardener-

professional or amateur, green thumb or brown thumb, fruit, vegetables, or flowers- let's plant some seeds in pots this week and next as **our** acts of faith and hope. Water them, give them light, and nurture them. And then, on the first Sunday that we can gather together for worship in person again, let's bring our potted plants and praise the Lord who is our light and our salvation; who is the stronghold of our lives and brings us peace. As David wrote in Psalm 27, we can say with boldness,

<sup>13</sup> I remain confident of this:

I will see the goodness of the Lord  
in the land of the living.