

TRUST IN GOD'S FUTURE

Text: Psalm 27

LHUMC 2/24/13

(Lenten Series "Prayers of the People" #2)

I. Introduction

- A. Today we are talking about what Psalm 27 is really all about, and that is "trust". How would you define "trust"? (Show video)
1. There are some helpful words in the video—dependence, assurance, belief, understanding. And don't you feel sorry for those people who have no clue what it is?
 2. For the writer of Psalm 27, according to the last verse, the key word in defining what trust really is would be "waiting". "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; Wait for Lord." (If we didn't get it the first time, the writer says it again.)
 - a) You get the sense that this person has been through some rough stuff in their life, all of this talk about evildoers and enemies would suggest that they have had some first-hand experience coming up against those kinds of people.
 - b) But even after all of that, in the last verse, the Psalmist has gotten to the level of trust where they have been able to wait for the Lord's presence, even in the toughest times of life. And now he or she is reaching across the centuries to urge us to get to the point where we can do the same thing.
 - c) For the Psalmist, ultimate trust is when you can wait for someone to show up and knowing all the time that they will show up.
 - d) Actually, the New English Version of the Bible makes that leap from waiting to trusting by translating that last verse "Trust in the Lord. Have faith and do not despair. Trust in the Lord."
- B. So the question for us is "Do we have that kind of trust in God?" The kind of trust that allows us to wait patiently for God to show up, even in those times when it seems like God's time is way too slow for us.
- C. I always remember how Corrie Tenboom defined trust—"When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer." (You could call that a paraphrase of Psalm 27).
1. When our train goes through the tunnel, do we have the trust and the patience to wait for God to see us through to the other end?

2. Or do we desert God and God's promise of presence in times like that like we talked about last week?
3. And then the prayer question—Are our prayers at times like that as patient and trusting as this prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 27?
4. Are our prayers **statements** of trust in God's future like they are here? (“God will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble, he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high on a rock. He will, he will, he will...”)
5. Or do we pray in **questions** when our life is in the middle of the tunnel—“Will he?...Will he?”
6. Psalm 27 would seem to suggest that one sign trust in God's future for us is if you can pray in statements rather than questions when the train is in the tunnel.

II. Which leads to the next question, which is probably the question we are all asking ourselves about now, after hearing this incredible testimony of trust. That question being, “How do I get to where the Psalmist is on my own trust walk with God?” Well, one other great thing about Psalm 27 is that you don't have to read between the lines to get the Psalmist's answer. No peeling away of the symbolism needed here! In fact, it's summed up in one verse when the Psalmist says what it might take —v. 4: “One thing that I seek after (and it's actually three things)—#1 “To live in the house of the Lord all the days of the days of my life,” #2: “To behold the beauty of the Lord”, and #3: “to inquire in his temple.” Three pretty clear directives. What do we get from those three things about how to gain more trust in our relationship with God?

A. “To live in the house of the Lord forever.”

1. Does this mean that we're supposed to pitch a tent at the back of the sanctuary or down in the Fellowship Hall or something and just hang out here for the rest of our lives? (In my line of work, some weeks are kind of like that). The Psalmist would say “sort of yes and sort of no.”
 - a) “Yes” in this sense—When any of the Psalms talk about the importance of “dwelling in the house of the Lord forever”, they are first and foremost talking about being in the Temple, of being here, specifically for worship.
 - b) Back then, it was essential that everyone make an appearance in the Temple at Jerusalem, at the very least during the great religious festivals that happened throughout the year.

- c) And this was no easy task necessarily—if you lived far out in the countryside, it took a lot of travel and effort and expense to get there.
 - d) But the Psalmists all understood the reality that it is in worship where we come in close contact with God, where we are in conversation with God, even where God makes Himself known to us in the most tangible ways.
 - e) They understood that if you never get to worship, you are missing out on perhaps the best opportunity to grow in your relationship with God.
 - f) And if you are never growing in your relationship with God, it's hard to grow in your trust of God.
 - g) So the Psalmist is telling us that our trust walk with God begins here on Sunday morning when we dwell together in the house of the Lord for worship, and it is really important to be here if we expect to grow in our trust of God.
2. So being here for worship is important, but at the same time, it was also understood that when the Psalmists said that we need to live in the house of the Lord forever, that at a deeper level it also meant to be in the presence of the Lord forever—and we don't need to be in church to do that, that anywhere we go, we are in the presence of the Lord—we just need to remember that.
- a) So we don't necessarily need to live here all the time, for if we remember that God is always dwelling with us wherever we are, then we can more fully trust Him when we need Him the most.
- B. All of which leads actually to #3 on the Psalmist's list of what we need to do to grow in our trust of God, because it's related. He says we need to “inquire in His temple.”
- 1. The way I read that is that maybe worship by itself isn't enough.
 - 2. That maybe just sitting here on Sunday morning soaking it all in may be better than nothing in growing in our relationship and then our ability to trust in God, but we've got to take the next step and be active learners as well.
 - 3. What this means is that things like Bible studies or any other ways we might learn more about God can help us on our trust walks.
 - 4. With the Psalmist, because he had learned so much about God's past, and all the ways that God had come through for those who came before, he was able to trust in God for the future.

5. Because of what he had learned, he knew that if God had done it before, God could do it again.
 6. You could say that the bottom line is that it's hard to trust someone until you get to know them pretty well.
 7. So the call is for each of us to never stop "inquiring in the Temple", however we are able to do that so that we can get to know God better.
- C. And then back to #2—that we need to “behold the beauty of the Lord.”
1. Here is what one commentator says about this one—“That (God’s) universe is beautiful might seem to need no expression, but countless numbers of people seem to go through life with little awareness of the beauty of a butterfly, a rock formation, or the Milky Way. The problem is that we too often focus on ourselves and our problems. Looking at the beauty around us can remind us that God creates beauty, and God wants our lives to be beautiful” (Tod Mundo, www.progressivetheology.org, March 4, 2007)
 2. I think that what he and the Psalmist are trying to tell us is that our trust walk with God might also take us down the beach, through the woods, up the mountain. That seeing God’s beauty in a sunset or the change of seasons or as we look in a telescope can be ways in which we grow in our trust of God.
 3. The bottom line in this one would be something like “If God can do that, just think of what God can do for me.” A statement of trust if there ever was one.
 4. But any time we are busy or distracted or tuned out, and we miss some display of God’s beauty, we miss an opportunity to grow in our trust of God.
 5. Our story when Megan was born—It was a few weeks before she was due, and she hadn’t been moving for a couple of days, so we went into the hospital. It was our first time, so we were clueless. But as we sat there, and Annette was hooked up to every kind of monitor imaginable, and Megan’s heart rate was getting slower and slower, and the doctors and nurses were moving faster and faster, I remember looking out the window of the hospital room and seeing a gorgeous sunset. And I remember thinking at the time, “However this comes out, I know that God is with us.”
 6. It was a moment of which the Psalmist speaks—finding trust in the beauty of the Lord.

7. So remember last week when I said that in every Psalm there is that “aha” moment where there is a verse or an image that seems to be speaking directly to you? That is the moment for me in Psalm 27.
- D. So to sum it up—three ways to grow in our trust of God.
1. Live in the house of the Lord—In other words, go to church! If you are ever going to get closer to God, it will happen here. And even when you are not here, remember that you are dwelling in the presence of God. That in effect, the whole universe is God’s house.
 2. Inquire in God’s Temple—in other words, learn everything you can about God. The more you know, the easier it is to trust.
 3. And behold the beauty of the Lord—Look around, savor God’s beauty. See in that beauty the beauty that God has in store for you at the other end of the tunnel.
 4. If we do those things, then we too can begin to pray prayers more like Psalm 27.

III. Conclusion

- A. I’ve learned in my research of the Psalms that over in Ireland, the early Celtic Christians were apparently great readers of the Psalms.
- B. They also had an understanding that there are certain places that we can go to be closer to God. They called them “thin places”. Where the gap between us and God is very thin.
 1. Sometimes these were geographical places—and you may have a certain place where you go and you feel like God is right there.
 2. But they also understood that sometimes the “thin places” are within us. That once we have a very deep relationship with God, when we understand that we are always dwelling in the house of the Lord and He is dwelling within us, then the thin place is right here.
- C. I mention this because Psalm 27 is a prayer prayed by someone who was at a thin place in their life. You can only pray this kind of prayer of trust when you know that you are in the immediate presence of God.
- D. I share this because I came across a prayer that echoed Psalm 27 this week from the Celtic tradition that begins like this: “Where is my home? Is it the house where I live, the garden where I sit in the summer, the country where I roam, or the church where I worship? The place I call home is where my heart is at rest. And my heart is

most at rest when it turns to God in prayer. So wherever I pray is home.”

- E. Once we understand that wherever we pray is home—that wherever and however we pray, we are dwelling with God and God is dwelling with us, we can come to the kind of trust that the Psalmist had. The kind of trust that knows that God is always with us as we go through the tunnels of life.
- F. We give thanks for this wonderful trust walk that is our faith journey.
- G. We give thanks that God is with us all the time—leading us safely through to the other side.

