

Psalm 27

3rd Sunday Year A; 2nd Lent Year C
7th Easter; Anzac Day; November 2nd
Office during the Day Holy Saturday
Evening Prayer Wednesday Week I

The title reads: 'Of David'. This is a psalm of deep trust: 'I will be confident'(3b); 'my head is lifted up'(6a); 'I believe'(13); 'hope in YHWH'(14). Threatened with violence as a result of false accusations, the psalmist is endeavouring to counter his fears (1) by recalling his special relationship with God, who he knows will protect him: 'My heart shall not fear'(3a); 'Come seek my face!'(8a); 'Wait for YHWH; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for YHWH!'(14). We might contemplate Jesus in agony:

In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission.

– Hebrews 5:7

YHWH is his light (1). YHWH is also his salvation and stronghold (1); and his help (9). YHWH hides him, conceals him, sets him high (5), takes him up/welcomes him (10). Notice the various situations in which the psalmist trusts in YHWH: war (2-3); sin (9); being abandoned by parents (10); being unjustly judged (12)

Part One. YHWH my light, the stronghold of my life

The psalmist likens himself to a city under siege. The temple is first thought of as providing refuge, then as being a place where the psalmist can dwell all his life in God's presence. Fear is overcome by a process of spiritual interiorisation.

YHWH my God, you are wrapped in a mantle of light.

– Psalm 104:1-2

With you is the fount of life. In your light we see light.

– Psalm 36:9

YHWH, happy are the people who walk in the light of your countenance.

– Psalm 89:15

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of YHWH has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but YHWH will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

– Isaiah 60:1-2

**^{1a}YHWH* is my light
and my salvation*;
whom shall I fear*?**

As we reflect on YHWH as our 'light', we might recall the following from the New Testament:

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

– John 1:9

The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.

– Matthew 4:16

^{1b}YHWH is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

The expression 'stronghold of my life' occurs only here. The words 'of whom shall I be afraid?' remind us of Jesus' words:

Take courage; I have conquered the world.

– John 16:33

Gird up your loins; stand up and tell them everything that I command you. Do not break down before them.

– Jeremiah 1:17

I, I am he who comforts you; why then are you afraid of a mere mortal who must die, a human being who fades like grass?

– Isaiah 51:12

Compare the following from Paul:

If God is for us, who is against us?

– Romans 8:31

²When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh*, it is they – my adversaries and foes – who shall stumble and fall.

Those who are combining to attack the psalmist resemble an army tightening its grip on a besieged city. Through his prayer he is encouraging himself to resist and to continue to place his trust in YHWH.

³Though an army encamp against me, my heart* shall not fear; though I find myself having to face war, yet I will continue to trust*.

This longing to be in the presence of YHWH by entering the temple is a theme that recurs throughout the psalms:

Surely your goodness and kindness will be my escort all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of YHWH my whole life long.

–Psalm 23:6

Walk about Zion, go all around it, count its towers, admire its ramparts; consider its citadels, that you may tell the next generation: this is God, our eternal God forever our guide.

– Psalm 48:12-14

Happy is the person whom you choose to bring near to live in your courts. We are filled with the goodness of your house, with the holy gifts of your holy temple.

– Psalm 65:4

How lovely is your dwelling place, YHWH of hosts! With all that I am I long, indeed I faint for the courts of YHWH; my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. Even the sparrow finds a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young, at your altars, YHWH of hosts, my King and my God. Happy are those who live in your house, ever singing your praise.

– Psalm 84:1-4

I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory.

– Psalm 63:2

The psalmist experiences YHWH's protection in the temple. Compare the following:

Blessed be YHWH, who has shown wonderful kindness to me in his stronghold.

– Psalm 31:21

Let us listen to Jesus:

Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

– John 14:1-2

The victory of YHWH is acknowledged with shouts of joy and the offering of sacrifice.

⁴One thing I ask of YHWH, this is what I seek:

to live in the house of YHWH all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of YHWH, to admire his temple.

⁵For he will hide me in his shelter in the hour of danger; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will set me high on a rock.

⁶Now I will lift up my head above the enemies who surround me, and I will offer sacrifices in his tent with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to YHWH.

Part Two

An interior dialogue, praying to YHWH and concluding with an invitation to trust.

⁷Hear, YHWH, when I cry to you, be gracious* to me and answer me!

⁸“Come seek my face!”

My heart says to you: “I am seeking your face, YHWH.

⁹Do not hide your face from me.

Do not turn your servant away in anger*, for you are my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God my Saviour*!

¹⁰Even if my father and mother forsake me, YHWH will welcome me.

¹¹Teach me your way, YHWH, and lead me on a safe path because my enemies are waiting in ambush.

^{12a}Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries.

In his heart the psalmist hears God calling him: ‘Come seek my face!’ His response is immediate and heartfelt. Compare the following:

I will return again to my place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face. In their distress they will beg my favour.

– Hosea 5:15

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

– 2Chronicles 7:14

Seek YHWH and his strength;
seek his presence continually.

– Psalm 105:4

The greatest obstacle to trust is sin which blocks off God's love.

Compare the following:

Can a woman forget her child at the breast, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

– Isaiah 49:15

How much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!

– Luke 11:13

The psalmist focuses again on his enemies.

The focus moves from the battlefield to the court. His adversaries are those who are bringing false accusations against him. Compare the following:

The irreligious are bracing the bow,
they are fitting their arrow to the string,
to shoot from the shadows at the upright in heart.
When the foundations are destroyed,
what can the just do?

– Psalm 11:2-3

We think of Jesus on trial before the Sanhedrin:

Some stood up and gave false testimony against Jesus.

– Mark 14:57

The psalmist continues to place his trust in YHWH.

Be strong and bold; have no fear or dread of them, because it is YHWH your God who goes with you; he will not fail you or forsake you.

– Deuteronomy 31:6

I, I am he who comforts you; why then are you afraid of a mere mortal who must die, a human being who fades like grass?

– Isaiah 51:12

Jesus said to Thomas, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

– John 20:29

Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

– 1Corinthians 16:13-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ.

– 2Corinthians 1:3-5

Let us listen to Saint Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing trouble you / Let nothing frighten you/
Everything passes / God never changes /Patience
obtains all/ Whoever has God wants for nothing / God
alone suffices.

^{12b}False witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence.

¹³I believe that I shall see the goodness of YHWH in the land of the living.

¹⁴Hope* in YHWH; be strong, and let your heart* take courage; hope* in YHWH.