

**20C*THE TIMELESS PSALMS:
A CALL TO WORSHIP
LENT 2C 2016
PSALM 27**

We come to worship you, O God, as "*The Eternal is my light amidst my darkness...*"¹
We come to revere our God, as God gives light and hope to us even in our darkness.

We come, O God, to: "...*live with him all of my days—in the shadow of his temple...*"¹
We come to worship our God, as we shelter in the large shadow of God's presence.

We come, O God, "...*to behold his beauty and ponder his ways in the company of his people... It is there I find peace in the midst of storm...*"¹ We come, to wait upon God.
We come to worship and praise our God, because God does lift us up above the storms of life; and above the claims on our time and energy - to renewal, and growth in grace. Amen.

PSALM 27
A psalm of David.

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid?
The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble?

2 When evil people come to devour me, when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

3 Though a mighty army surrounds me, my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked, I will remain confident.

4 The one thing I ask of the LORD—the thing I seek most—
is to live in the house of the LORD all the days of my life,
delighting in the LORD's perfections and meditating in his Temple.

5 For he will conceal me there when troubles come;
he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock.

6 Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me.
At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy,
singing and praising the LORD with music.

7 Hear me as I pray, O LORD. Be merciful and answer me!

8 My heart has heard you say, "Come and talk with me."
And my heart responds, "LORD, I am coming."

9 Do not turn your back on me. Do not reject your servant in anger.
You have always been my helper. Don't leave me now;
don't abandon me, O God of my salvation!

10 Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.

11 Teach me how to live, O LORD.

Lead me along the right path, for my enemies are waiting for me.

12 Do not let me fall into their hands. For they accuse me of things
I've never done; with every breath they threaten me with violence.

13 Yet I am confident I will see the LORD's goodness
while I am here in the land of the living.

14 Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous.

Yes, wait patiently for the LORD.

**PRAYERS OF PETITION:
LENT 2C 2016
PSALM 27**

We come, O God, to worship you this day, in hope and expectation of you hearing our prayers and praises; and that you also hear our petitions for your grace and mercy, as we experience difficult times of fear and anxiety. Today, we claim as our own the faith statement of the psalmist who sang: "*The Eternal is my light amidst my darkness...*"¹ and with him we also ask: "*Whom shall I fear...?*"¹ Sometimes, we also ask "What shall I fear", as it is often the 'unknown' rather than the 'known' that unsettles or troubles us in our faith journey. Faithful God, we bring to you today, all that comes between us and you, asking that you strengthen us to face all of life's uncertainties; and to ask again that you take us by the hand and show us your 'way'.

Lord of Light and hope, we bring to you our faith in you, and ask that you strengthen that faith, so that all the things that bother us and make us anxious are simply nothing, in the presence of our Glorious God! The psalmist pleaded with God to allow him to live forever within the shadow of God's presence; and yet, it was from that very same shadow that he found the confidence to ask that prayer! Help us to grow in the confidence that we too already live each day within that same shadow of God's holy presence, if we but realised it; and to live and love accordingly – every day and night of our lives.

God of fellowship and community, the psalmist also prayed to be allowed to "...ponder his ways in the company of his people..."¹; and so today we pray for our own people—those people with whom we join together in worshipping our Heavenly Father. Be now for each one of us we pray, a light that shines brightly in our darkness on to the pathway we have to tread as a community; and lift us up above the various storms of life; and above all the claims on our time and energy - to our renewal and our growth in grace and love. In faith, hope and expectation we bring our worship to the our Lord God, who asks of us: "...Wait patiently for the LORD. Be brave and courageous. Yes, wait patiently for the LORD." Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:
LENT 2C 2016
PSALM 27**

Psalm 27 opens with what could be two rhetorical questions or two statements of faith! *“The LORD is my light and my salvation—so why should I be afraid? The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger, so why should I tremble...?”* The word ‘so’ is the defining word, as if to say: ‘Of course, with the Lord as my light and my salvation; and with the Lord as my fortress – what is there to be scared of?’ Rhetorical questions are intended to at least extract an acknowledgement of the validity of such a statement, or to start a discussion to reach either consensus or affirmation of the statement. “The Voice” translation gives a different reason for the questions: *“The Eternal is my light amidst my darkness and my rescue in times of trouble. So whom shall I fear? He surrounds me with a fortress of protection. So nothing should cause me alarm...”*¹ The author was “amidst” his problems – they were not questions or statements about potential hazards, they were real and relevant!

Creative pause: *“The Eternal is my light amidst my darkness...”*

“The Voice” translation continues: *“...I am pleading with the Eternal for this one thing, my soul’s desire: To live with him all of my days—in the shadow of his temple...His house is my shelter and secret retreat. It is there I find peace in the midst of storm and turmoil...”*¹ This translation seems to be stronger and more urgent than the one I usually use which states: *“...The one thing I ask of the LORD—the thing I seek most...”* I resonate to the words: *“my shelter and secret retreat.”*¹ as is often the case, I have a ‘place’ for my reflecting and meditating where there is no place for pretence – rather, allowing only an openness before God. The psalmist found that ‘place’ in God’s ‘house’!

Creative pause: Where is your ‘place’ of honest openness before God?

Finally, “The Voice” also strengthens these verses: *“...O Eternal, show me your way, shine your light brightly on this path, and make it level for me, for my enemies are lurking in the recesses and ravines along the way. They are watching—hoping to seize me. Do not release me to their desires or surrender me to their will...!”*¹ By way of contrast the “New Living Translation” states *“...Teach me how to live, O LORD. Lead me along the right path...”* Having claimed that *“The LORD is my light and my salvation...”*, the psalmist asked God to shine God’s light upon the way ahead and to show him how to really live in God’s ‘way’. The New Testament followers of Jesus were called “people of the Way”; and this early believer in God wanted to live with that same passionate commitment, as he begged God not to “release” or “surrender” him - as though he were God’s very own!

Creative pause: Was the psalmist an early follower of “The Way”?

¹ Quotations from Psalm 27 using the translation entitled: “The Voice”
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