

Anglican Church of Freiburg
Sunday the 13th March 2022
Second Sunday of Lent
Homily
Psalm27

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?

²When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

⁴One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.

⁵For he 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.

⁶Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

⁷Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸"Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, do I seek.

⁹ Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.

Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!
¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.
¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.
¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.
I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD
in the land of the living.
¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

The beauty of the Scripture is that it keeps speaking to people generations after generations. The words take new meaning in each context, meanings far beyond someone else in a different context could ever imagine.

I read Psalm 27 afresh this morning after having closely journeyed with the Council of Anglican and Episcopalian churches in Germany and listening to their experiences from Ukraine.

The Words that came up for me to pick from included

Darkness and Light- Imagine living without power supplies and gasoline availability for over a week. Darkness is far beyond the absence of Light. It is a much deeper spiritual reality. A much stronger inner reality.

Fear. Living under contexts of horrific bombings. Where all your dear ones have already fled. You see your residences gutted. Your roads unusable. Your food supplies looted. The smell of decay filling the air. Sounds of horror everywhere. The chill of fear cannot be explained in words. It is fear for yourself and for the other.

Adversaries, foes, armies encamping against, enemies, war. See how suddenly your former colleague becomes for you one of these categories. How suddenly the WE became YOU and US. How suddenly hatred replaced collegiality. How suddenly encampments

Father and Mother forsaking me. Would that ever happen. They had no choice. The elderly had to leave and I could not. Was it forsaking. Was there a choice in the context of compulsory enlistment of young people into the armed forces.

House of the Lord. That was the fulcrum of our faith. It was where we found real community. Real friendship. It is all gutted down. People have gone away. It is a place of

refuge now for the ones left. How do I seek the beauty of the Lord in such a horrific scene.

We could go on picking words and realise that those words could have new meanings for us today as individuals and families- within or outside the context of Ukraine. The fact that one of our family members was not affected directly would be no consolation at all.

The context of Psalm 27 and the context in which we read it today could have similarities and difference. David is surely fleeing from his adversaries, not from an enemy nation, but from his own. And the way he finds solace in God in such a situation is the highlight of this Psalm.

1. Turning to God in Crisis Times

The LORD is my light and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?

When Darkness Creeps in and Life is at Stake

When fear fills the air

What does it mean to find Light in the Lord

What does it mean to find salvation in the Lord.

The Android Personal Assistant created by Artificial intelligence was asked a question- Now that you can do all things that a human could and sometimes beyond what is it that you do not have.

The answer was very interesting- The Soul.

In an age where even emotions are artificially created- the question WHERE is GOD in all of these would keep reverberating

It is therefore important to look at the experience of the Psalmist who claims

The LORD is the stronghold of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?

What do you mean by having a strong-hold when everything else falls off. Someone strong to hold on to when everything feels so wobbly.

Whatever be the context. Read with me the experience of David

²When evildoers assail me
to devour my flesh—
my adversaries and foes—
they shall stumble and fall.

³Though an army encamp against me,
my heart shall not fear;
though war rise up against me,
yet I will be confident.

How do we find confidence in God amidst war and turbulence
A world of evil doers, adversaries, foes...
An army encamping against me
What does it mean to say the Lord is my light and my salvation.
Hatred is a Virus- You and I are the vaccines
That is why the Light of the World said- You are the light of the world.

2. Desire of Hiding in the House of the Lord

What do you mean by hiding. Ask a person who just managed out of the war zone the meaning of the word hiding. It is not the hide and seek or the cat and mouse games that our children know of.
Hiding is for protecting your LIFE
That the enemy soldiers would not see you or the artillery does not reach you.
But what does hiding in the House of the Lord
It is far beyond the assumption that the enemy would not attack this place. They would.
Then how and why do we find religious spaces a space for refuge for people.
What do we mean when we say the Lord will hide me in his shelter.
We are used to singing- Guide me O thou great Jehovah and now there are people this morning singing amidst sounds of gun shots
Hide me O Thou great Jehovah
⁴One thing I asked of the LORD,
that will I seek after:
to live in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to behold the beauty of the LORD,
and to inquire in his temple.
⁵For he 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.
⁶Now my head is lifted up
above my enemies all around me,
and I will offer in his tent
sacrifices with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

There is another very pertinent question that we should ask- what is the house of the Lord? Is it a beautiful archaic building. Well buildings have its own significance. But the Pandemic taught many of us across the last few months- the House of the Lord is far

beyond buildings. It is you and me reaching out to each other seeking God's presence everywhere.

How do we become the living temple of the Lord where people needing a helping hand could reach out and hold on to.

How do we make our life meaningful. After all at the end of the day we must listen carefully a voice from the border

I lost my life time earnings- was it for this that I toiled?

I lost my job and my house- was it for this I spent most of my time?

I want to go back and pray that I would not be encrypted. I want to be part of Life and not Death.

What are we living for.

What does it mean to hide in the house of the Lord.

3. Seeking the face of God

⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!

⁸ "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!"
Your face, LORD, do I seek.

⁹ Do not hide your face from me.
Do not turn your servant away in anger,
you who have been my help.

Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,
O God of my salvation!

¹⁰ If my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will take me up.

One of the hardest feeling is that of forsakenness. David is struggling through that in his crisis points. But he does not want to give up his heart holding on to God.

He therefore cries out to the Lord- hoping that the Lord would hear

He is confident that the Lord would be gracious and would answer

Amidst turbulence he wants to seek the face of God.

Created in the image of God- the word used is ikon. Do we find God in the face of the suffering

Do you hear the voice- I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was fleeing, I was imprisoned, I was in the hospital and you came to me. The little you did to the least of these you did unto me.

DO not cast me off. Do not forsake me.

4. The Call to Wait for the Lord

¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.

¹² Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries,
for false witnesses have risen against me,
and they are breathing out violence.

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

¹⁴ Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

In a context where adversaries breathe out violence what is the meaning of Waiting for the Lord.

With so much of tears and pain around what does it mean to hold on to the promise verse- I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Here or hereafter.

Teach me your ways O Lord.

There is an old story of a man who have four wives. Three of them he loved very much and one he ignored. At his death bed he called one by one and asked- Would you come with beyond the river.

The first said- the moment you cross the river I will go to someone else.

The second said- well I might come for the viewing but that's all I can do

The third said- I might be able to come to the funeral but after that what to do would be my choice but certainly would not be able to come along.

The fourth- the one whom he never seriously considered said- Do not worry I will come with you.

The first is called- your wealth- your possessions, your job. The moment you cross the river it becomes someone else's- would not come with you.

The second is your friends- upto the viewing and not beyond

The third is your family- lucky if you have them for the funeral.

The fourth is the soul- whether you cherish it or not- it comes along

The Little you do to the least of these stays with you.

In contexts like this our prayer can only be- teach me your ways O Lord.

What then is the good news we take home from this passage

Wait for the LORD;
be strong, and let your heart take courage;
wait for the LORD!

The going might be touch tough - Wait for the Lord- be strong
Your health might be failing- Wait for the Lord- be strong
There could be emotional breakdowns and anxiety- Wait for the Lord- be strong
There could depression at seeing what's happening- Wait for the Lord- be strong

Our Symbol for Lent is the seed
Today when we share our peace we would again have a seed to share
And our prayer of peace for each other would be Wait for the Lord- be strong

Within the seed is hidden new sprouts, new possibilities, new hopes, new dreams and a
new future
Wait for the Lord- be strong

Amen