

In the Day of Trouble

Psalm 27

Well, it's happened! I've been preaching long enough that I am encountering lectionary readings that I've already spoken on. What to do? I could rerun what I did 3 or 6 years ago, but you folks are all young enough to remember that I did that sermon already, so that didn't seem like the best choice. Then as I pondered what to do with this text from Psalm 27 something happened, I attended June Jenkins' funeral.

While I knew June, I did not know her well, so hearing the stories told by family and friends helped to paint a fuller picture of her for me. The words funny, fun, generous, and humble were often repeated. Pastor Burkett mentioned how her musical talent was shared with many in the area. But the stories that touched me the most were about her last days.

I think you all are aware that June had been very sick and in the hospital for several weeks. When it looked like she may have turned a corner and could return home she, sadly, took a turn for the worse and was moved to hospice care. It was at this point that June made a decision that was difficult for some family members to accept. She was ready to go Home. That's Home with a capital H. She knew her Lord and was ready to be with Him.

This leads me to today's Scripture verses, originally penned by King David. David himself faced death on several occasions as related in the Biblical story. Yet in this Psalm he speaks of an unshakable sense of security – of whom shall I be afraid, whom shall I fear. He says that even if his enemies seek to harm him or war breaks out against him, he will remain confident. Confident of what? Confident that the Lord who had delivered him in the past will once again deliver him from harm.

David expresses a desire to be close to the Lord, to dwell in His house where he can see and spend time with the Lord. He knows that by building that close relationship he will be able to not only call on the Lord, but trust that he will be heard. He trusts that the Lord would shelter him from all distress. In response to the Lord's provision for his safety, David promises to make sacrifices of joy with music and song.

Aware of his own sinful nature, David asks that the Lord not turn His face away from him. He trusts that even though earthly parents may forsake him; the Lord will always be there to uphold him in times of trouble. So sure is he of the Lord's faithfulness, even in the times of trouble, he will wait for the Lord, trusting to see Him act in his lifetime.

David penned this psalm as an encouragement to others who find themselves in tough times. Reflecting on the times that God had delivered him, gave him the confidence that God would do the same for those who, like him, desired to dwell in the house of the Lord. The

Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Rome, shared this same thought in Romans 8:31 - ³¹ ... If God is for us, who can be against us?

As humans we are weak, in mind and body, but God is our strength. Because God is our strength, we have nothing to fear. In our times of trouble, He will make a way. He has toppled armies and empires in the past and is still capable of doing the same today. There is a catch, however.

It's not enough to say you know about God, you need to KNOW God. When we spend time in God's house, building that intimate relationship with him, we are led, like David to offer sacrifices of joy with music and song. I think of the beautiful music June played on a Sunday morning that truly was a sacrifice of joy. This is what God desires of us, to be in close relationship with him.

Reflecting on this psalm and its juxtaposition with June's death made me think about something I learned during my pastoral training in the Mennonite Church. While the Church of the Brethren is a non-creedal church, the Mennonite Church has what they call the Mennonite Confession of Faith. This confession has been edited and updated several times since the Schleithem Confession of 1527, when the Mennonite tradition was founded. The edition that had the most impact on me was the revision of 1963, specifically Article 3: God's Creation and Providence. This article states:

We believe that in the beginning God created all things by His Son and that all existence is therefore finite and dependent upon God, the Source and End of all things visible and invisible. He created man in His own image, which set man apart from the animal creation. In free will, moral character, superior intellect, and spiritual nature, man bore the image of his Creator.

In His providence God is concerned with the lives of His children, and in everything works for their eternal good. He hears and answers their prayers. By Jesus Christ He upholds the entire creation. He is Sovereign over all things, but He is not the author of sin. He has endowed man with the power of self-determination, and He holds him responsible for his moral choices.

What stood out to me is the reference to all things working to our *eternal* good. When we read psalm 27, it's easy to hear David saying that everything in this life will work out the way we want it to, but it doesn't always go that way. Jesus, himself, told us otherwise:

“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have **trouble**. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” [John 16:33](#)

And he backs up this statement with this one from John 14:

My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?

John 14:2

Jesus is preparing a place in God's eternal house for us. June has already moved into her place in God's house. Knowing we will dwell in the house of the Lord for eternity, who or what should we fear. God has promised to keep us all the days of our life here on earth and in the heavenly realm as well. With David, we can say with confidence:

The LORD is our light and our salvation—
whom shall we fear?

The LORD is the stronghold of our lives—
of whom shall we be afraid?

We will wait for the LORD;
we will be strong in the Lord and take heart
and wait for the LORD. AMEN

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