

July 16, 2021

Psalm 27: 7-14

- ⁷ Hear, O LORD, when I cry aloud,
be gracious to me and answer me!
⁸ 'Come,' my heart says, 'seek God's 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.

- ¹³ 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!

Have you ever felt threatened or bullied? Have you ever felt forsaken or betrayed by those who should have been there for you? Whether you are a child or young person, someone in the workplace, part of a family or a community, one of the core vulnerabilities we all share as human beings is the need to have people around us who will be there for us to stand with us, believe in us and walk with us through any threat or crisis we will face. Whether they can do anything for us or not, we need people we can turn to, on whose shoulder we can cry freely or before whom we can vent without being judged or shut down for doing so. We also need people with whom we can discuss our challenges who can be truthful with us and whose love and support we trust. We need help in developing enough distance and perspective in a situation so that we can figure out the best way to make good choices, and then muster up the courage to act on them.

Psalm 27, like many psalms of lament, name the source of threat as “enemies” or “adversaries.” We have already been challenged in previous meditations to use our

imagination in pondering what such enemies or adversaries may be in our lives. In this psalm, they seem to be those voices that tempt the psalmist to make bad choices (“Teach me your way, O Lord, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies”).

But what psalm 27 offers us in addition, though, are beautiful ways of engaging “God” prayerfully even though such engagement is anything but polite or respectful in any conventional sense. Psalms teach us to pray passionately, using personal language, wrestling with God and conceptions of God, and also demonstrating in verse how understanding God and hearing God speak takes time to discern. If we give up our praying too early, we’ll never get to the beauty of discovery and an ever newer level of intimacy with the ground of our being some of us choose to name “God.”

Old Testament language is physical language, describing God in person-like terms, using bodily images, referring to natural phenomena and all things we access through our physical senses, and all this to communicate what is happening in our inner spiritual and emotional world. Whether it’s an earthquake or storm, whether it’s 40 days, going to a mountain or travelling through a valley, whether it’s fighting real life enemies or seeing a rainbow, God is seeking to communicate and journey with us human creatures. We are being called to discover a path to the “promised land” of flourishing, abundance and a purpose within a larger creation.

Psalm 27 speaks of the search for greater intimacy with God. A lot is at stake when we have expectations of intimacy. When the psalmist feels trouble surrounding them, they experience God as absent. Is God hiding? Is God angry and therefore non-responsive to the psalmist’s plight. Now this may seem immature of the psalmist to think of God like this, but in any intimate relationship where we have high expectations of another’s being present and available to us in our toughest times, it’s easy to feel upset with the person. At the same time, even as the psalmist has moments where they feel ‘cast off’ or ‘forsaken’ by God, they come to other moments of strong affirmation. Even if our very mother and father forsake us God will not!

And even as the psalmist is threatened by enemies and adversaries this section of psalm 27 ends with another strong affirmation of faith: “I believe I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” In other words, I will see goodness before I die. This also means I must develop the spiritual quality of “waiting” for the Lord. I must trust that goodness will come and it will come in time. I must wait faithfully, not give in to despair. I must wait openly, for goodness will come in ways I may not anticipate if my vision is too narrow or impatient. I will wait for the One who

will never forsake me, trusting in a goodness that will find me no matter what. "Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"

PRAYER: We wait, O God... even as you have been there for us whether we've been aware of your presence or felt your absence, you have been there for us. Give us faith that you will be there for us today and tomorrow. Give us the gift of patience, of "waiting"... Give us the gift of vision and awareness of your presence... You are healing energy, O God... you are restoring, renewing, new life-giving energy... You are our conscience, our spiritual sensitivity, and most of all, the warmth of love that breaks through our hardness, our despair and our fear... Thank you for walking the journey with us and never forsaking us... Amen.