

SERMON – “Holding Fear & Faith Together In Our Heart” – Lent 2
Text: Psalm 27 & Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

What do you fear? (*pause for reflections*) I have asked that question of myself this past week. I fear letting a ball that is my responsibility fall while juggling others. I fear being unemployed wondering if the church can afford me. I fear Tom going down with depression again. I fear being hurt by an intruder in the church or at home. I fear failing. I fear suffering before I physically die. As I was honest about these fears I felt anxiety rising within me. It was like this back heart with each fear my heart grew darker and darker.

What does having fear in our heart mean? Does it mean we put more credence in what we fear than the power of God? Does this mean that our faith is weak? Does fear have more power than our faith?

But first what is fear? Fear is an emotion that God created. It does serve a purpose. Fear tells us when it is unsafe and it can cause us to run to safety. In our primitive brain it causes us to flight no fight. Fear can harm. Fear can paralyze us. It can help us loose perspective. It can even rule our olives instead of our faith, or trust in God. Our heart can be filled with the darkness of fear. But how do not let this fear overwhelm us. How do we handle fear in a faithful way?

Well to answer this question of fear we are going to look at Psalm 27. The first clue in handling fear is to begin with our trust in God. This what the psalmist does. Verses 1-6 are a beautiful affirmation of faith in God. In verse one the writer equates light with God's salvation. The Lord is the stronghold in his life. This Lord is

more powerful than darkness or evil. The opposite is true with fear. It is darkness (point to heart). In verse two and three the psalmist is honest about what he is up against: armies, war, evildoers out to kill him. But then he looks deep in his heart and says, "It is you, My Lord and God that I believe in and trust in." It is in your presence that I want to live in. And I know (from past experience, not just in his head) in his heart again, that you, God, will protect me, hide me, set me high on a rock so that my enemies will not reach me."

In these few verses the writer reviews his faith in God. This is what a profession of faith does, this is the purpose of worship in the hymns we sing, in the music we listen to, in the words we read and say, in the prayers we pray, in the scriptures read and the Word proclaimed to remind us who God is, who we are, and what God has done for us. In doing so we remember past experiences that God has rescued us, protected us. So right now reflect on a moment that you felt the protective presence or rescuing presence of God in the midst of a fearful situation?

Silent reflection

In this remembering and in this proclaiming of our faith we know that God is more powerful than what we fear. This is where the psalmist starts and it is where we are to start in balancing our fear. It is in this remembering of our past as written in this Bible and the past history of our own lives that we know the power and protectiveness of God.

But as all you know fear can creep back. Well then you go to the next step you pray your desires to God. This is exactly what the psalmist does in verses 7-12. God answer me! I seek you face!

Come now! Come now!!!! Do not abandon me! Right now I need your presence and your rescue. The worse fear the psalmist faces turns out to not be the armies and enemies but that God abandons him in his greatest need. That somehow he has offended God and God turns God's back to him. If God does that then all is lost.

The psalmist prays a honest prayer before God. Hides nothing. Is totally honest about the worst fear, God abandoning him in the face of great opposition. But notice at the end of verse 10 you have an inkling of restored faith- "If my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up.

In that faith then he opens himself up to learn from God and to be lead by God's on a level path. He pleads Do not give me up to my adversaries. So in the faith you have experienced, you can handle your fears by praying what you miss about that experience and what you know and trust about God. So on your post it slip of paper in the bulletin please write down one of tow things. First, what fear do you want to give up to God as an action of faith? Second, what is it about God that you have experience in the past that gives you assurance now?

Come forward and place your note on the heart. These notes our lights of God' salvation and it is the perfect picture of how we hold fear and faith together in our hearts.

As we remembered and wrote the fear is held in balance. The doubt is replaced with trust, the faith that you know. And so like the psalmist we wait but we wait in trust and faith and not in fear and doubt.

No matter what we face in life: unemployment, loss of wealth, loss of identity, loss of health, loss of loved ones, adversaries that want us gone from our job, organization, church, or even families; or struggle to live in peace of mind. My prayer for you is the last verses of Psalm 27:

“ I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord. “