

Sermon: Wait Patiently for the Lord
2 Lent, Year C
Psalm 27

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Emmanuel Church, Staunton
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“Wait patiently for the Lord.”

One advantage to being part of a family of faith, such as this Emmanuel Church, is that we have ample reminders of God’s presence if we just open our eyes and ears. When we listen to each other’s stories about faith, we are often richly blessed with renewed faith. The Emmanuel Lenten Devotionals Book is a beautiful example of how God shines through our stories. I have heard from so many of you how much you are enjoying these daily reflections. We could think of this booklet like a box of chocolates - really, like a Whitman’s Sampler with all its variety. And while *some* of you have been able to eat one chocolate at a time, in other words, read just one reflection per day, the way it was intended, *SOME* of you ate the whole box in one sitting! You read the entire booklet in one felled swoop. Just couldn’t help yourselves once you got going! 😊 This excess really is out of sync with Lenten austerity, but I believe God will forgive you.

In our psalm for today, the psalmist offers us a realistic view of the life of faith, the highs and lows, moments of faith and doubt. The writer begins on a high note. “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?” He sounds so confident, so full of trust, so strong in faith. The sun is out! God is great! The day is full of promise. The psalmist feels so sure of God’s saving goodness. What could interfere? What could he be afraid of? He continues, “When evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh, it was they, my foes and my adversaries, who stumbled and fell. Though an army should encamp against me, yet my heart shall be not afraid. And though war should rise up against me, yet will I put my trust in (God.)

But then, a few verses into it, we notice a shift, almost as if a cloud has begun to block the sun that was out, and a shadow is cast upon the confidence of the psalmist. The fog of doubt is creeping in. “Hide not your face from me; nor turn away your servant in displeasure. You have been my helper; cast me not away. Do not forsake me, O God of my salvation.” In essence, “Don’t leave me, God.” The psalmist’s confidence seems to wane, the day has turned darker.

We have had a cold, wet, dark winter, haven’t we? There have been many days when the weather was dreary, the wind relentless, the air frosty, the sky dark. For some of us this outer darkness affects our mood. When we’ve had a rare sunny day, it has been obvious that people’s moods have been lifted. At the sight of the sun, some folks have been downright giddy! Somewhere in our minds though, even on the darkest days, we know that somewhere up through the clouds, and really not that far away, the sun is shining and the sky is blue.

In our darker moments, it sure seems that God has left us to deal with our problems alone. It might even seem that we have mishandled this world to the point where God has become fed up with us, and has left the scene. This week we have encountered another tragedy resulting from the white supremacist movement. The notion that white people are superior to other

races would be laughable if it weren't so deadly. In 2015 Dylann Roof murdered 9 members of Mother Emanuel A.M.E. Church in Charleston, SC; last October eleven were killed at the Tree of Life Jewish Synagogue in Pittsburgh; and just this week in Christchurch, New Zealand, 50 Muslims were murdered at the hand of yet another person claiming white supremacy. I trust that we are forlorn about these hate crimes against God's precious children. God's heart is torn in two, right along with ours, and while these sad things happen and life can be very dark, the psalmist implores us to trust enough to wait for God's help.

We all have those areas of life when we feel forlorn and wonder where God is. Doubts arise. Are we sure of God's love and care? We may wonder if we can be so certain and confident in the reality of God's presence. Sometimes we wonder if God is playing hide and seek, if God is choosing to be distant or near, coming or going, at a whim.

We will see the sunshine come and go. We will experience moments of faith and doubt. God has given us the gift of each other though, so that when we are feeling the bright blue sky and sunshine of faith, we can share it with others. And when we feel that dark cloud of doubt casting its shadow over us, we can turn to each other for support, to remind us that God is indeed with us now, in our joys and sorrows, in our faith and doubt.

So let's keep sharing our stories of faith with one another, that perhaps our own faith will be bolstered. One opportunity is through the Lenten program. This Wednesday night at 6:00 p.m., we, along with Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church and Trinity Church, will meet here at Emmanuel to share faith stories. If you have a story to share, wonderful. And if you need to hear a story to strengthen your faith, wonderful. We are here for each other. Whether you are in a place of the journey where you can say with confidence, "The Lord is my light and my salvation!" or are wondering where God is, and saying, "Don't hide your face from me, dear God", as the psalmist says, let's "wait patiently for the Lord." Together.

Amen.