

**Text: Psalm 27:1-8, 13-14**

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2020**

**Brightons Parish Church**

## **Message**

**Let us take a moment to pray before we think about God's Word.**

**May the words of my mouth, and the meditation of all our hearts, be pure and pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.**

**I wonder how you responded to the news this week about the extra restrictions? I wonder how you felt as we awaited that news being released? I suspect there's a broad range of reaction and feeling associated with what we've heard, and many of us may have a sense that the crisis continues, that these unprecedented days have carried now beyond six months and their end...well, we just don't know when that will be.**

**In this midst of it all,** we might be asking “where is God? What’s He up to?” These are questions and emotions that the people of God across the ages have felt and asked. Indeed, David, who wrote the psalm we read today, he was in a crisis, for he faced people who were bent on doing evil towards him, ready to go to war, ready to show savagery and devour him, like a pack of wild beasts ready to pounce and bring him low. David faces his own crisis, **and we face ours,** each just as life threatening, each just as potentially unsettling. Yet I’m struck by David’s posture, his reaction, the emotions that flow through him, for twice he speaks of his confidence, **he says:**

**‘...though war break out against me,  
even then I will be confident...**

**I remain confident of this:**

**I will see the goodness of the Lord**

**in the land of the living.’ (v3, 13)**

**In the midst of his crisis, David still has a confidence, a feeling of security. I wonder if we do? **I wonder where**, or to whom, we go when life seems too much to handle? Is it a spouse or a close friend, a trusted advisor, or parents? I’m sure David was surrounded by all such people, yet his confidence comes from another source, his confidence comes from another relationship, it comes from his intimate relationship with God, the Lord.**

**Notice what David **says in verse 1**:**

**‘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?’ (v1)**

**David knows God, but in a very relational way – this is not simply head knowledge, information about God, but rather it is a reality that David knows for himself. ‘The Lord is MY light and MY salvation...the Lord is the stronghold of MY life.’ **At the heart of biblical faith,** is not a list of rules, nor expectation of duty, but a relationship with the living God and David draws upon what he knows of God as he faces his crisis.**

**So he says, ‘the Lord is my light’ – the Lord dispels the darkness of fear, the Lord lights the way ahead, and in the light of His presence and love...life, hope, faith is revived and helped to flourish.**

**But the Lord is also ‘my salvation’ – the One who can deliver me and rescue me – and the Lord is also his**

**‘stronghold’, ‘the stronghold of [his] life’, that place of security. **In the Lord then**, David receives protective presence and care, and it is this very relationship which allows David to maintain a confidence, without fear, but also without minimising the realities either.**

**I wonder, do you have that confidence? In the midst of our crisis, in the midst of whatever crisis you may be individually facing, is there a quiet confidence in who God is? God doesn’t promise to fix all our problems now, and yet the Lord’s people over the centuries have affirmed His unchanging nature, that in Him they have found light and salvation and a place of refuge, a stronghold, even in the greatest and darkest of times. I wonder, do you share in that? Or, do you want to share in that?**

**C. S. Lewis tells** of his experience standing in a dark shed on a sunny day. Through a chink in the wall a sunbeam probed its way into the dark interior of the shed and Lewis suggests it is two quite different things to look at the beam of light and how it interacts with the dark, illuminating only a small part of the shed, or to step into the light and look along the beam to its source. If you want to share in the confidence of David, you need to come into the light, the light that comes from a relationship with God, a relationship that we pursue and invest time in, a relationship that is personal to you, and not confined to four walls on a Sunday morning. Because when we step into the light and seek the Lord, although it may be dark within the walls of our shed, although our very lives may be dark, there is still light and it bathes our whole perspective when we look to its source.

**I wonder, are you someone who is looking in from the side? Do you see a beam of light, but you're simply looking on? Maybe you see it in another's life, maybe you see it in the Scriptures, but this relationship with God, this knowledge of God, is external to you, it's not your experience. If that's you, how can we change that reality? How can we step into the light? Well, let's turn to David's example once more.**

**He writes: 'One thing I ask from the Lord,**

**this only do I seek:**

**that I may dwell in the house of the Lord**

**all the days of my life,**

**to gaze on the beauty of the Lord**

**and to seek him in his temple...**

**Wait for the Lord;**



**be strong and take heart  
and wait for the Lord.’ (v4, 14)**

**In these verses of his psalm, David gives us a window into how he pursues this relationship with God, and we see there a prayerful waiting, a prayerful seeking, of the Lord. David does this by spending time in the presence of God, which for him, at his particular point in history, meant going to the central place of worship, the tabernacle. So, David would seek the presence of God, in a prayerful way, by giving time to this.**

**But in that time,** David would also ‘gaze on the beauty of the Lord’ – and this is language which speaks of a steady, sustained focus, rather than a one-time glimpse, and during this time instead of asking the Lord for things,

**David is praising and admiring and enjoying God, for who God is. David finds God captivating, not just useful for getting stuff. In spending time with the Lord in prayer, resting in His presence and appreciating who He is, David cultivates confidence, a contentment which carried him through many a crisis.**

**Again, I wonder, does this describe us? Is this part of our prayer life? Do we know how to slow down and wait in the presence of God, wait in such a manner that we enjoy Him? It could be argued, based on the Lord's Prayer, that this is where we should start, for Jesus said to pray, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'** In one line, Jesus echoes David, for in these familiar words, which we often rush past, we call to mind who God is and we hallow Him, we admire, we enjoy, we praise Him.

**But unlike David, we don't need a temple or a sacred place, because Jesus in His death made a way for us to come directly to God, and in the sending of the Holy Spirit, we are enabled to know God and meet with God. Indeed, **Jesus would say**, 'I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you for ever – the Spirit of truth...you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.' (John 14:16-17) At the heart of biblical faith, is a direct, immediate relationship with God, where you can relate to Him as the perfect Father, and so share in the confidence of David.**

**I want to give you now** the prayer for this week, a prayer that my own minister, Kenny Borthwick, shared in a parish magazine some 8 years ago, yet it has stuck with me ever since and I keep turning to it, especially in the

hard times, and I can do that because it's only one line. **It reads:** 'Abba, beloved Father, I belong to You, I am Your son, and I bring You great joy.'

My encouragement to you this week, is to take 5 minutes each day, and pray this line. Talk with God about each word, talk with Him about the words you find hard, talk with Him about the wonderful reality that is captured in these words. Also, can I encourage you to pray it out loud? In our psalm, **David said,** 'Hear my voice when I call, Lord.' David spoke out and there is something powerful, life-giving when we pray directly to God and speak out. I'm not asking you to do it in front of people, but the things we believe and hold dear, are the things we put into words, and same is true in our relationship with God. So, I encourage you to speak out this prayer this week.

**Why don't we take a moment to pray this together, and I'm going to move into a more comfortable seat.**

**(PAUSE)**

**Here we are in my livingroom, in the seat I sit in each morning to spend time with God, and from time to time I'll use that line. But I'll also use it when I'm out walking Hector in the woods and fields. Use it where you see fit, use it where you need and want to connect with God, but let us pray it now. Let us pray.**

**(SHORT PRAYER)**

**We close our time together with our final song...**

***HYMN MP-33 And can it be***