

“One Thing I Ask of The Lord?” (Psalm 27)(6.7.2020)

Psalm 27 (NIV84) Of David.

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?

² When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh,
when my enemies and my foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.

³ Though an army besiege me,
my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.

⁴ One thing I ask of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

⁵ For in the day of trouble
he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock.

⁶ Then my head will be exalted
above the enemies who surround me;
at his tabernacle will I sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.

⁷ Hear my voice when I call, O Lord;
be merciful to me and answer me.

⁸ My heart says of you, “Seek his face!”
Your face, Lord, I will seek.

⁹ Do not hide your face from me,
do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me,
O God my Savior.

¹⁰ Though my father and mother forsake me,
the Lord will receive me.

¹¹ Teach me your way, O Lord;
lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.

¹² Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me,
breathing out violence.

¹³ I am still confident of this:
I will see the goodness of the Lord
in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the Lord;
be strong and take heart
and wait for the Lord.

The word of God for the people of God.

Title: **“One Thing I Ask of The Lord”**

LET US PRAY.

INTRODUCTION:

What is the greatest desire of your heart? If you could only have one thing, what would you choose? There are good answers to that question and not so good answers. It almost sounds like the kind of question they use to ask the Miss America beauty pageant contestants here in Atlantic City. But my friends, it is a most serious inquiry; the answer of which, reveals the condition of your soul.

When I was a child, I often walked by a particular store on Burnside Avenue in East Hartford, CT. It had a large display window of toys and games. The scene was almost a fantasy land for me to look into with its great many treasures. I could never say that there was one thing that I desired because I relished the thought of having it all. My parents knew that I spent time dreamily staring into that store window.

There was one traumatic day where I had been to the doctor. He called a couple of nurses into the room and they, along with my mother, held me down. The doctor burned numerous warts on various parts of my body. When it came time to burn the one under my fingernail, the doctor forwent the Novocain shot because he thought it would hurt worse than removing the wart. As a reward for my bravery, my mother stopped in front of that store on the way home. “Go ahead,” she said, “pick one thing that you want.” What a hard decision that was!

BODY:

In this psalm, King David was facing a lot of adversity, but that is the story of his life. He was the youngest of eight sons and when the prophet Samuel visited David’s father’s house, David wasn’t even invited. He was out in the fields shepherding his father’s sheep.

From early on, David had great faith. The LORD gave him victory over the lion and the bear when they threatened the flock. While humbly delivering lunch to his older brothers who were in battle against the Philistines, he was appalled by the arrogance of the giant Goliath. When everyone else trembled in fear, David took his slingshot and his faith in the LORD’s protection to defeat the enemy.

When King Saul became tormented in his spirit, David was sent to the king’s court. He was a gifted musician and his harp playing soothed Saul’s spirit. As you know, Psalms are songs, and David wrote a large portion of those in our holy scriptures. So he was a poet and a musician. He loved God and loved to worship. When the Ark of the Covenant was being brought into Jerusalem, David was moved to uninhibited dancing before God.

In ancient Israel, they were frequently at war. King Saul had many victories. When David’s victories surpassed the king’s, jealousy raised its head, which evolved into hate. Although Saul betrayed David and would try to take his life, David was always loyal to the king because he was the LORD’s anointed leader.

While being pursued by Saul, David was constantly on the run. He even served as a mercenary to survive and to sustain those that was leading. Eventually, King Saul was killed by the Philistines and David became King of Judah. After a lot more fighting within Israel, David united the Jews into one kingdom. Then he expanded the kingdom by defeating all the enemy nations around Israel. While he was a great warrior, he knew that victory came from the Lord.

In his private life, David also had a lot of strife. Polygamy was the common cultural practice but it was forbidden by God for the king in Deuteronomy 17:17. King David had many wives and an adulterous relationship with beautiful Bathsheba. He subsequently arranged to have her husband Uriah killed in battle. David and Bathsheba’s baby died. There would be conflict, hate, rape, incest, and outright rebellion among David’s other children. He would suffer much grief.

David knew he was a great sinner and he wrote psalms of confession to a loving and forgiving God. While the Lord did forgive David, there were still grave consequences for him and his family and the nation.

Because of his love for the LORD, it was the desire of David's heart to build a great Temple for God. Why should God live in a tent, in a Tabernacle, when King David lived in a palace? While the prophet Nathan thought this was a great idea at first, the Lord forbid it. Why? Because there was too much blood on David's hands. His son, Solomon, would become king and build the Jerusalem Temple.

In fact, instead of agreeing to have David build God's Temple, the LORD made a great promise to him. God would make a house, a dynasty, for David and God's Chosen People. David was told that his throne would be established forever. This promise was fulfilled in the Messiah, our Lord Jesus. Always remember that He is alive and is still the King of kings and Lord of Lords.

King David had many reasons to be afraid. He was opposed by evil men that want to consume him. He was opposed by enemies and foes. They attacked him and they surrounded him. Oppressors came against him. Their every breath brought violence and hate. They lied about David. Still, he says the Lord is his salvation, his light, his stronghold, even if his very parents were to forsake him, God never will. As a warrior, David knew what hand to hand combat was. David knew what guerilla warfare was. He faced overwhelming odds many times. No matter the odds or the chaos that engulfed him, **EVEN THEN I WILL BE CONFIDENT**. What is the why and wherefore of David's confidence?

One thing I ask of the Lord,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord
and to seek him in his temple.

It is the priority of David's life. He wants to live in the house of the Lord. To be with the LORD. The Lord is David's sanctuary. He will SEEK out this relationship and position. Seeking is Active not passive. He imagines it with his creative giftedness. He is a steward of it like a faithful shepherd. He has the passion for it that brings victory to the warrior. The One thing, the one thing.

When Jesus visited Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in their home, Martha was very busy preparing the meal. While Martha bustled about, Mary sat serenely at Jesus' feet. When Martha complained to Jesus, he said, "Mary is doing the one thing needful." I know that David knew this truth too because he wants "to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord." Isn't that what so many of us need in these chaotic times? We need to sit at Jesus' feet and soak in the beauty of God's love, mercy, and grace.

David proceeds to say that he will seek God in his temple. Now, the Jerusalem Temple had not been built yet so David's meaning is more encompassing than the limits of the building. At the same time, when Jesus was left behind in Jerusalem by his parents, he spent time interacting with the teachers at the Temple. He told his parent's, "Didn't you know I would be in my Father's house?" There is a synonymous thought of the Father's house and God's Temple.

No one ever thought that the LORD's presence was limited to the Ark of the Covenant. God's presence was not only over the whole world, He existed in the heaven of heavens. God himself dictated the exact specifications for the Holy Tabernacle. And, God chose the Levites to attend to the work and worship in the Tabernacle. The Lord was a pillar of cloud during the day and fire by night as he led The Chosen People through the wilderness. And yet, and yet there was something about the Tabernacle. God's presence was manifested there in a special way.

When plans and preparations were made for the Jerusalem Temple, the Lord was exacting in His specifications. Even all the furnishings were designed in fine detail. The business of the Temple: sacrifice, worship, and feasting were all mandated by God. The Ark of the Covenant, which contained the stone tablets of the 10 commandments and Aaron's rod and were covered with the golden Mercy Seat was

hidden within the Holy of Holies. The altar, lampstand and golden wash basin were intentionally positioned there too. No one thought that God's presence was limited to this place; but at the same time, the Almighty Himself established it as a holy and sacred place. It was NOT JUST A BUILDING. F. L. Wisemen preached: "Just as the Embassy of another nation is considered a portion of the territory of that nation, so the house of God is a little bit of the Eternal world let down into the world of time. Pass within its doors, You have, as it were, entered the territory of another State. Here reigns another Monarch, a different language is spoken, other laws obtain, different sanctions hold sway, than those recognized by the world outside.

The house of God stands for and witnesses to other thoughts and other feelings than those of the market-place, the battlefield, the law court, and the university. It is tenanted by a different spirit. It introduces to a life loftier and deeper, richer and fuller, more strenuous and more peaceful, more joyful and more sympathetic, more self-denying and more self-abandoning, than any of which the world has dreamed. From its beautiful worship a man goes forth at once softened and exhilarated, subdued and strengthened.

When Jesus angrily turned over the tables in the Temple and chased vendors with a whip, he declared in Matthew 21:13 (NIV84) "It is written," " 'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'" Certainly, God's house should be filled with prayers, built with prayer, and sustained by prayer. Prayer connects us to the LORD and to our neighbors for whom we are called to be intercessors. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. Prayer is communication and communion with our Creator. God reveals himself in our prayers. We prayerfully confess our sins in God's house. Certainly, we can pray anywhere and are called to be praying without ceasing. But, there is supernatural grace that is integral to the prayer life within the church.

According to our governor's current plans, though not detailed, churches will be open in some manner next weekend. There have been no updates for a couple weeks. The governor and I have a fundamental difference over what is considered essential. I believe that spiritual health and eternal life take precedent over every other concern.

Even our GNJAC leadership keeps proclaiming that the church is not a building. Of course, we know that and I have preached it too. But something happens in the gathering or at least it is supposed to happen. Maybe a critical issue is being identified. Maybe too few congregations are experiencing the supernatural work of God the Holy Spirit in their gatherings. What a pity and judgment that is for our modern Christian churches.

In Matthew 18:20 (NIV84), Jesus says, "For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." Prior to Pentecost, the disciples were constantly gathered together in the Temple and in the Upper Room to join in prayer. D. Rhys Jenkins said, "Every building may be a house of God **if there be a child of God in it.**" The mystery and power of God happens when we worship corporately in spirit and in truth.

Yes, we should be using all the tools we can to reach people for Jesus. Yes, we should use modern technology to enhance our discipleship growth. In fact, it is my hope to create a hybrid Bible study that combines face to face with Zoom participants.

I believe that Satan is very happy with all the chaos and isolation that is happening. The conversation has been controlled by a large contingent that accuses those of us who believe our Churches ought to be meeting as being heartless; or, we are just ignorant; and/or, we are just stubborn. Yes, as a short term solution, live streaming and digital features have their place. Here at Emmaus, we have been live streaming for three years and enhancing our online presence as supplements to our regular corporate worship. These measures are no substitution for real church and real community any more than 1000 Facebook friends are a substitute for six brothers or sisters in Christ.

CONCLUSION:

Now, I want you to imagine yourself on the Ocean City Boardwalk on a beautiful blue sky summer day. The sun is warm but there is a cool breeze coming in from over the water. As you stroll past the candy store, the air is filled with a sweet aroma. You enter the store heading to the back so you can see them making the saltwater taffy. You know the store I mean, right? You pass row upon row of fudge and candies. The colors and smells are a sensory overload. And then, you start tasting the samples. Oh my, how could you pick just one?

Psalm 119:103 (NIV84) How sweet are your words to my taste, oh God, and sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalm 34:8 (NIV84) Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.

Over and over again the scholars describe David's longing, his desire, his seeking, as the pursuit of communion with God. Psalm 84:1-2 (NIV84)

¹ How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty!

² My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, we have not celebrated Holy Communion for a couple months. Normally, we do celebrate it on the first Sunday of the month and every Tuesday. After some debate, our Bishop authorized an at-home Communion during worship live-streaming. While some of our sister churches have, and will today, partake of this practice, for me, I felt that it was a shallow substitute. I am not saying that others are wrong to do it; only that I didn't feel right leading you in that practice. There was bread in my freezer that I made three months ago. After thawing it out, I tasted it and it was ok, but a little dried out. Instead of just making due, Carol went out yesterday and bought more wheat flour and fresh grapes. You see, I want you to taste and see that the Lord is good. Our Lord Jesus is the Bread of Life and He deserves our best. My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. Let us prepare ourselves for Holy Communion with our God, the greater Church, and this particular Body of Christ. Amen and amen. Let us pray.