

## February 2 Experiencing the Lord's Goodness

### Psalm 27: 6-14

This is our second week to look at this great Psalm of faith. Last week we lifted up the concept that the Lord is our light and our call to walk in trust in the light God gives us. It is not always all the light we want and not always in the directions we would choose to go, but to walk with faith trusting that with God we can deal with anything. Today I want to lift up verse 13. Here it is in the Common English Bible translation. "I have sure faith that I will experience the Lord's goodness in the land of the living." This, for me, is so key to all we do in faith. It is part of what organizes my life and my actions. Let us see what this is telling us today.

Here is a quote I came across concerning this verse: "Faith is not merely about the pledge of eternal life in another world, but it is in this world, not merely some spiritual realm, but the real, physical world, in my body, in my neighborhood, in politics, in economics, everywhere." We can grab a glimpse of heaven even here! Do we believe it? Do we live it?"

That first question is really a fundamental one. Do we believe we can catch a glimpse of heaven here? Even more do we believe that right now, today we can experience the Lord's goodness? Unfortunately, I believe that most people would respond: possibly or maybe, instead of with an emphatic yes. Oh don't get me wrong. We believe that there are moments of goodness that happen to us and to others. But to ramp that up to the idea that this goodness is so awesome that it is in fact a glimpse of heaven....well? We see and focus so much on the bad, the shadows that I mentioned last week, that we find it hard to truly believe that we can and do experience bits of heaven right now.

The Psalmist knew all about the negative side of life. He even mentions some possibilities such as his father and mother leaving him all alone, and having to face false witnesses and violent accusers. Yet he says, "I have this sure faith that I will experience the Lord's goodness", not some day but in the land of the living. We want this kind of faith, don't we? One of the ways to have it become a part of our faith

expectations is to live with this awareness and anticipation of the Lord's goodness. So, today I want to talk about some of the fundamental changes to the way we live and view life that this idea challenges us to embrace.

First of all, faith is not about rewards someday but celebrating God's blessings today. In the Psalm he says, "My heart says, seek God's face." For me this is the same as saying seek God's goodness each and every day. Too often we think about the rewards of life happening after we die. We live faithfully trying to live a good life and if we do a proper job of it we will get rewarded in heaven. I don't know about you, but I am into more immediate gratification than that. What I mean is to tell me to be good, to be faithful, and basically slog through the grinding muck of life until I die, and then get rewarded, no thanks. I can't and don't want to wait that long.

This for me is a formula for creating gloomy Christians. If you don't really expect to see and experience God now, and you are just doing what you are doing for that future reward, there isn't going to be much joy and there will be a lot of self-righteous judgment. After all, you are right, you are faithful and will be rewarded and all those other misguided ones will get it in the end.

What does it mean to live with the awareness that we are going to catch glimpses of God's goodness today? First of all it means that we are called upon to live as citizens of heaven today. Think about what we would consider a resident of that place would be like. They would be kind, and loving and forgiving. They would only speak good and shun evil. Well, that is what we are to do as well!

For me the reward of faithful Christian living is not somewhere out there but here today. In my loving others and being loved, in forgiving and asking to be forgiven, in seeking to be faithful and seeing others strive as well I am blessed. In so doing I catch glimpses of heaven on an almost daily basis and this causes me to live as a citizen of that realm even today. As I was writing, this story from the upcoming Olympics came through the news.

*Athletes work hard to qualify for the Olympics. If they are lucky enough to make an Olympic team, most probably wouldn't consider giving up their spot. However, United States biathlete Tracy Barnes decided to relinquish her spot to her twin sister, Lanny.*

*Both biathletes have been to the Olympics before. Lanny has been to the previous two Winter Olympics, and Tracy made the team back in 2006.*

*Tracy qualified for the Olympics this time around, but Lanny was the final competitor eliminated. Lanny was sick during qualifying and only able to participate in one of the four races. After her sister was unable to compete for a spot, Tracy decided to do something about it.*

*And as the old saying goes... 'Only the strong will survive.' Most of the time, that is the case. On occasion the strong don't survive for whatever reason. And that is what I feel happened to Lanny. She's having a stellar season and she's bound to do great things this year, but she fell ill during the trials and couldn't race. Because of that she didn't make the team. While most people would say 'that's biathlon, or that's life' - and they'd be absolutely correct in saying that - but what if that person who was hit with a little bit of bad luck got a second chance? What if someone believed in them enough to give them that chance? Well, that's what I did. Easy decision.*

*Lanny is my best friend and my teammate. I see how hard she works on a daily basis, so I know first hand that she is deserving of a spot on the Olympic Team. If I can be the one to give her that opportunity, than that is an honor and a sacrifice that I am willing to make.*

I hope you see the glimpse of heaven there. Don't we want to live in a world where people sacrifice for another; give up a spot to one they think is more deserving; and believes life is not all about competitiveness but cooperation? I do and I think this is what heaven will be like. Hearing about this kind of action reminds me of how I am to live if I am to be a citizen of heaven today and receive and give blessings each day.

When we believe this way we are then also called to have a positive attitude about life today. Too many people seemingly drag themselves through life thoroughly

unhappy with “the now” but hanging in there for the rewards of tomorrow. This instead says embrace today. Seek for God’s face in the here and now. Believe you will experience good no matter what might be happening around you and at this moment. This is not living in denial or living with rose colored glasses on. It is instead saying our God is bigger than this moment or this problem and so life is good right now. This, for me is the key to living an appropriate, at least to me, Christian faith. This is how we live if we believe what the psalmist talks about.

Finally it means that we are to live with hope. No matter what is happening now God is with us. It is believing that people are basically good people. It means believing that the world is a good place. It means that you truly believe that God is amongst us and we not only seek but find God’s face. This is how I try to approach each day and I, like the Psalmist, walk in the light and seek the goodness of God here and now. I truly believe that I am already a citizen of heaven and so are you.