

Psalm 27

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Preacher: Jack Gamble-Smith

[0 : 0 0] If you have a Bible, we're going to be looking at Psalm 27, which was read just a moment ago. And if you would open your Bible to Psalm 27.

I'm very thankful to be back. I was here, I think it was two weeks ago, and so thank you for having me back. But as I was thinking about Psalm 27, it reminded me of this beautiful and yet kind of haunting scene.

I don't know if you've read the books or seen the movie of Harry Potter, but there's this scene where Harry is walking around the castle late at night by himself, and he stumbles into this mirror.

You might remember this, you probably remember this if you've seen it, read the books. And he sees himself in the mirror, as you would expect that he would see himself in the mirror, but he sees a group of people. As he looks into the mirror, he sees a group of people behind him.

Harry, for those of you who don't know or haven't read the books, is an orphan. He lost his parents when he was just a boy. And as he stares into the mirror, he realizes, as he sees this group of people behind him, that he has the same eyes.

[1 : 1 4] He has a resemblance to them. He can see himself in the features of the people standing behind him. And he realizes it's his mother, it's his father, smiling at him. His mom's even tearing up, crying at the sight of her son.

And he had never seen his mother or father before, since they died when he was just young, and they're waving at him. And Harry gets as close to the mirror as he possibly can, and he presses his nose against it to see his parents.

And Rowling says he stares hungrily at them. He's been longing to see them his whole life, and he sees them. And after hours of just staring at this mirror, he decides, because he's sneaking around, he should go back to bed before anyone catches him.

And he whispers, I'll come back to his parents. I'll be back to see you again. And he sneaks off to bed. And the next day, he tells his friend Ron, eager to bring him along to introduce him to his family.

And of course, because this is a mirror that just shows people's families, he wants to meet Ron's family as well. So all day, Harry longs for the night so he could see his family again. He didn't eat all day.

[2 : 2 6] He didn't, all the schoolwork, all the things that were so important to him before this, are now irrelevant to him. His only longing was to go back to that mirror and see his family again.

And so finally, it's night, and everyone's gone to bed, and the two sneak off to the mirror. Harry steps in front of the mirror again, and he sees his family. He sees his mom. He sees his dad. And he tries to say, Ron, look, there's my parents.

There's my family. And Ron can't see them. And so Ron steps in front of the mirror so he can get a better glimpse, and Ron's mouth drops open. Because as he looks into the mirror, he doesn't just see his parents.

He doesn't see his family. He sees himself. You know, if you've read this. Except he's older. He's now the head boy. He has badges.

He has awards. He's the captain of the Quidditch team. And you see what this mirror showed them. It wasn't a mirror that just showed them their families. It wasn't a mirror that showed them their futures.

[3 : 28] And it didn't even just show them what they wanted. As Dumbledore would explain to Harry, it shows nothing more, nothing less, than the deepest, most desperate desire of their hearts.

And whether you've read or you like Harry Potter or not, this psalm is in some ways a mirror that does a similar thing for us. It asks you, it asks you, it asks you not just what you want, but what is the deepest, most desperate desire of your heart?

Or as Jesus would so pointedly ask in the Gospels, what are you seeking? What are you seeking if you want to follow me?

And were that mirror to be here this morning, to be over there in the corner and you were to look into it, what would you see? What would look back at you from that mirror?

Would you see a little healthy baby? Would you see your grown children or grandchildren walking with the Lord? Would you see a big corner office or a graduation day with a diploma that says with honors on it?

[4 : 35] Would you see a life filled with leisure or a life filled with friends or a life filled living somewhere else or a bigger house or a bigger garden? And obviously it's not bad to want all of those things.

I want many of those things. But I think this psalm would challenge us. David would challenge us. Are those the deepest, most desperate desires of your heart? Because as Dumbledore would warn Harry, men have wasted away before that mirror.

They're entranced by what they have seen or driven mad by it. Not knowing if it's possible, if it's real, if this will ever actually happen for them, what they see in that mirror.

And I think we all know in this room that's what good desires can really quickly become. They can drive us mad because we just want them so badly. So this psalm would ask us, what do you truly want?

What do we, what do I, what do we want? What do we truly, truly, truly want? And if David were here and he were to look into that mirror, and as you think of Psalm 27, what he, what he would want, even more than rescue from those enemies who are chasing him, even more than a secure kingdom, finally, even more than the throne, what he would see when he looks in that mirror is he would see the face of God.

[5 : 53] And in verse 4 of Psalm 27, he says, I just want one thing. And I seek after that with everything that I have. All that I have is aimed toward this one thing, and it's you, Lord.

That's what I want more than anything else. And in verse 8, he says, it's, he says, it's not just my mouth that says this. I don't just say this so that people will think that I'm holy.

But he says, my heart, my heart says to you, please show me your face, Lord. See, this wasn't a show for David. This wasn't him trying to act pious and holy in front of other people.

This is something that he tells the Lord in the quiet of his room. This isn't a public performance. This is the posture of his heart before the Lord when he's alone and no one else is watching.

In other words, this is the deepest, most desperate desire of David's heart is to see the Lord. And I think that all of us probably here this morning want that to be the deepest, most desperate desire of our hearts.

[6 : 59] But if we're, if we're honest, our hearts are often paralyzed and seek after other things. And that's what this sermon is going to think about.

What does it mean for the Lord to be the deepest hunger of your heart? Even in the midst of all these other voices and all these other paralyzing things that can creep into our hearts. So just three voices that try to paralyze our hearts based on Psalm 27.

And the first voice, if you look at Psalm 27, is fear. Look at verse one. David says, whom shall I fear? Whom shall I fear?

He asked the question twice. Whom shall I fear? And the answer, if you're actually looking at Psalm 27, is pretty obvious. He has plenty of people that you could put in that list of people to be afraid of.

There are evildoers who want to eat up his flesh, he says. He has adversaries. He has foes. There are armies. There are wars being waged and waged against him. And yet in the midst of all this, he says quietly, verse three, my heart shall not fear.

[8 : 05] I will be confident, is what he says. And my guess is that as we read this, if this were to be the thing you'd flip open to tomorrow morning for your devotion time, it can feel fairly unrelatable.

As I hope you don't have armies camped outside of your doorstep waiting to fight you. If you're involved in personal wars, you should tell someone at the church here. But the reality is David did have armies coming after him.

He really did have wars being waged against him. He had enemies coming after him, even though we don't. And what this situation was in the life of David, we're not exactly sure.

But we can say at least two things for sure about what was happening to David here. One, he says, the Lord is my light in verse one. So we can pretty safely say this situation felt pretty dark to David.

And the second thing we could say is he says, my heart shall not fear. And so we can say pretty confidently, David was afraid and struggling with fear.

[9 : 08] If he had to keep telling himself, I won't be afraid, I won't be afraid in this situation. In other words, what we're seeing in this is David's reality and his theology coming into conflict with each other.

He looked out of his tent and he saw enemies coming for him. He looked out in the plain in front of them and he saw wars raging against him and his people. And then he turned and he looked into the law of God.

And it said, I am your God and you're my people and I will protect you. And so he's trying to reconcile what's going on outside of his tent with what's going on inside the word of God.

And he's trying to teach his eyes and his heart and his emotions to begin to feel and think about the world through the lens of the word of God. Even when it looks like God isn't protecting him.

How does he do that? If you look at verse 1, he says, The Lord is my life and my salvation.

[10 : 12] The Lord is the stronghold of my life. My. In other words, he puts handles on God. He puts handles on the character and the promises of God and claims him for himself and for his own situation.

He says, the Lord. The Bible tells me he's my God. So I'm going to say the Lord is mine. He is mine today. Even as enemies are outside, the Lord is mine in this situation.

What I need right now more than anything else is a refuge. It's a stronghouse. And guess what? That's who the Lord is going to be for me today. I'm going to believe that. When it is dark and I need a light more than anything else, the Lord is my light.

When I need just salvation from this pressing danger, the Lord is my salvation. When I'm running for my enemy, he will be my stronghold.

When evildoers are chasing me and I need someone to trip them up or push them over, he says, the Lord pushes them over. In other words, David is saying, what's David saying? He's saying, God, be who you are.

[11 : 17] All of who you are and your attributes, your might, your power, your protection. Be who you are to me in the midst of my day today. Be mine. And what does that mean?

What does that mean for us here today? It means that we know darkness. We've felt that feeling before. And it means that in the dark, we need theology.

Even more literally, it means that, of course, you're going to hear this from a nerdy PhD in theology, but it means that you need a systematic theology book by your bed at night.

Because when you're afraid, you need more than a song to pick you up or a TV show to distract you. You actually need content. You need something to believe in. You need things to put into your mind, to fill your mind, and to let those things seep down into your heart and into your affections.

And what you need, the content that you need is you need to understand who God is. And you need to understand God so well that you say, this is who he is for me. He is all those things in my direction.

[12 : 24] And then to put handles on the realities of the character of God and pull the character of God into your fears and into your situations. In other words, just as an example of that, you could open up the Bible to Genesis 1 and see God saying, let there be life.

Maybe that's what David was thinking of. And we need to have a view of God that says, God, say those words into my darkness. Who you were at the beginning of the world, still be that God to me today.

Be who you are to me, God. And as David does that, his questions, if you look at verse 1, he asks questions. Those questions become answers in verse 3.

They turn into statements in verse 3. And I think we find that this is the true secret to confidence. It's the true secret to the questions of our life. Because the more your brain internalizes who God is and what he is for you, that's the only way a quiet confidence will settle into your life.

Because you'll realize how much bigger and deeper and stronger God is than for David, the evil people chasing him. And for you, whatever it is that's in your day, you realize, I have a big, strong, faithful God.

[13 : 45] And when you rest all of who you are in the promises of God, personalized into your own soul and your situation, you put handles on him, then you can begin to say in an anxious situation, God isn't just peace, God is my peace.

You can say the Lord is mine in all of who he is. And what that means is, is that whatever your situation is this week, last week, today, what you need most isn't more of you.

You need more of God in your situation. And that reality will begin to change the way you live, the way you think, and the way you pray. Because you're praying, God, be more of you.

Let there be more of you in this situation, more of your character. And not just give me the strength to do more stuff. That's the first voice, is fear.

And the second that tries to distract us, if we look at Psalm 27, is guilt. It's guilt. If you look at verse 9, David cries out.

[14 : 50] What does he say? He says, Lord, don't hide your face from me. And the next line, look at the next line. Don't send me away in anger. And he continues, cast me not off.

Forsake me not. And the reality sets in that the one thing David wants, to behold the face of God, that's his one prayer, is the one thing that David is not qualified to do.

He has too much blood on his hands, too much lust in his eyes, too much guilt in his heart to be able to behold the face of God. And as he prays to see the face of God, immediately his heart whispers, shouts back at him, what makes you think God would look your way?

And you can hear David in Psalm 27 wrestling with the fear that God might turn away from him, that God might be angry with him, that God might forsake him because of what he's done.

And the real lie that Satan is whispering to him is that if David were to catch a, if David were actually to see God's face, his face might be one of disappointment or anger.

[16:07] And so in verse 7, David asks for a deeper privilege than, I don't even think he understands how deep of a privilege he's asking for. He says, God, would you be gracious to me?

He's saying, God, you who are my light, you who are my stronghold, you're my force, you're my protector, you who never change, you who save me from these things, is there also grace in you for me?

Is there grace in you for me? And the reality is that if I can say this, no one in this room by default truly believes that God loves them.

I don't. John Owen put it this way, men are afraid to have good thoughts of God. We're afraid to have good thoughts of God.

Why? Why are we afraid to have good thoughts of God? Very simply, because that's what Satan wants for you. He would love to convince all of us in this room that God doesn't actually love you.

[17:14] He would love to convince you of that. And that's what he does all throughout the Bible. Do you remember the parable that Jesus told in Luke 19 of the ten minas, of the first two who received the differing levels of minas, and they put them to work, and they stewarded them, and then the master came back, and he said, what have you done with what I've entrusted you?

And they show them what he's done, and he's pleased with them. And the third says, you buried it in the ground or something. And he said, I was afraid of you, master, because you're harsh.

Because who you are is harsh, and I was afraid of who you are. And so what does he do? He does nothing. He was paralyzed in fear at the character of his master, terrified to do the wrong thing and to anger him.

And the crazy thing about that is, if there's one word that the New Testament uses to describe the Father, it's the word love. That's the word.

Just think of a few verses. And now as you read your Bible, just look, whenever the Father is described, it's usually by the word love. Here's just a few examples. He loved us.

[18:27] It's the Father. And sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Here's another one. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. So grace is tied to the person of Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost.

So grace is tied with Jesus, love with the Father, and fellowship with the Holy Ghost. Jesus himself says, I say not unto you that I will pray to the Father for you, for the Father himself loves you.

And it couldn't be more clear than this one. God is love. Of all the things that are said about the members of the Trinity in the New Testament, love is almost always given to the Father.

Again, that's, John Owen points that out in his wonderful book, Communion with God. And I think we all know that one of the worst things that you could ever do to somebody, one of the worst things someone could ever do to you, is to soil your reputation, is to talk to other people in a way that misrepresents you and misrepresents your character to them.

And isn't that what Satan does to us every single moment about God? It's to get us to believe that God isn't the one thing that he says he is, which is love for you.

[19 : 42] And so our entire lives become this battle in our mind to believe the word of God rather than our own hearts. And that's my rationale for why we need theology books.

Because your own heart, my own heart, my own emotions will not just lead me to the truth. That's why he says, your word is a lamp to my feet.

He doesn't say, my heart is a lamp to my feet. My heart will lead me in the opposite direction because it's filled with lies from Satan. And isn't that what faith is?

Isn't that what faith is? It's deciding that the word of God is your truth and that you're going to believe the word of God even when your heart and what's going on outside of your tent seems to tell you this isn't true.

God actually isn't your protector. God actually doesn't love you. And that's a scary thing to do. That's a scary thing to do to begin to believe the word of God over your own heart.

[20 : 47] I think David would have said, say whatever you want about how scary the enemies are, how scary the wars are, how scary Goliath was.

The hardest, boldest thing you could ever do is to believe that God is love towards you. Even when your heart protests with everything it has.

And the boldest thing you can do is to pray, God, be love to me. I believe that you love me. Be gracious to me. And to grab onto the handles of the character of God and say, be who you are to me, God.

And David does that. In the midst of his guilt, in the midst of Satan trying to convince him of the anger and disappointment and abandonment of God, David grabs his heart by the collar and tells it, verse 8, God told you to seek his face.

God told you to seek his face. I think a better translation of verse 8 is that God told you to seek his face. And he says, God is urging you, pleading with you, ask to see my face.

[21 : 54] And Satan would do anything he could to get you not to say that prayer. So he convinces you that if you were to ask for that, you'd see a face that would be upset, angry, disappointed.

And yet God says to you this morning, to me this morning, ask me. Ask to see my face because who I am is love. And I will be all of that towards you.

I want to show you my face. And what is it to see someone's face other than to see who they truly are? When you post a picture of yourself on whatever it is, I was uploading a picture for a new, for Slack, for this thing for my job, you don't post a picture of your elbow because no one knows who you are.

You post a picture of your face because that's the essence of who you are. And God says, I want to be who I am for you. So David can say confidently, be gracious to me, God, because in essence that's the same prayer as turn your face toward me.

And look where this leads him in verse 10. This leads him to say that even when my father and my mother forsake me, you will take me in, Lord. And I don't think the main point of this is that David is saying his father and his mother forsook him.

[23 : 12] Although that may have happened. I think he's trying to help you to see a point that's pretty obvious to all of us, which is there are parents in this room and you know that you would never turn your child away.

No matter how strained the relationship gets, if your child calls you at night when they're grown up, you will always take them back.

You will always take your child back. You will always love them. And kids know this. They know how, no matter how broken or damaged your relationship is with your parents, if you call, your mom and dad will probably answer the phone.

And they'll always be the one to believe in you after you failed for 10 times. And they'll root for you and they'll make you a hot meal. And if that isn't the reality for anyone in this room, actually David's truth is even more beautiful.

Because if there's anyone whose parents haven't picked up the phone, David says, even past the point that a parent would finally give up on you, he says, God will, the Father will still take me in.

[24 : 23] He'll still open the door for you. Even past the point that a parent would finally say, I give up on you, God would still say, I'm opening the door for you. I'll still take you, even when your parents have given up on you.

And isn't that a beautiful picture? And so, you can kind of begin to see that this psalm is in some ways painting a picture of the face of God for you. David's heart tells him, I'm afraid that God's face is going to be angry, disappointed, and tired of me.

And will turn me away. And so, what does he do? He says, heart, it's time for me to talk to you. You don't just talk to me, I'm going to start preaching to you, heart. No, God told me to come home.

God will open the door for me always. God will always say, welcome home, my boy, welcome home, my daughter, and he'll always make a meal for you.

And if that seems to emotionally charge language, that's the way that Jesus talked about the father when he told the story of the prodigal son. And that's the way that David talks about him as well.

[25 : 37] The third and final voice that tries to pull your heart away from this one prayer to seek the face of God isn't as obvious, but it's even more central, I think, to David.

And it's the idea of beauty, actually. It's the idea of beauty. Look back at verse 4. David's prayer that he's hanging onto through fear, through guilt, is that he would see God's face.

But he actually, it's more specific than that. His prayer is more specific. If you look, actually, at verse 4, it's that he would gaze upon the beauty of the Lord.

He would gaze upon the beauty of the Lord. And I think if David were here this morning, here's the question he would ask you. Here's his application question for you. He would say, how do you see the Lord?

He might say, is he useful to you? Is the Lord useful to you? In other words, is the Lord the key to fixing your marriage? Or is the Lord the key to fixing your struggle with sin?

[26 : 45] Is the Lord the key to giving you a purposeful life, a meaningful life, giving you meaningful days of things to do? Is the Lord your get out of hell free card that you're using?

I think, and I don't remember exactly, I think it was John Piper who phrased it this way. He said, if you could have an eternity of recreation, of family, of food, of freedom from sin, of pleasure, of a beautiful earth to explore, of all the hobbies and all the resources that you could ever want of a big house, but Jesus weren't there, would you still want it?

Does your heart say, take whatever you want from me, but verse 8, I need to see Jesus. That is the only thing I need to see is Jesus.

There's a trendy new worship song that I don't advise or endorse, but it says something like, and it says it wrongly, that Jesus didn't want heaven without us, that Jesus was needy for us.

But the question is, would we want heaven without Jesus? Are we, as a church, more interested in cultural relevance and in mission, in growth, in financial stability, even in planting, than we are about seeing the face of God himself?

[28 : 11] And the Lord is urging us this morning, as a church, Winchboro, seek my face. And does your heart say in response, your face, oh Lord, do I seek?

And the only way that we'll truly, truly, truly do that is not if we find Jesus useful or motivational or practical, but if we find him beautiful. And what does it mean for something to be beautiful?

It's just something you want to look at. It's just something that you want to be there. Those flowers that are in your kitchen aren't helping pay the taxes. They're not helping with the leaks or to protect you at night.

They don't pay the bills. They're just beautiful. And we just want them there for what they are because we just like them there. And there's a helpful test for what you find beautiful.

It's what you think about when you can think about anything at all. When you maybe first met your spouse, you just thought about them all the time. Maybe it was a best friend that you met who just brightens your life.

[29 : 17] And if someone were to ask you why do you think about them, the question almost wouldn't even make sense. You'd just say, well, because. I want to be with them. I like them. In other words, your heart's just delighting in them.

And we all know here that when you were planning your honeymoon or if you were to plan your honeymoon or a trip, and you could have the nicest hotel and the nicest beach with all the luxuries and all the amenities, and someone told you you can have all that, but your spouse can't come on your honeymoon, you wouldn't go.

You would say, give me the motel and somewhere boring as long as my spouse can be there because they're the center of gravity for your life. And that's how you treat something that's beautiful to you.

In other words, to see God as beautiful is to say, God, just give me yourself. And everything else around that will work itself out. If I have you, everything around it will work itself out.

And that's what Jesus says. Seek first me, and I'll take care of all the other things. And isn't that what Jesus did?

[30 : 26] Didn't he live this out? Didn't Jesus say the words of this psalm as well? Remember when he was just a boy, and they were in Jerusalem, Jerusalem, and his parents left, and they thought he was with someone else, and they come back, and they realize he's in the temple, and they asked him, where have you been?

And he actually responds with the words of this psalm to them. Didn't you know that I would be in my father's house? Didn't you know that I would be inquiring in his temple? And as evildoers chased after Jesus, every word that he said all the days of his life, foes sought to trip him up on everything he said.

He just slipped away to be with the father. He just wanted to be with the father. He longed to go be with the father. And as his head was lifted up above his enemies on the cross, he looked down at them, and they wagged their mouths at him, it says, and they mocked him.

What does he do? In the words of this psalm, he offered himself up as a sacrifice, and he sung quietly the words of Psalm 22 to the Lord. And as sin bore down on his soul, what did he do?

He said, Lord, don't forsake me. Don't turn your back on me. My mother, my father, no longer believe in me. My brothers don't believe in me. But the Lord will still take me in.

[31 : 45] My father will take me in. My father's pleased with me. And he heard the words of his father saying, you're my son. I would never desert you. And as he was burdened with sorrows, he told his soul to wait for his father because he knew he would take him in.

So what is it that we truly want? What is it that you truly, truly, truly, truly, truly, truly want? If there were that mirror here this morning, what would show up in that mirror? Is it the face of God?

Is it just the face of God? Because he says to you this morning, all of you individually, seek my face. Seek my face. How will you respond? What is it that you want?

Let me pray for us. Father, thank you that you say to us corporately, seek my face. And that David in Psalm 27, though the command was plural to all of them, David says, I will seek your face.

I personally will seek your face because I want to see your glory. In the midst of fear, Lord, I will hang on to your character. In the midst of guilt, I will hang on to the fact that you are my father.

[32 : 57] And even when my parents, my mom and my dad give up on me, you still say, you come home to me. And I pray that that would lead all of our hearts to say you're beautiful.

Not that we're going to use you for some purpose or that we can be distracted by so many other things that revolve around the name Christianity except for the person and beauty of Christ.

And I pray that you would impress that reality into our hearts, Lord, that we would walk away seeing you as beautiful and we'd hold you dear. And that you would be who you are to us this morning.

That you would be all of your attributes, all of your character in our direction. And we pray in the words of Psalm 27, verse 7, be gracious to us, Lord, as we feel our sinfulness.

Please be gracious to us. We need you. Thank you, Lord, for your word. We pray this in Christ's name. Amen.