

August 14, 2022 -- The Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

Psalm 4 – “Enjoy the Light of the Face of the LORD!”

Good Shepherd, Beaver Dam

Grace, mercy and peace be yours in abundance from our almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

For the choir director. With stringed instruments. A psalm by David.

¹ My righteous God, answer me when I call. When I was under pressure, you gave me relief. Be merciful to me and hear my prayer. ² You people, how long will you turn my glory into shame? How long will you love empty delusions? How long will you pursue lies? ³ Know this: The LORD has set apart his favored one^a for himself. The LORD will hear when I call to him. ⁴ You may be upset, but do not sin. When you are on your beds, speak to your heart, but remain silent. ⁵ Offer righteous sacrifices, and trust in the LORD. ⁶ Many are saying, “Who can show us any good?” Shine the light of your face on us, O LORD. ⁷ You have placed joy in my heart greater than the joy when grain and new wine are plentiful. ⁸ In complete peace I will lie down, and I will sleep, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. (EHV)

In the name of our righteous God, who hears and answers our calls from distress, dear fellow believers!

What keeps you awake at night? Health concerns? Problems within your family? The safety of your children and grandchildren? Spiraling inflation? I just bought a 35 lbs. bag of dogfood. It cost \$15 more than the previous bag which was 47 lbs.! What keeps you awake at night? The deep divisions in our society? The price of gas? The prospect of a shortage of energy for heating your home this coming winter? What keeps you awake at night?

The setting of Psalm 4 presents a situation that could have kept King David awake at night. Psalm 4 appears to be a companion Psalm to Psalm 3, which was written when David was fleeing from his son, Absalom, who had inspired the people to turn away from trusting David as their King. David fled from his palace in Jerusalem rather than engaging Absalom. Some of his long-time trusted advisors and friends had turned their loyalty over to Absalom. Now he had to sleep on the ground. He didn't know if he would be alive the next day. If anyone has the right to stay awake at night, certainly it was David!

But in verse 8 David says: *“In complete peace I will lie down, and I will sleep, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety (v.8).* Do you hear David's confidence? His prayer in verse six invites us today to:

Enjoy the Light of the Face of the LORD!

Even though David lived about 3,000 years ago, his words sound so fitting for the days of our lives. In verse one he says that he was *“under pressure”*. What pressure do you feel? Is it all the talk about climate change? Or monkey pox? What about the divisive politics of our day? Do you worry about the cost of health care? What effect has inflation and a declining stock market had on your retirement account? Does over use and abuse of social media cause you concern for the well-being of your children and grandchildren?

So we can very eagerly join David in his prayer: *My righteous God, answer me when I call. When I was under pressure, you gave me relief. Be merciful to me and hear my prayer.* With his prayer David reminds us that we can pray with confidence because our God is righteous. Because God is perfect and correct in all that he does, he alone is the one who can answer our prayers. His promises of loving care and perfect protection have always been kept in the ways that he knows are best for us. David says exactly that when he says, *“you gave me relief”*. So, just as David had learned to do over and over, so we too can continue to seek God's mercy when we are under pressure and know that he hear and answer. There is even more for us to know when David says that our God is a “righteous God.” Righteous now only describes God, it

also describes his most wonderful gift. He is the giver of righteousness. This David knew as well. He found great comfort in knowing that God through his promised Messiah would provide forgiveness of sins and an eternal place in his presence. He is both holy and the giver of holiness. We are richly blessed because spiritually, the light of the face of the Lord shines on us. In eternity that will also be physical as we dwell in the light of God's glory forever. When we pray like David under pressure we enjoy the light of the face of the Lord.

In verses two and three of Psalm 4 David rebukes his enemies. We learn from David how we can regard the words of those who mock and ridicule us for believing what Scriptures has to say and choosing a path of life which follows God's will for those who are members of his family. David asks: *how long will you turn my glory into shame?* David helps us put the wickedness of the world in proper perspective. It is bring shame on itself by despising and denying God's glory. The world is following delusions and pursuing lies. Despite what the world is doing David is confident because: *The LORD has set apart his favored one for himself. The LORD will hear when I call to him.* It certainly didn't feel that way at the time but David rejoices because he is the *"favored one"* of the Lord. This is what the writer of the letter to the Hebrews is saying in the epistle lesson we heard today. When by the power of the Holy Spirit we fix our eyes on Jesus, then we are the "favored" ones of the Lord. Through our baptisms we have been declared to be his favored ones. Each time we receive our Savior's body and blood in Lord's Supper he reminds us that we are his favored ones. Just like it was for David, this doesn't mean that we will have a troubled-free life in time. It does remind us that God uses the pressures he permits in our earthly lives as a tool to draw us closer to him and find strength in our favored relationship with him.

In verses four through six David offered some advice for his supporters. *⁴You may be upset, but do not sin. When you are on your beds, speak to your heart, but remain silent. Offer righteous sacrifices, and trust in the LORD. ⁶Many are saying, "Who can show us any good?" Shine the light of your face on us, O LORD.* David knew what was going through the hearts and minds of those who remained loyal to him. He didn't want them to fall into sin. He urges them to control their anger and keep it from coming out of their mouths. He urges God-pleasing actions rather than angry, vengeful words and deeds. What a powerful lesson for us: as we enjoy the light of the face of the Lord, we too can trust in the Lord and offer righteous sacrifices. A sacrifice is when something precious is given up for the sake of someone or something else. When we give up what our sinful hearts and minds want us to do and follow the will of the Lord that is a righteous sacrifice. That's what David urges us to do. We can do this when we know that the light of the face of the Lord is shining on us. The devil will use the circumstances of our lives to lead us to lament with those around David, he said: *"Who can show us any good?"* Our sinful nature wants us to complain about the disappointments and pressures in our lives with the same complaint—to say "what's the use? Why?" When that happens remember David's prayer and join with him: *Shine the light of your face on us, O LORD.*

Having offered up that prayer David turns to praising the Lord. *You have placed joy in my heart greater than the joy when grain and new wine are plentiful. In complete peace I will lie down, and I will sleep, for you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety. (vs. 7 & 8)* Since Israel was an agricultural society, David's illustration was well understood. Those of us who grew up on farms can appreciate them also. The completion of a harvest (when grain and new wine are plentiful) always bring joy to the farmer. To finish a crop of hay, to complete the harvest of oats or wheat, or whatever the farmer was raising was always a time of joy and at least a mini-celebration. Joy greater than this David says is ours when we enjoy the face of the Lord shining on us. The he says nothing will keep him awake at night. For in the safety of the Lord there is peace and joy. So when the circumstances of your life is keeping you awake at night, take it to the Lord, confident that he will use those circumstances for your good. Enjoy the face of the Lord shining on you. Amen.

Pastor Joel W. Jaeger