

What to Do When You Don't Know What to Do
1. When You're Struggling with Where God is Leading You
Jonah 1:1-3; Psalm 121
April 23, 2023
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As a kid, whenever I complained, my mother would say to me, no one said life would be easy. Now, as an adult, knowing how she grew up and what she faced as a coal miner's daughter in the hills of West Virginia in the 1930's and 40's, I have a better understanding of how hard her life was. And as I've experienced decades of life, I too now know that life is hard and not always fair. In fact, Jesus tells us, that in this life we will have trouble. So, what do we do when trouble comes and we don't know what to do, which way to turn, how to get out of the dark places and how to respond when God is telling us something? **While the answers are not always clear, in Christ, there is always a way.** Over the next few weeks, we're going to spend some time with questions that address those uncertain times in our lives. Questions like, what do we do when we must wait or listen for a direction from God longer than we'd like? How do we remember in those times when we are struggling with the difficult moments in our lives, it's okay to not be okay? And today, we start with *what do you do when you're struggling with where God is leading you*. Sometimes we know the right answer to our questions, but we struggle with where that answer will take us.

Me? I didn't want to be a pastor. I mean, my entire life I have been called to the work of the church, but I never wanted to be a pastor. For over 30 years, in many different churches, with differing roles and responsibilities. And in all those roles, I was doing what I believed God was calling me to do. Then about ten years ago, other people, my mentors, family, and friends, began to name in me this call to pastoral ministry that they so clearly saw. But I didn't want to listen. I liked what I was doing and how I was serving God. To be honest, it was comfortable. In my administrative role, it really didn't require me to be brave and do hard things. (I don't like to be brave and do hard things.) But God, kept after me until I began trying to make deals with God. "I'll do this if I don't have to leave this church. I'll do it if I don't have to do it alone. I'll do it's easy." I knew that if I said yes, that meant I'd have to go back to school (for the first time in 30 years) and I could not think of anything scarier and more boring than going back to school, reading academic textbooks and writing papers. But after a miserable summer in 2015, trying to run away and ignore God, I finally stopped running and said yes to God and that journey eventually led me here today.

We have all had things in our lives on which we procrastinate, things like filing taxes, paying bills, or starting an exercise program. Perhaps you are procrastinating on taking that first brave step to ending an unhealthy or even dangerous habit. And why do we procrastinate? A lot of times that reason is fear, fear of failure, not being good enough, or losing control. Oftentimes, fear is what keeps us from the life God is calling us to have.

Today, we begin part of the story of Jonah. We'll hear more about Jonah and his story later this summer in our June sermon series but for today, let's start with just a little background on this book. Scholars agree, this is one of the most peculiar writings in the prophetic literature of the Bible. For one thing, the book focuses on foreigners, non-Jewish people, who receive God's mercy which is surprising to find in the Old Testament. Jonah, son of Amittai, is mentioned in 2 Kings, but it makes no mention of a trip to Nineveh. So, this story of a prophet named Jonah doesn't appear to be historically based but instead a story of God's grace and mercy and love that is marked by wordplay, satire, irony, hyperbole, and humor. If you doubt that the book of

Jonah has humor in it, just look at Jonah chapter 3 where the repentant king of Assyria commands that not only should the people fast and wear mourning clothes as a sign of their repentance, but the animals must fast and wear mourning clothes as well. The visual image of cows wearing mourning clothes is indeed quite humorous!

If you've heard Jonah's story before you know that he was one stubborn man, and yet... one of the most successful Old Testament prophets. He was a holy man, but he was also pretty self-righteous. He did not like that God instructed him to go to proclaim God's word in a foreign land to the strange people of Nineveh. Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and for years, the Assyrians had oppressed and persecuted the Israelites. So, there was deep bitterness in the Jewish community towards Assyrians. It's no wonder that Jonah didn't like the idea of the Ninevites being rescued and saved. He thought they deserved judgment and wrath. He did not want to be the one to deliver God's message of repentance. He did not want to be associated with a God who offered second chances. So, he ran from God and headed to Tarshish, which was in the exact opposite direction from Nineveh. And once he arrived in the seaport village of Joppa, he boarded a ship headed to Tarshish, went below deck and immediately fell into a deep sleep. He might have thought that he could distance himself from God, but God had other ideas.

While at sea, a huge storm rolled in and as it worsened, tossing the ship back and forth, everyone feared for their lives. Finally, Jonah came clean, confessed that it was him who God was chasing after and volunteered himself to be thrown overboard to calm the storm. He was a very stubborn man to the point where he'd rather die than go to Nineveh and preach repentance. But, as you heard earlier, no one can hide from God or God's love for them. And this is when Jonah got swallowed up by a big fish. And it was only when there, in the belly of the fish when Jonah feared for his life that he returned to God in prayer, restoring his relationship with God.

Jonah 2:7-9: *"When my life was ebbing away, I remembered you, LORD, and my prayer rose to you, to your holy temple. "Those who cling to worthless idols turn away from God's love for them. But I, with **shouts of grateful praise**, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, 'Salvation comes from the LORD.'*

He remembered the Lord and the Lord heard his prayer. He had turned away from God's love because of his self-righteousness but now, in the depths of his despair, he said he would "shout with a grateful praise." Huh? What happened there? What was there to praise in the midst of the dark, smelly, damp and cold belly of a fish? We would expect him to shout with anger or fear or criticism, but instead, he shouts praise? The belly of the fish is a metaphor for us and our lives when we try to run from God or ignore God and find ourselves lost and struggling. And when we are focused on our problems, we usually complain. But when we are able to focus on God in the midst of our suffering, everything changes.

Henri Nouwen, in his book, *Turning My Mourning into Dancing*, writes this: *"For in our suffering, not apart from it, Jesus enters our sadness, takes us by the hand, pulls us gently up to stand, and invites us to dance. We find the way to pray, as the psalmist did, "You have turned my mourning into dancing." (Ps 30:11), because at the center of our grief, we find the grace of God. And as we dance, we realize that we don't have to stay on the little spot of our grief but can step beyond it. We stop centering our lives on ourselves."*

There is much in the world to make us weary, weigh down our souls, and break our hearts. There is war causing unimaginable suffering and death. More and more mass shootings. Our

climate crisis is creating more storms, deeper droughts, torrential rains. Economic news has been more bad than good. The capacity of us to continue to draw deep lines around “us” and “them,” “I’m right” and “You’re wrong” seems as strong and as cruel as ever causing the divisiveness in our country to run deep. Watching the news can make one feel hopeless and alone.

Then there’s things in our personal lives that each of us carry. Perhaps it’s a concern for yourself or a loved-one’s health, physical health or mental health. Maybe it’s concern over a broken or abusive relationship, or you suddenly find yourself unemployed or underemployed. Perhaps you feel God calling you to something or someplace and you just do not want to go.

So how does all that make you feel? Anxious? Frustrated? Angry? Vulnerable? Confused? Maybe you feel like you’re in the middle of a dark tunnel with no light visible at the end. It is precisely in these times that we should remember who we are and whose we are. Because as people of God, we can find grace at the center of our grief. The psalmist writes this elegant psalm of trust that uses the image of a journey, a journey that can lead us from conflict to peace., *I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the LORD, THE Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip— he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD watches over you— the LORD is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.* (Psalm 121) This is a reminder or reassurance that God goes with us, protects us, guides us on all of life’s journeys.

Jonah’s story reflects how often God is calling us to go somewhere, or to do something, and we simply don’t want to. But, as Jonah’s story shows, there is little use in running away from God. Yet even as Jonah runs, God provides safety and shelter along the way. In the end, God shows Jonah that just as God loves and protects him, God loves and protects Nineveh, and all creation.

So, what scares you the most about God having a call on your life? You know, you, me, all of us, are being called to something unique and special. Whatever that situation is in your life, if you’re run away, God is with you. It’s like running on a treadmill, you work hard but you get nowhere. Running or hiding from God never really works. God has a way of getting you to where God wants you to be. If you can get off the treadmill and back on the ground, it is through your calling that you can help other people experience God’s grace and love.

Someone who followed God’s call is Carol Erickson, our missionary in Kenya and Executive Director of Imara International. From a very early age, Carol knew that God was calling her to do something special with her life to help children in need. And after hearing Bono speak about Africa at a National Prayer breakfast in Washington, DC., she told a friend that the only way she’d ever go to Africa was on a 5-star tour. There were strange diseases and scary bugs there, after all. To make a long story short, three months later she was on a plane to Kenya. The lesson here? Carol says, “Never, ever tell God what you are not going to do.”

It was several years later that Carol felt that God was telling her to serve the youngest, most vulnerable girls in Kenya. She didn’t think it was fair that girls got kicked out of school or their families just because they got pregnant, often due to rape or manipulation. It was out of this that the idea for Imara was born. Here’s what Carol told me yesterday about this call.

As I look back now, I have no idea what I was thinking. I made a list of all the reasons why I should not go to Kenya. And a friend and I prayed over the list and one by one people volunteered to help with every item on the list. I was left without excuse and so, I went to Kenya.

*It was not and it is not any easy call. It is far from the home, family, and friends that I love. I never thought God would call me to serve alone, but he has. I went to a place I didn't really understand, didn't speak the language and was generally clueless about. And then once I got here, I realized that there were times when I was not physically safe and that was a rude awakening for fairly sheltered girl from the Pacific Northwest.... **I decided early on that to be obedient in a hard spot is way better than being disobedient in an easy place.** This all sounds hard and depressing...and some days it is. But if I had stayed in America, I never would have had the opportunity to see God work in the ways I have...God has allowed me to be part of the lives of some amazing young women and I have been present for the births of more precious babies than I can count. My life may have been easier if I had not answered the call, but I would have missed the adventure of a lifetime.*

Courage and trust are required to follow God's call on your life and walk into the struggles of our community and our world. Your journey may not impact 100's of young moms and their babies like Carol, or an entire city like Jonah. But your journey matters and if just one life is impacted, this might be someone you've never met or someone with whom you do life every day, if one person knows the love of Christ because of you, it's evidence of a life well lived. Let's pray: God, in the world of suffering and pain, destruction and walls, pull us close to you. Build us up, bind us together as the Body of Christ so that we can support and encourage one another. And then let us rise up, following your call on our life to offer your hope to a hurting world. Amen.

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of April 23, 2023

Weekly Prayer

Faithful God, I thank you that you have given me your promise to always be with me. I know that you will never go back on that promise. I can count on you to be there for me in any difficult or scary situation. You have brought me through storms of adversity in the past and will do so again. Amen.

Monday, April 24

Scripture: Jonah 1:1-17

The LORD's word came to Jonah, Amittai's son: "Get up and go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it, for their evil has come to my attention." So Jonah got up—to flee to Tarshish from the LORD! He went down to Joppa and found a ship headed for Tarshish. He paid the fare and went aboard to go with them to Tarshish, away from the LORD. But the LORD hurled a great wind upon the sea, so that there was a great storm on the sea; the ship looked like it might be broken to pieces. The sailors were terrified, and each one cried out to his god. They hurled the cargo that was in the ship into the sea to make it lighter. Now Jonah had gone down into the hold of the vessel to lie down and was deep in sleep. The ship's officer came and said to him, "How can you possibly be sleeping so deeply? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps the god will give some thought to us so that we won't perish." Meanwhile, the sailors said to each other, "Come on, let's cast lots so that we might learn who is to blame for this evil that's happening to us." They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. So they said to him, "Tell us, since you're the cause of this evil happening to us: What do you do and where are you from? What's your country and of what people are you?" He said to them, "I'm a Hebrew. I worship the LORD, the

God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land.” Then the men were terrified and said to him, “What have you done?” (The men knew that Jonah was fleeing from the LORD, because he had told them.) They said to him, “What will we do about you so that the sea will become calm around us?” (The sea was continuing to rage.) He said to them, “Pick me up and hurl me into the sea! Then the sea will become calm around you. I know it’s my fault that this great storm has come upon you.” The men rowed to reach dry land, but they couldn’t manage it because the sea continued to rage against them. So they called on the LORD, saying, “Please, LORD, don’t let us perish on account of this man’s life, and don’t blame us for innocent blood! You are the LORD: whatever you want, you can do.” Then they picked up Jonah and hurled him into the sea, and the sea ceased its raging. The men worshipped the LORD with a profound reverence; they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made solemn promises.

Meanwhile, the LORD provided a great fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.

Observation

As Jonah’s story began, he flatly defied God’s call—he set out “to flee to Tarshish from the LORD!” (1:3) Instead of going to Nineveh like the Lord commanded, he went to Joppa, a coastal seaport where he boarded a ship headed in the opposite direction of Nineveh, trying to escape the Lord’s call.

Application

Here’s an irony, right off the bat. Jonah was on the boat because he didn’t want to obey God’s call. Yet he identified himself to the sailors by saying, “I worship the LORD, the God of heaven—who made the sea and the dry land.” Have you ever identified yourself as a follower of God (or a Christian) while acting in a way that clearly wasn’t obeying God? If so, how persuasive was your “witness”?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you may have large, difficult calls for me, or simpler, everyday kinds of callings. Give me a heart that listens and answers “yes” to whatever you call me to. Amen.

Tuesday, April 25

Scripture: 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 32-37, 41-45

A champion named Goliath from Gath came out from the Philistine camp. He was more than nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore bronze scale-armor weighing one hundred twenty-five pounds. He had bronze plates on his shins, and a bronze scimitar hung on his back. His spear shaft was as strong as the bar on a weaver’s loom, and its iron head weighed fifteen pounds. His shield-bearer walked in front of him. He stopped and shouted to the Israelite troops, “Why have you come and taken up battle formations? I am the Philistine champion, and you are Saul’s servants. Isn’t that right? Select one of your men, and let him come down against me. If he is able to fight me and kill me, then we will become your slaves, but if I overcome him and kill him, then you will become our slaves and you will serve us. I insult Israel’s troops today!” The Philistine continued, “Give me an opponent, and we’ll fight!” When Saul and all Israel heard what the Philistine said, they were distressed and terrified.

“Don’t let anyone lose courage because of this Philistine!” David told Saul. “I, your servant, will go out and fight him!” “You can’t go out and fight this Philistine,” Saul answered David. “You are still a boy. But he’s been a warrior since he was a boy!” “Your servant has kept his father’s sheep,” David replied to Saul, “and if ever a lion or a bear came and carried off one of the flock,

I would go after it, strike it, and rescue the animal from its mouth. If it turned on me, I would grab it at its jaw, strike it, and kill it. Your servant has fought both lions and bears. This uncircumcised Philistine will be just like one of them because he has insulted the army of the living God. "The LORD," David added, "who rescued me from the power of both lions and bears, will rescue me from the power of this Philistine." "Go!" Saul replied to David. "And may the LORD be with you!"

The Philistine got closer and closer to David, and his shield-bearer was in front of him. When the Philistine looked David over, he sneered at David because he was just a boy; reddish brown and good-looking. The Philistine asked David, "Am I some sort of dog that you come at me with sticks?" And he cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said to David, "and I'll feed your flesh to the wild birds and the wild animals!" But David told the Philistine, "You are coming against me with sword, spear, and scimitar, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of heavenly forces, the God of Israel's army, the one you've insulted.

Observation

This is the first story about Israel's King David most children learn in Sunday School. Even in sports or business, we often talk about a "David and Goliath" story when a "little guy" takes on an established power. The Philistine giant, whatever his exact size (ancient manuscripts differ), was big enough to terrify King Saul and the whole Israelite army. But he didn't scare David. For him, the size of the God he served mattered much more than the size of his enemy. (And, of course, the story goes on in verse 46 to say the giant lost—badly.)

Application

When have you had to face a "giant" problem or person? Were your feelings (whether you showed them externally or not) more like those of Saul and the army, or like David's? What role, if any, did your trust in God play in the way you faced the intimidating situation? Did you learn anything that helps you with giant problems or people you face today, or may face in the future?

Prayer

Lord God, giants don't always have to be nine feet tall to feel that way to me. Teach me that you are bigger than any human "giant," and help me "cut them down to size" by trusting in you. Amen.

Wednesday, April 26

Scripture: Numbers 13:27-33; 14:1-3

Then they gave their report: "We entered the land to which you sent us. It's actually full of milk and honey, and this is its fruit. There are, however, powerful people who live in the land. The cities have huge fortifications. And we even saw the descendants of the Anakites there. The Amalekites live in the land of the arid southern plain; the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the mountains; and the Canaanites live by the sea and along the Jordan." Now Caleb calmed the people before Moses and said, "We must go up and take possession of it, because we are more than able to do it." But the men who went up with him said, "We can't go up against the people because they are stronger than we." They started a rumor about the land that they had explored, telling the Israelites, "The land that we crossed over to explore is a land that devours its residents. All the people we saw in it are huge men. We saw there the Nephilim (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We saw ourselves as grasshoppers, and that's how we appeared to them."

The entire community raised their voice and the people wept that night. All the Israelites criticized Moses and Aaron. The entire community said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt or if only we had died in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land to fall by the sword? Our wives and our children will be taken by force. Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?”

Observation

As Israel neared the Promised Land, Moses sent 12 men to scout the land (Numbers 13:1-3). When the scouts returned to give their report, ten of them focused on obstacles and problems, and were terrified. Long before David faced Goliath, they were frightened of the “huge men” they saw in the Promised Land. Only Caleb (along with Joshua—Numbers 14:6) focused on God’s promise and power and pleaded with people to keep moving forward.

Application

Camped right on the borders of the Promised Land, Israel turned away because fear got the better of them. Are there any “frontiers,” spiritual or emotional as well as physical, you sense God might be calling you to cross? What fears arise in your heart as you think about where God may be calling you? How can you develop the kind of faith Caleb and Joshua showed?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, had you been governed by fear, you’d no doubt have stayed safely away from this broken, sometimes hostile planet. Please keep infusing your holy fearlessness into my heart and life. Amen.

Thursday, April 27

Scripture: Isaiah 52:13 – 53:11

Look, my servant will succeed.

He will be exalted and lifted very high.

Just as many were appalled by you,

he too appeared disfigured, inhuman,

his appearance unlike that of mortals.

But he will astonish many nations.

Kings will be silenced because of him,

because they will see what they haven’t seen before;

what they haven’t heard before, they will ponder.

Who can believe what we have heard,

and for whose sake has the LORD’s arm been revealed?

He grew up like a young plant before us,

like a root from dry ground.

He possessed no splendid form for us to see,

no desirable appearance.

He was despised and avoided by others;

a man who suffered, who knew sickness well.

Like someone from whom people hid their faces,

he was despised, and we didn’t think about him.

It was certainly our sickness that he carried,

and our sufferings that he bore,

but we thought him afflicted,

struck down by God and tormented.

He was pierced because of our rebellions

and crushed because of our crimes.
He bore the punishment that made us whole;
by his wounds we are healed.
Like sheep we had all wandered away,
each going its own way,
but the LORD let fall on him all our crimes.
He was oppressed and tormented,
but didn't open his mouth.
Like a lamb being brought to slaughter,
like a ewe silent before her shearers,
he didn't open his mouth.
Due to an unjust ruling he was taken away,
and his fate—who will think about it?
He was eliminated from the land of the living,
struck dead because of my people's rebellion.
His grave was among the wicked,
his tomb with evildoers,
though he had done no violence,
and had spoken nothing false.
But the LORD wanted to crush him
and to make him suffer.
If his life is offered as restitution,
he will see his offspring; he will enjoy long life.
The LORD's plans will come to fruition through him.
After his deep anguish he will see light, and he will be satisfied.
Through his knowledge, the righteous one, my servant,
will make many righteous,
and will bear their guilt.

Observation

Rabbis debated who Isaiah's fourth "servant song" was about. The first Christians had no doubt—they quoted this song more than any other verses to describe Jesus' redemptive suffering. In Jesus, the early Christians saw God's servant succeeded by taking the world's evil and hatred onto himself and through what looked like failure to human eyes changed it into a redemptive force. No passage in the Hebrew Scriptures spoke more eloquently to those early Christians—and to every generation of Christians since—about the meaning of Jesus' death. As the New Dictionary of Biblical Theology said, "God's power is at its greatest not in his destruction of the wicked but in his taking all the wickedness of the earth into himself and giving back love."

Application

Jesus set the stage for the way New Testament writers applied Isaiah 53 by quoting part of the passage and applying it to himself (Luke 22:37). It all came true in Jesus' saving death and resurrection, they said. What does Jesus' way of succeeding in defeating evil as the Suffering Servant tell you about how God defines success? What kinds of evil have you faced? How can Jesus' example guide you toward the path of genuine success at those times?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you succeeded through self-giving love, through suffering for others and giving your life to offer me life. Reshape any flawed notions of success I may have and help me to truly succeed by the same divine standards that you did. Amen.

Friday, April 28

Scripture: Exodus 3:2-4, 9-11, 13, 4:1, 10, 13; Deuteronomy 34:10-12

The LORD's messenger appeared to him in a flame of fire in the middle of a bush. Moses saw that the bush was in flames, but it didn't burn up. Then Moses said to himself, Let me check out this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't burning up. When the LORD saw that he was coming to look, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!"

Now the Israelites' cries of injustice have reached me. I've seen just how much the Egyptians have oppressed them. So get going. I'm sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and to bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"

But Moses said to God, "If I now come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' they are going to ask me, 'What's this God's name?' What am I supposed to say to them?"

Then Moses replied, "But what if they don't believe me or pay attention to me? They might say to me, 'The LORD didn't appear to you!'"

But Moses said to the LORD, "My Lord, I've never been able to speak well, not yesterday, not the day before, and certainly not now since you've been talking to your servant. I have a slow mouth and a thick tongue."

But Moses said, "Please, my Lord, just send someone else."

No prophet like Moses has yet emerged in Israel; Moses knew the LORD face-to-face! That's not even to mention all those signs and wonders that the LORD sent Moses to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh, to all his servants, and to his entire land— as well as all the extraordinary power that Moses displayed before Israel's own eyes!

Observation

Moses had a safe, steady (if fairly boring) job tending sheep for his father-in-law. He'd long ago left his upbringing in Egypt's royal palace behind. But God had other plans. God came to Moses as he did his steady, boring job (with little need to trust in himself or God) and kept calling as Moses offered excuse after excuse. In the end, Moses left his safe life to answer God's call, and marched into history trusting God to guide him in leading Israel out of slavery.

Application

Moses seemed to think only a strong, important person could carry out God's call. Was he really supposed to go as one man, with no army, and demand that Pharaoh let most of his slave labor force go just because God told him to? Do you ever fear that you are not strong or important enough to live as God calls you to live? God can help you shift your focus from your limitations to your strengths, the greatest strength being the fact that God will be with you.

Prayer

O God, you don't call all of us to huge, historic missions like the one you gave Moses. But at times your call looks big enough that I get scared. Give me your strength to live for you beyond any of my fears. Amen.

Saturday, April 29

Scripture: Psalm 27:1-5

The LORD is my light and my salvation.
Should I fear anyone?
The LORD is a fortress protecting my life.
Should I be frightened of anything?
When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up—
it's they, my foes and my enemies,
who stumble and fall!
If an army camps against me,
my heart won't be afraid.
If war comes up against me,
I will continue to trust in this:
I have asked one thing from the LORD—
it's all I seek:
to live in the LORD's house all the days of my life,
seeing the LORD's beauty
and constantly adoring his temple.
Because he will shelter me in his own dwelling
during troubling times;
he will hide me in a secret place in his own tent;
he will set me up high, safe on a rock.

Observation

Within the confines of time, the promises of Psalm 27 do not always come true. But our God is eternal, not bound by time, so we need not fear anyone or anything. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, at the funeral of four girls killed in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, "Like the ever changing cycle of the seasons, life has the soothing warmth of the summers and the piercing chill of its winters. But through it all, God walks with us. Never forget that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope."

Application

Israelites who prayed and sang this psalm saw Babylon destroy Jerusalem, saw Rome overpower their land—yet they still trusted. Christians saw Jesus crucified, the apostles Paul and Peter martyred by Rome, prayed the psalm in dim Roman catacombs—yet they still trusted. What difficulties test your trust, and seek to make you afraid? How can you trust that in the end God will always keep the promise to set you up high, safe on a rock?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, grow in me an ever-deepening trust in your eternal presence and power, and your great heart of love. Amen.