

Psalm 27.1, 4-9

[Worship]

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?

4 One thing I asked of the Lord, that I will seek after: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple. 5 For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent: he will set me high on a rock. 6 Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord. 7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry aloud, be gracious to me and answer me! 8 "Come," my heart says, "seek his face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek. 9 Do not hide your face from me. Do not turn your servant away in anger, you who have been my help. Do not cast me off, do not forsake me, O God of my salvation!

Consider:

[Think & Pray...]

Jesus begins to announce the kingdom of heaven at hand, echoing John the Baptist's cry in Matthew 3.2. The Greek word translated "come near" in the NRSV is *eggizo*. Here it is in its perfect tense, suggesting something that has happened in the past and come to completion, and yet has lasting impact for all time. This carries the linguistic implication of being perpetually in the state of happening: the kingdom of heaven is always in the midst of drawing near—imminently imminent, as it were.

Two chapters later, Matthew places the Sermon on the Mount, one of Jesus' explications of what this kingdom both looks like and requires. Deceptively simple, even the beatitudes leave ample room for interpretation.



Paul, writing to the community in Corinth, pastorally intervenes in an all-too familiar scenario. Left to their own devices, ideological camps have formed with competing schemes for sanctity and true believing. Paul implores them to remember whose they are, "so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power" (1 Corinthians 1.17).

Just what is the power of the cross? Left to our own devices, it has been a most effective weapon of oppression, used to justify suffering and thereby pervert everything Jesus stood for.

To choose to follow, like those fishermen who "immediately left their nets" (Matthew 4.20), is to enter completely into God's divine power, without fear of consequences, and without the promise of greatness. In doing so, the power of that ultimate threat—death—has been unseated. Have we come anywhere close to grasping this?

Let me put it another way. Do we love with abandon, no matter how reckless, uncool, or tasteless we appear? Does fear paralyze us from living as if we needn't fear death? Does shame blind us to how forgiven we truly are?

[The Scripture] **1 Corinthians 1.17-18**

17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and *not* with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be *emptied* of its power. 18 For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.