

Psalm 27

[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? 2 When evildoers assail me to devour my flesh— my adversaries and foes— they shall stumble and fall. 3 Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident. 4 One thing I asked of the LORD, that will I 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! 10 If my father and mother forsake me, the LORD will take me up. 11 Teach me your way, O LORD, and lead me on a level path because of my enemies. 12 Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen against me, and they are breathing out violence. 13 I believe that I shall see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. 14 Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!

Consider:

[Words]

The gospel reading portrays Jesus in sharp contradiction to the dominant ordering of Herod and Rome. Jesus heals and casts out demons, whereas the dominant order of Herod is itself

wounding and demonic. In his grief over the dominant order of Jerusalem, Jesus anticipates a future that will be ordered in healthy, messianic ways. The theme for the day is *contradiction* and *alternative*.

Paul's word is an echo of the teaching of Jesus. He characterizes "the enemies of the cross" as preoccupied with commodities ("belly") (Philippians 3:18-19). He invites his congregation to an alternative, to remember that there is another "citizenship" (in heaven), so that they are not to be committed participants in the dominant culture of commoditization.

The Hebrew Testament readings readily serve the same themes of contradiction and alternative. Abraham is presented as one who trusts God's promises (for heir and for land), who does not need to grasp for self but can receive what is to be given. The psalmist, finally, sorts out fear and trust, settling for trust in God that counters the conventional fears of the world, awaiting "the land of the living."

The readings converge for a Lenten community that is focused on the demanding, glorious truth of the gospel. Such a community can embrace ample distance from dominant values of violence (killing prophets), serving the belly, grasping for self, and fearing too much. The gospel invites otherwise!

Walter Bruggemann

[Scripture]

Philippians 3.17-4.1

3.17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18

For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears.

19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

4.1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Also, read Luke 4.1-13