

“Fearless Gratitude” Psalm 27:1-6

Welcome to our third in a series of four texts utilizing the Psalms. We have explored a praise psalm and a lamentation psalm. Other types include salvation history, wisdom and liturgical (for use in worship specifically and also for special occasions like royal settings.) In addition, most scholars also distinguish between community psalms and individual ones.

We are utilizing Psalm 27, verses 1-6. Psalm 27 is considered a hybrid. The first half is all about assurance. The last half depicts a desperate search. The reason why one half is so different than the other? Most scholars think they were two Psalms and then joined together later!

Psalm 27 is also important from a Jewish standpoint - it is typically utilized to prepare for Rosh Hashanah - the loud and boisterous Jewish New Year!

(Voice)

The Eternal is my light *amidst my darkness*

and my rescue *in times of trouble.*

So whom shall I fear?

He surrounds me with a fortress of protection.

So nothing should cause me alarm.

(The psalms provide us with a way to think about and pray through the various threats we face. Consider the threats on the horizon. Some may be national. Others may be more personal. The reality is there are times when our enemies appear to have the upper hand. All is not lost because, ultimately, God is our light and salvation. The darkness will lift, and our Savior will come.)

When my enemies advanced

to devour me alive,

They tripped and fell *flat on their faces into the soil*.

When the armies *of the enemy* surround me,

I will not be afraid.

When death calls for me in the midst of war,

my soul is confident *and unmoved*.

I am pleading with the Eternal for this one thing,

my *soul's* desire:

To live with Him all of my days—

in the shadow of His temple,

To behold His beauty and ponder His ways

in the company of His people.

His house is my shelter and secret retreat.

It is there I find peace in the midst of storm and turmoil.

Safety sits with me in the hiding place of God.

He will set me on a rock, high *above the fray.*

God lifts me high above those with thoughts

of death and deceit that call for my life.

I will enter *His presence*, offering sacrifices *and praise.*

In His house, I am overcome with joy

As I sing, yes, *and play music* for the Eternal *alone.*

THIS IS THE WORD OF GOD FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD!

THANKS BE TO GOD! Amen

The Psalmist seems to be going through a dangerous time and with God's presence, the psalmist is going to find joy because God will deliver and save.

Omar Brownson (unusual name right? Mom is fourth-generation Chinese-American. Dad is a white guy from Des Moines that converted to Islam!). Mr. Brownson graduated from Harvard and was successful in both real estate and finance. Around 40, he decided to upend his life and work towards trying to rethink how to utilize the 51-mile LA River. Since this was quite a monumental change, he took a retreat.

At the end of the retreat, (from the article Gratitude: The Antidote for a Fear-Driven Life) "I spoke to one of the monks and shared my struggles with impatience for social change. In his black robe, he laughed in my face. He then put his hand on my shoulder and told me that the root word for patience in Latin is patis, meaning 'to suffer.'"

Making a mark meant doing something that mattered. I wanted to matter. I grew up feeling unseen, and I did not trust that time nor others were on my side. I was racing against myself, causing my own suffering, even if for the greater good.

I'd love to say that after the silent retreat, I forgave myself of needing to prove something and that is why I am grateful. That's not quite the case. When we can take a breath and appreciate each moment, we

enter the place author Brené Brown calls "enough." This is how I got to gratitude. Enough is enough.

Gratitude is the simple act of seeing good revealed in multiple ways. Gratitude helps us notice what we appreciate, even a simple breath. As a social emotion, gratitude recognizes that something of value has been received at a cost to someone else. Gratitude makes visible what or whom we might be taking for granted. Gratitude also just feels good.

[OBJ]

Fearless gratitude makes us whole. Gratitude reminds us that we are not alone and that we can tap into the courage that comes from being connected to something bigger than ourselves.

Experiencing gratitude isn't an obligation. Gratitude is an opportunity to make visible what you appreciate. What you are mindful of changes how you experience your life. Seeing the world differently actually changes the world you live in—and changes you.

Fearless gratitude is when you can see what is present. There is no fear or stress about what is absent. This courage is how you find calm and satisfaction, and can give thanks.”

[\(http://cowbird.com/story/73275/Love_Gratitude_And_Patriotism/\)](http://cowbird.com/story/73275/Love_Gratitude_And_Patriotism/)

One more short story from a lady who refers to herself as Boo King

“Grateful and patriotic. That’s how I felt last weekend when E (her husband) and I escaped again to the mainland. This time there weren’t any medical procedures tagged. No Big C cloud hovering over our heads like an alien space ship. Just two glorious days of freedom and fun with our oldest daughter A. Quite simply, it was divine.

I like to keep an attitude of gratitude. I’m happier and far more optimistic when I do. Life just feels richer and amplified when I see the glass half full. This thankful countenance isn’t always easy to maintain though. Sometimes I engage in rip-roaring pity parties of one. But most of the time I count my blessings.

Last Saturday afternoon, smack dab in the middle of a crowded downtown Vancouver street, I had an epiphany. The sun was shining gloriously. Music and laughter, breezy summertime conversations, and the smell of suntan lotion wafted from every street corner. It was picture perfect.

Endorphins flooded my limbic system, and released a profusion of happy childhood memories. In an instant, I was as lighthearted and mirthful as a ten year old girl running under the garden sprinkler. Yippee! It doesn’t get much better than that. Another neat thing happened in that moment. My gratitude muscle expanded and skyrocketed, then soared heavenward through the brilliant clear blue sky.

Giddy with glee, I turned to E and said, 'Life doesn't get much better than this.'

He looked at me as if I had suddenly grown two heads. I fully appreciate why he would find my declaration untrue, given the circumstances of our life right now. But before he could protest or disagree, I repeated, 'Life doesn't get any better than this. In this cosmic moment, which is all we have, life is perfect. Just the way it is.'

Then he got it. His eyes welled with tears and he smiled. Big honest smile. Right from the heart. One filled with gratitude.

Later that day, our daughter took us to a baseball game at the Nat Bailey Stadium, where the Vancouver Canadians and the Tri-City Dust Devils were playing.

The Nat Bailey Stadium is gorgeous. Most people wouldn't describe a sports stadium this way. But to me it is. This was my first time, and like many firsts, it was memorable and I loved everything about it. The pre-game excitement, the smell of popcorn and hotdogs, fans in red tee-shirts and baseball caps, hoots and hollers across the stands, the pre-game warm-ups and the national anthems. Gorgeous. Every last bit.

Before the game begins two national anthems are sung. I don't recall the name of the singer of the anthems, only that she gave a virtuoso performance. Flawless. Resplendent. A crackerjack job. I love the American anthem. It's impressive and majestic. But I'm a Canadian girl. Through and through. Tried and true.

From the very first note, when this crowd of devoted Vancouver Canadians fans stood shoulder to shoulder, hats in hand, young and old alike, and gloriously sang our national anthem, I was moved. Unexpectedly filled to the brim. With patriotism. With pride. With gratitude.

Oh Canada. Dear sweet Canada. My home and native land. I am so grateful to be here."

Have a safe and meaningful Fourth of July - and practice your fearless gratitude.

AND THAT'S THE MESSAGE!