

Scripture: Psalm 27 (2)
Date: January 23, 2011
Service: 3 Epiphany
Place: St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Palatka, Fl
The Rev. Canon James M. Dorn III, Rector

“The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom then shall I be afraid?”

All of us are afraid of something and how we handle our fears will determine our future.

If we are afraid of entering a dark room, turning on a light will ease our fears; however, our fear of what we cannot see will never be conquered or tamed unless we enter the darkness.

A fear of animals will never go away unless we pet one or pick up a reptile.

Fear of failure is strengthened when we do nothing; however, it is soundly defeated when we do something and accept the results of our attempt, whether a success or failure, as a learning moment claiming victory over fear and complacency.

Our fears can be conquered or at least transformed into a healthy respect for what we are afraid of in order to be non-anxious in its presence and remain uninjured or alive when we attempt something risky.

Do your fears keep you from accomplishing something or living up to your full potential?

I know my fears have kept and can keep me from doing something and some of the things I am afraid of might surprise you. I am afraid of speaking in front of a group of people, especially if there is an English teacher present. I am afraid of inadvertently saying something that might hurt someone. I have a very healthy respect large dogs but not long ago I was very afraid of them. And last but definitely not least, I am afraid of failure.

My fears, like your fears, are born from some experience we did not like and if we allow our fears instead of our strengths direct our lives, then they will rob us of living a full life of joy. Quite possibly that is why Fulton Oursler wrote, “Many of us crucify ourselves between two thieves - regret for the past and fear of the future.”

Mr. Oursler's quote is so true and before I use any quote, I want to know a something about its author. Well, he was a journalist, a playwright, and an author of mystery and detective stories. However, after a visit to the Holy Land and while he wrote, [A Skeptic in the Holy Land](#), his heart began to change as Jesus transformed his skeptical life. This spiritual change in Oursler's life was so dramatic that he wrote [The Greatest Story Ever Told: A Tale of the Greatest Life Ever Lived](#), and [The Greatest Faith Ever Known: The Story of the Men Who First Spread the Religion of Jesus and of the Momentous Times in Which They Lived](#). When a life changes, as Oursler's did, the person will wrestle with regrets of a sinful life and fear of what their new faith in Jesus Christ will be leading them.

We have many fears, some trivial and some not so trivial, and many of us do crucify ourselves between the two thieves of regret from the past and fear of the future. I have regrets from past decisions and I am fearful at times about the future but aren't we all regretful of something we have done or not done and fearful of what is yet to happen.

To release us from the guilt of our past and our fears, God gave us the gift of forgiveness and light through His Son Jesus Christ. This gift is so powerful that when we call to Jesus in our troubles, in our illnesses, in our financial problems, or for help in anything that is causing us discomfort and heartache, He speaks through the Holy Spirit to our hearts and whispers, "Seek my face."

No matter how we learned to be fearful and regretful, the psalmist wishes to teach us to not seek fame, fortune, health, or anything else from the Lord but this, "The one thing I ask of the Lord -- the thing I seek most -- is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple. (NLT)"

When we as a Church and you as a child of God get our priorities straight, there is nothing and there is no one we need to fear. You need not fear the regrets of your past because Jesus is the author of your salvation, he will strengthen you, and He will never turn His face from you when you have repented of the sins you have sown so well and plentifully and turn your heart toward Him.

Today, in the silence before you ask God's forgiveness for your sins against Him and your neighbor, seek the face of Jesus Christ and know that no matter what you have done or what you are afraid of, He will never turn away from you, he will be with you, he will protect you, and he will guide you through whatever storm you are in, even if you created the storm you are in.

Let us pray,

Lord Jesus, we call to you and name you as eternal, ever-present, and boundless in love. Yet there are times, when we fail to recognize you in the routines of our lives. Sometimes shame clenches tightly around our hearts, and we hide our true feelings. Sometimes fear makes us small, and we miss the chance to speak from our strength. Sometimes doubt invades our hopefulness, and we degrade our own wisdom.

Holy God, during every moment of the day, remind us of your holy presence near us and in us. Free us from shame and self-doubt. And Jesus, help us to see you in the moments of the day to live honestly, to act courageously, and to speak from the wisdom you have given us. Amen.