

## **Carrying the Light**

January 25, 2026

### Psalm 27:1 and 4-9

*<sup>1</sup> 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?...*

*<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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.*

*<sup>6</sup> Now my head is higher than the enemies surrounding me, and I will offer sacrifices in God's tent — sacrifices with shouts of joy! I will sing and praise the Lord. <sup>7</sup> Lord, listen to my voice when I cry out — have mercy on me and answer me! <sup>8</sup> Come, my heart says, seek God's face. Lord, I do seek your face! <sup>9</sup> Please don't hide it from me! Don't push your servant aside angrily — you have been my help! God who saves me, don't neglect me! Don't leave me all alone!*

### Matthew 4:12-23

*<sup>2</sup> Now when Jesus heard that John was arrested, he went to Galilee. <sup>13</sup> He left Nazareth and settled in Capernaum, which lies alongside the sea in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali. <sup>14</sup> This fulfilled what Isaiah the prophet said: <sup>15</sup> Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, alongside the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, <sup>16</sup> the people who lived in the dark have seen a great light, and a light has come upon those who lived in the region and in shadow of death. <sup>17</sup> From that time Jesus began to announce, "Change your hearts and lives! Here comes the kingdom of heaven!"*

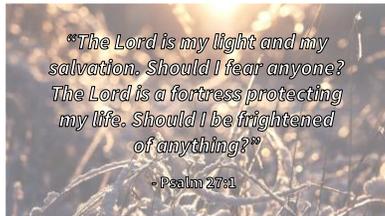
<sup>18</sup>As Jesus walked alongside the Galilee Sea, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, throwing fishing nets into the sea, because they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup>“Come, follow me,” he said, “and I’ll show you how to fish for people.” <sup>20</sup>Right away, they left their nets and followed him. <sup>21</sup>Continuing on, he saw another set of brothers, James the son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with Zebedee their father repairing their nets. Jesus called them and <sup>22</sup>immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him. <sup>23</sup>Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.



We have heard the invitation to see the light. We have remembered our baptisms, hearing the invitation to be present to the world as people of justice and righteousness. Last Sunday we were reminded of our charge to be the light, to serve and walk alongside a God who has an amazing vision for our lives and for our world. Today we turn to our task to carry the light into the world. In the Psalm, fear was the factor that stood in David’s way. It is the factor that often stands in our way too. David found that when he turned to God’s perfect love, fear lost its grip on him. We will find the same. Seeking God’s presence in the person and example of Jesus, we will discover how his perfect love removes fear, allowing us to carry the light into the darkness and pain of our world. As we prepare to enter this time together, let us begin with a word of prayer to center our hearts and minds. Let us pray...

*God of truth, you speak your Word, and we barely hear it beneath the rumble and clatter of our world. Tune the ears of our heart to your voice. Clear our minds to listen. Let us hear Jesus calling us, and answer, and follow, by the powerful grace of your Holy Spirit. It is by the power of your grace that I ask you, O God, to bless the words of my mouth and the meditation of all of our hearts. You are our rock and our redeemer, our Christ and our king. Amen.*

Please turn with me to Psalm 27 as we begin. In verse 1 we read this proclamation of David:



*“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?”* These are big words, spoken about a big God. But

there, in the two questions, we find words of truth that we can wrestle with. Should I fear anyone? Should I be frightened of anything? Well, on one level, if our faith were really strong, and our belief really true, then, no, we’d have nothing to fear.

But if I am being honest, at times I feel like we are closer to the abyss than we are to establishing God’s kingdom here on earth. Unity, cooperation, compassion, freedom, love, progress, equality for all people?... These ideals feel like they have been overwhelmed and overtaken by division and oppression, by suspicion, by injustice and inequality. These ways of the world seem to be the norm as those in power seek to seize more power, as those with wealth strive to accumulate more wealth. Our world feels like it is has become an “us against them” world. In that world, every person is in it for themselves. In that world, some will make it big, but many will suffer. It is sad, but most days I can only take so much of the news, can only look at so much of the scroll on my phone. Is there anyone else feeling this way??

As I ask these questions, I am aware that because of my skin color and because of my gender and because of the Christian label that I wear, I am insulated from what much of our nation and world faces on a regular basis. If I feel fear and worry and angst rising up within me as I think about the state of our world today, just imagine how people without these privileges and advantages feel. Imagine, for a moment, walking along the street in the shoes of a person of color in Minneapolis. Imagine, for a moment, being afraid to go to school or to work or anyplace else for that matter – because you look different than some do. Imagine.

And let us take that a step or two closer to home. Last week, Kristin and I were with my brother David and his wife Kirsten in Washington, DC. They live just outside of Minneapolis, and their daughter teaches at a public school in the inner city that serves students who are predominantly Somalian. Fear, angst, worry, anger – just a few of the emotions running high in that place and tangibly felt in our conversations. Then on Tuesday morning I was part of a Rapid City pastoral gathering that held food insecurity as the focus of our meeting. Before we got to that discussion, though, we were talking about what is happening in the Twin Cities. District Superintendent Dan Bader was there last week for the Dakotas-Minnesota cabinet meeting. They talked about the three men from our local Oglala Sioux tribe currently being held in custody. They talked about churches delivering food in the middle of the night.

At the table in Rapid City, it was noted that this presence has rippled out – to Sioux Falls, to Watertown, to Huron. And to Rapid City. As we talked about what our response might be or should be, I thought of our little community. And I pondered, what would I do, what would we do, if government agents showed up at the middle school on Tuesday as we waited for our Art with Heart students? And what would I do if an agent began moving towards one of our Native students as he or she tried to make their way to the church van? Would I, would you, be willing to risk self or status or imprisonment in this or in a similar situation? Would I or would you take bold action, trusting in our God who *“is a fortress protecting my life?”* Or would fear or angst or worry win the day? In this scenario, I ask: what would you or I do?

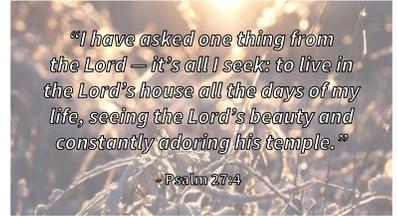
David, the great king, was a person who knew fear. He has been threatened by enemies and by loved ones alike. David has felt the abiding love and presence of God, and he has felt as alone as alone can be. He has run for his life, hiding in caves in the desert.

David has alienated himself from God because of where his lust, greed, arrogance, and pride have led him. He knew what fear was. David knew what it felt like to want to just disappear. In the first few verses, David recalls when foes and enemies and evildoers were against him. He thinks back to when an army was encamped against him. David has known fear. Yet, to his glory, when David found himself in trouble or in a place where fear was rising up, he turned to God with repentance and humility.

Jumping over to Matthew 4, we see that the human side of Jesus knows fear too. He just learned that John the Baptist had been arrested. Trouble was brewing in and around Jerusalem as Herod once again exerted his power over others. Just starting out in ministry, just coming off the temptation in the wilderness, all alone because he had yet to call any disciples, Jesus relocates to Capernaum, up in Galilee. It felt safer to be further from the source of power and violence and threat. Jesus was just getting ready to begin to flex his spiritual muscles as he settled into this region far to the north of Jerusalem.

As a king, David could have flexed his muscles, exerting his power when isolated or threatened or when fear was beginning to rise up. But instead, he leaned into God. That was his decision as David declared, *“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?”* While David, like us, lived in the world and was impacted by the ways of the world, he did not choose to live by the ways of the world. Like David, we too are called to live differently.

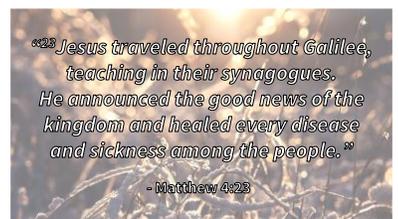
Like David, we can choose to ask for what David asked for in verse 4: *“I have asked one thing from the Lord — it’s all I seek: to live in the Lord’s house all the days of my life, seeing the Lord’s beauty and constantly adoring his temple.”* David sought to be with God in all aspects of his life. Yes, definitely in worship. And he sought to see God’s beauty in the world all around him.



Last week we were challenged by Steve to be present and willing and to live with eyes and ears open. When we live as David did, when we live as Steve challenged us to live, then we will see beauty in the world as we see God in the face of one another and in the face of the stranger. And when we see that beauty in the other, then we see them – the one serving our lunch, the one working on our car, the one asking for a helping hand, the one that needs us to stand for them or between them and injustice – we see them as God sees them. And when we see them as God sees them, then we become willing to be present and to stand with or for those in need. And that, my friends, is our mission.

Returning to Matthew 4, in verse 23, we see that was Jesus’ mission. In this verse we read, *“Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues. He announced the good news of the*

*kingdom and healed every disease and sickness among the people.”* Jesus went about being the light in the world – teaching others God’s will and way in the churches of his day. Jesus also did this in his daily living. He traveled throughout the Galilee, announcing the good news in both word and deed. He healed people of *“every disease and sickness.”* Because Jesus was carrying the light and love of God out into the world, people sought Jesus out. People in need sought Jesus’ face. They desired to be in Jesus’ presence.



They knew Jesus was there for them. When we too make the choice to carry the light and love of Christ out into the world, then others will know that we are there for them. We then open up the possibility of our light touching many lives as well.

Backing up a bit in our gospel passage, we see how Jesus chose the first disciples – those who would, in turn, continue to carry the light out into the world. This is important because you and me, well, we are ordinary people. Jesus sees some ordinary people, just doing their regular jobs. The first two are fishermen throwing nets into the sea. The next two are repairing nets alongside their father Zebedee. Jesus says to them, *“Come, follow me, and I’ll show you how to fish for people.”* They leave all behind to follow Jesus.



Jesus continues to call ordinary people who do regular jobs. He calls schoolteachers and first responders, insurance salespeople and craftspeople, accountants and trades men and women, retired folks and school kids, homemakers and truck drivers.



Jesus calls you and me. Jesus calls us all to be his disciples, to live as he lived, carrying the light and love of God out into the world. Yes, my friends, he calls you and he calls me. Jesus calls us all to carry the light.

When we respond to the call, when our heart seeks God’s face, when we walk with the God who saves, when we seek to be light and love in the darkness and brokenness of our world, it is then that we will find the God that we search for. It is then that we are living out our mission to bring Christ to all places and to all people.

When we find and then walk with the Lord our God, we can live joyfully and without fear, for then we will know that God is our light and salvation, that God is our fortress and our protector. May it be so for you and for me. Alleluia and amen.

### **Grow, Pray, Study**

- 1) *Grow*. Was anything unsettling or challenging in the message today? Why was it so? How might wrestling with this lead to growth in your faith?
- 2) *Pray*. Who do you know that needs to be bathed in Christ's light and love? Spend some time in prayer this week seeking the Holy Spirit's guidance and direction.
- 3) *Study*. Read Matthew 4:24-25. What would happen if your light and/or our church's light were to become like Jesus' light in these verses?