

July 26, 2020

*Fear Not: B.L.A.T*

[Psalm 27](#) (NIV)

For the past 6 weeks we have been talking about something that affects every single one of us... fear. Whether we have experienced it, are experiencing it, or will experience it, fear is a familiar feeling and powerful emotion that comes to us in many ways.

From the moment we are born we face all kinds of fear. As children we might be afraid of the dark or the bogeyman who, we are convinced, lives under the bed. Perhaps it is a fear of heights, spiders, snakes, or small spaces.

As we grow older, we may find ourselves overcoming some of those fears, only to be met by new and greater fears.

Fear of being alone, fear of failure, fear of tragedy. Fear of loss, fear of death.

Combine that with the unpredictability of troubling times, and the storms of life, it is no wonder we find ourselves so often living in fear.

Fear that is destructive and kills our joy. Fear that suffocates us and leaves us feeling paralyzed. Fear that keeps us up at night full of worry and anxiety. Fear that distracts us from God's truth and peace leaving us empty, unsatisfied, and unsure about everything.

But even in the midst of our struggle with fear there is hope and there is good news. As we have looked at the truth of God's Word throughout this series we have been reminded over and over again how God knows our struggle with fear and reminds us, "do not be afraid, I am with you, I will never leave you."

Jesus reassures us in John 14:27- *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

The reality is, our faith does not exempt us from difficult times or things that cause us to fear. Faith in God does not spare us from trials or troubling. Rather, faith enables us to live with courage and hope.

We have a God who is greater than all our fears and who walks with us and is with us in every circumstance or fear we face. As followers of Jesus we don't just have to "deal with" or get over our fears but in Jesus we can be confident and courageous as we face our fears.

In our passage today we hear the promise of Psalm 27. *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?*

This is not only a promise, but it raises an important question we need to ask ourselves. Whom shall I fear? How would you answer that? What do you fear?

If I am being honest, lately it feels like I could answer that with “everyone and everything.” And you know what? That is ok. It is ok to say, “I am afraid.”

Psalm 27 not only addresses our struggle with fear, but it invites us and gives us permission to name our fears and then bring them before God.

Rather than denying our fears, or telling us that we shouldn’t be afraid, Psalm 27 illuminates a pathway to confident trust in God in the midst of our fears. It’s good news. It’s good news for those of us who are afraid, or struggle with anxiety or fear.

Psalm 27 is a Psalm of David, who in this psalm we see going back and forth from declarations of great confidence to anxiety as he lists some of the many things he has every reason and right to be afraid of.

- The wicked who advance and are seeking to devour him. (27:2)
- Armies surrounding him and besieging him (27:3)
- Fear of God turning his servant away in anger (27:9)
- Enemies and false witnesses speaking against him with accusations and lies (27:12)

David was no stranger to fear and troubling times. Yet in the midst of fear and troubling times David could say, “My heart will not fear; though wars break out against me, even then I will be confident!” (27:3)

How is it, in the midst of all that was going on and in the face of fear David could say, with confidence, “Whom shall I fear?”

How can we in the midst of difficult circumstances and in the face of fear say with confidence “I will not be afraid!”?

How do we live with this confidence, in a world that at times feels so broken, complex, overwhelming, and even frightening?

I believe Psalm 27 can give some direction and answers to those questions.

As we jump into this passage, I want to approach it a bit differently. I want to frame it around this idea of a sandwich.

Yes, you heard me right. We are going to build a sandwich today. More specifically a B.L.A.T or BLAT. If you don’t know what a BLAT is, think B.L.T (bacon, lettuce, tomato) but with the addition of avocado. It’s a game changer. Trust me.

And before you think I have spent a bit too much time in quarantine, let me explain. As I was reading and studying Psalm 27, I realized this Psalm is a literary sandwich.

Here in the first and last few verses are these brackets of confident trust in God that sandwich the realities of fear and anxiety we face and the desire for God's presence and deliverance.

My hope is that by approaching it this way we will discover in a memorable way how we can live with confidence in the face of fear. So, let's build our sandwich.

## **FOUNDATION**

I find that one of the most overlooked and neglected parts of a great sandwich is the bread or the roll. This is the foundation, the starting point to a great sandwich. For that you need something that is sturdy enough to hold up and support the rest of the sandwich. Something that will complement and highlight the overall flavor and goodness but not take away from the main star, in this case the bacon!

For our B.L.A.T, I'm going to use a thick slice of toasted sourdough bread.

Here in Psalm 27:1-3 we have our foundation. It is confident trust in the Lord as our light and our salvation. The stronghold of our life where we find faith, strength, and courage in Christ Jesus that enables us to have confidence in the face of fear and all that may be going on around us.

This is our foundation and it is good and sturdy. So, let's build on it. Because while the foundation or bread is important, what we are really after is what's on the inside. We want to get to the star of the sandwich, the meat of the matter, right?

## **Believe**

Being from Philly I love a good cheesesteak and many of you have heard me rant and lecture about the importance and necessity for a good sturdy roll. And yes, as important and needed as that is, if I am being honest what I'm really after is that thin sliced, well marbled ribeye, topped with grilled onions wrapped in a blanket of melted provolone cheese. MMM...MMM...MMMM. And don't even get me started on those cheese wiz folks.

For our sandwich, we have this wonderful sourdough bread, right? But let's be honest. It's all about the bacon, lettuce... No, It's all about the bacon.

So here I have some thick cut crispy bacon that we are just going to pile on. This is the goodness of the Lord so don't be shy or stingy with it. Side note- Obviously for David, being a good Jew and all, this would not be bacon. Pastrami is a great substitute.

The meat of this passage in Psalm 27 comes down to belief. What do we believe? David without a doubt believed in the Lord as his light to guide and lead him. He

believed the Lord as his salvation delivering him from his enemies. He believed the Lord as the stronghold of his life that kept him secure.

But at the core of all this is what he believed about the “one thing” we see here in verse 4.

*One thing I ask from the Lord, this one thing only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek Him in His temple.*

David isn't pleading with God to rescue him. He isn't asking for riches or glory. He is asking only that he might always enjoy an intimate closeness with God; that he might spend as much time as possible in the presence of the Lord.

David believed the one thing that truly mattered, that would truly satisfy, that was more important than anything else, was to be present and near to God. To be someone who worships, not just in worship, but constantly, every moment, all day, every day. This is what David sought after and believed to be the most important thing.

What do you believe is your “one thing”? What do you believe is the “one thing” that will set you free from fear? That will truly satisfy and be your security? What do you believe is the “one thing” that matters most to you?

What we believe truly matters. Lettuce move on...

### **Lean and Listen**

Speaking of which. Next we have the lettuce. I believe the type of lettuce matters. What do you think? What kind of lettuce should we use? If you said Romaine, I'm sorry but you are wrong.

We are going to use Iceberg. I know. I have heard it all before “Iceberg is a waste.” “It has no nutritional value.” On and on.

But listen. This is a B.L.T. Key word, bacon. There is no amount of nutritional value from lettuce that can compensate for the goodness of bacon. So, we are going with the iceberg. It's crisp, clean and is a great contrast to the softer textures of the tomato and avocado.

Going back to Psalm 27. What we believe is important. What we believe matters. Our next step is to listen.

That is lean into God and His stronghold. Lean into His promises and strength and guidance. Lean into the One thing who is greater than our fears and is always with us. Lean into God and listen for His voice.

Because here is the thing. Fear is a liar. It will tell you are wrong, you are not worthy, you are not enough, and you are not loved.

Listen to the voice of truth. God says, "you are my beloved. You are worth dying for. You are mine. You are beautiful. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. And nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate you from My love. Do not fear!"

### **Ask**

Back to our sandwich. Following the lettuce is our wonderful addition, the avocado. I'm telling you, it's awesome; The creaminess of it is such a nice balance to the smoky salty bacon. Just a few thin slices outa do.

B.L.A. Believe, Listen, Ask.

Just as David asked to know God more intimately, he also asked to know God's way, and that God would help him and lead him to live a good and godly life.

When faced with fear and difficult circumstances it can be easy to be led astray, to follow the path of folly that leads to greater fear, more hardship and even destruction rather than the path of righteousness that leads to joy and peace and fullness of life God has for us.

Like David we need to ask God. Ask God to teach us, to lead us, to instruct us, and to guide us. If we ask, we can have confident trust that He will answer!

James 1:5 - "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."

### **Trust**

Back to our sandwich. We have our bacon, our lettuce, our avocado and now for the tomato. In a B.L.T you are going to want to use a decent size beef steak tomato sliced to about ¼ inch slices. Personally, I recommend two overlapping slices on the sandwich.

B.L.A.T. Believe, listen, ask, and finally, trust.

Trust in who God is and what He is already at work doing. Trust in the promise that Paul reminds us of in Philippians 1:6- *Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

The thing about trust is that it requires a posture of surrender. We surrender our control, our will, our pride. To trust God, is to live with the assurance that God is in control, not us. That God's plan and purposes are perfect. That His timing is best.

Because part of trust is waiting. 27:14 says, *Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.*

What we have here in the context of confident trust is a wait sandwich. Personally, I don't like waiting for a sandwich let alone waiting. I don't think anyone enjoys waiting.

Here in our passage we have a sandwich on top of a sandwich. Let's call it for what it is- A club sandwich.

As we wait in the midst of troubling times and in the face of fear we may find ourselves filled with many questions. When will deliverance come? When will we overcome these fears? When will this storm pass? When will God move?

We are then often tempted to take action, to make a move. Fear often leads us to action and reckless action at that.

But God says wait. Be patient. Be still. Trust.

Waiting is difficult. It takes strength and demonstrates trust, courage, and endurance. But God will accomplish His plan, His redeeming work. And even as we wait, He waits with us. And even as we wait we can seek His face and find courage in His presence. Wait for the Lord. Be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.

Well, our sandwich is almost complete with just a few final touches. It needs some sauce. I have here some chipotle aioli that we are going put on top here. And if you didn't know, aioli is just another word for fancy mayo. Alright, we have our fancy chipotle mayo on top here. That is looking good.

Now for the final slice of bread. As we get to the end of Psalm 27, we find the other side of confidence.

*Verse 13 says: I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.*

It is this confidence in the face of fear that comes not only from the history of experiencing the goodness of God where we can look back and see how God was with us and delivered us, but also in the present, where we can look around and see His goodness and faithfulness in our lives today in whatever we are facing or going through.

Now, you know what would make this sandwich even better? A fried egg. You weren't expecting that were ya? I know this is way off the recipe. But here is the thing. Isn't that the same with life and the fears we may face or the difficult circumstances? We don't expect it and it certainly doesn't follow any type recipe.

And yes, this egg is going to make things a bit messy. But you know what? Life is bit messy. Life can throw us the unexpected and without Jesus as our light, salvation and stronghold we will easily be overtaken by fear, worry and anxiety.

It's no mistake that Jesus is the bread of life as he sandwiches us with his grace, mercy, compassion and love and holding us together as He walks with us through the ups and downs, in our mess and through our fears. He says, "I got You! I am with you. I won't leave you. Do not be afraid."

This is the confidence God is inviting us into. As we believe, listen, ask and trust God is with us and is working in our lives. He builds our confidence to live now in the face of fear and enables us to live in hope- looking forward to His return, when all will be made new and we will dwell in the presence of the Lord forever.