

**Message: “You Didn’t Want That”**

**In a moment many of us are going to say, “I don’t want to do that.”** I’m going to invite all of us to step outside our comfort zone for a few minutes. We’re going to learn to dance with joy in worship like David. If you think you’re too old or too macho to do it, I’ll have you know my 79-year-old father is the one who taught this dance to us years ago. Give it a try, it’ll be fun! If you want to move in the aisle, grab your partner and let’s go!! And, if you’re watching online, please join in.

[*YouTube videos of The Chicken Dance:*

*How to ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ptpofl1dqH0>*

*Join in ... <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xmV5uHWNag/>*

**Didn’t that feel good?** Worship is often thought of as passive: we sit and listen, hoping to receive a spiritual message and, maybe, experience God’s love and grace. And it often happens this way. I believe faith is an active part of our walk with Jesus. We’re more likely to encounter God when we are active in our faith, even when we run into opposition. This is what we see in our scriptures from Psalm 27 and Luke 13:31-35.

**David knows trouble.** David was threatened by enemies and loved ones alike, loved and despised in turn, filled with God’s presence and then seemingly abandoned by God because of his arrogance and conceit. David knew what it was to fear, to want to hide. But, to David’s honor, whenever he found himself in trouble, he turned to God with humility. David sought redemption from the only source who could calm his fears.

**It wasn’t his own strength that brought David comfort.** He said, “*The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I revere?*” (Psalm 27:1) Who indeed? Because we all have lists. There are plenty of fears we could embrace. It seems to be the way of the world.

**The way of God is the way of faith, relying on God’s strength, not our own.** While we live in and embrace the world, we don’t live by the ways of the world. We are called to live differently. We are called to live confidently. Have you ever noticed that, to God, the opposite of faith isn’t doubt? Doubt seems to be prevalent in scripture. Doubt seems to coexist with faith rather well.

**Remember the prayer of the desperate parent?** “*Lord, I believe, help my unbelief*” (Mark 9:24). Jesus doesn’t chastise them. Belief and unbelief often sit side-by-side. There are indications belief without unbelief, without a measure of doubt, turns into a crusader’s arrogance, into those who believe themselves incapable of error. A certain amount of doubt gives us a degree of humility, which helps us to be an effective vessel of God’s grace in the world.

**The opposite of faith isn’t doubt; it’s fear.** Throughout scripture the call is to not fear. Angels say it every time they show up. God says it. Jesus lived it. Paul reflected on it. John did everything but put it on a bumper sticker for us to cling to when things got shaky. Perfect love casts out fear. Perfect love - the love coming from Christ - casts out fear. There is no room for fear when we are filled with love.

**You can’t get rid of fear with wisdom.** You can’t argue someone out of fear. You don’t show up at your child’s door in the middle of the night and say, “You know there’s no such things as monsters under your bed. This being afraid in the middle of the night thing is simply illogical. Think about it.” No, that won’t work, and it sounds odd for a parent to do. We rush in, gather our little one up in our arms, hold them close and remind them they are loved - wholly, unconditionally, completely loved. This is how you handle fear, how God handles our fear.

**David says it in a different way.** “*Seek shelter in the tent of the Lord.*” Seek refuge in God and be lifted above your fears, stable on the rock. Then, we’re told, worship with joy - shouts of joy. Not sitting in the pew while the worship show goes on but shouting with joy while we make sacrifices. What sacrifices? We sacrifice our pride. We sacrifice our propriety, our stiffness, our standoffishness. We sacrifice our “me-first” attitude and offer a hand to someone who isn’t like us. We can act like we have nothing to fear but fear itself.

**I hope you’re thinking, “I like the sound of this living without fear thing.”** But how do we do it? We hear the talk. Political life seems based on fear. We’re constantly told there are lots of things to fear. Our world seems to be falling apart. Making fearful choices seems to be the way these days. Acting out of fear seems the logical response. How do we get to where we can live without fear?

**David is right there with us.** Sometimes we need a little pep talk to get where our theology tells us we need to be, even if our gut won't let us. Fortunately, David slipped a bit of his little inner dialog into the psalm. “*Come,*” my heart says, “*seek God’s face.*”

**You want to overcome fear? Seek God’s face.** This isn’t just a cliché to make you feel better. It’s a way to rid yourself and household of fear. Seek God’s face. Set yourself the task of looking for God at work in the world. We claim to believe God is at work among us. We claim to believe God is at work within us.

**So, look.** Look for God’s face in the face of the stranger serving you your lunch, working on your car, asking for a handout. Look for God’s face in the gestures of kindness in this terrible world, in the opportunities to laugh, sing and dance, in the moments of grace with loved ones, in the passion of body and soul. Seek God’s face in the beauty of music, in the wonder of the world around you. You’re on a mission. If you fill up your life with a search for God, you won’t have time to fear.

**Let me see your face, O God, my light and my salvation!** Conceal me so what shows isn’t me and my fears, but the presence, hope and patient confidence of God, even when we we’re waiting. This is what Jesus did. Let’s set the background for this part of our reflection.

**Jesus is on his final trip to Jerusalem.** He stops at towns and villages, teaching and healing people. He tells the parable of the mustard seed to remind us to have faith and the parable of the yeast which warns us about false teaching and legalism. Jesus then tells the people the way to the kingdom of God is seldom chosen, though all are invited. He shows us how different God’s kingdom is, saying, “... *some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.*”

**Today’s reading picks up at this point.** The Pharisees come to Jesus with a message “*at that very hour*” (Luke 13:31). Get this: the Pharisees, who don’t like Jesus, seek him out to deliver a death threat from Herod: “Leave and go somewhere else or I’ll kill you.” This is a stern warning! We’d be shocked and surprised to get a threat from the mayor telling us to leave town or suffer the consequences. I expect we’d probably leave. Or, if we were Chicken Little, we’d be telling everyone “The sky is falling, the sky is falling!”

**Jesus has a different take on it.** “*Go and tell,*” he says. Run on back to the puppet master pulling your strings, Jesus says. Jesus knows his destiny. He knows his worth and value. Jesus isn’t planning to run or hide from anyone. He knows the One to whom he belongs, just as we do.

**It makes perfect sense.** Jesus declares his own sense of belonging and love for the One who sent him on the journey. He pauses to reflect on the object of his mission – you, me and everyone else, and the love God has for us. It seems right Jesus’ heart breaks for those who say “no” at the very moment he’s reminded of the cost he’ll pay.

**“Go and tell the fox,” Jesus says.** Tell the scavenger, the trickster, the unscrupulous schemer, that his power, the power of destruction, has its limits. The fox has no place in the henhouse.

**Jesus wants to gather the chicks.** He says, “...*how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings ....*” We think of Jesus as the Son of God, but this is a strong and important image of Christ, a feminine image of God. Jesus reveals God as the mother of all, creator, redeemer and sustainer. These are roles women play in the world, community and our homes. Without women, the world is a much starker, less generous and more mechanical place. Mothers watch over and care for the unborn, nurture the young, teach and guide the flock under their care. Mothers also warn, shelter and protect those who need care. Our Divine Mother made us all, so let’s care for others, particularly the young and young at heart, in this way.

**It’s as if Luke is giving us an option.** Do we find our safety and security in the powers which operate based on fear and self-interest? Is our sense of meaning and purpose found in those who seek to define us by counting our failures and disappointments, dividing us? Or do we run to the One who shelters us under divine wings, who is broken and poured out through an unimaginable love for us?

**We need to know the love Christ offers.** We can cling to this love when we walk through deep valleys, and when we feel like orphans. We also need to practice loving like this. All around us, there are those who feel disconnected, those who feel as though no one cares, no one is there for them. There are those who feel their mistakes define them in your eyes, who need you to spread your wings and gather them in.

**For those of us who profess Jesus as Savior, the Lord is gathering us under her wings.** The Lord teaches and nurtures us and helps us to live, willingly and freely by God's love. We're called to gather the lost, caring for them, nurturing and introducing them to the loving ways of the Lord. We are called to care for the needs of each person: physical, material, mental and spiritual.

**There are many ways we can act with care:** we can speak out for the rights and dignity of those who are oppressed. We can give gifts beyond what we give to the church. We can volunteer our time, skills and energy to help those in need in our community. Whatever you do, let's do so willingly, not out of a sense of obligation. I invite you to be active in your faith, not passive. Welcome those whom God will guide to you.

**If you are lost and hurting, not sure of your purpose or what God is saying to you, I invite you to pray with me now:**

“God of all creation, I come before you willingly and humbly. I repent of my wrongdoing which separates me from you. Send your Spirit down to change my life, making me a part of a community living by faith, hope and love. I ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior. Amen.”

**I have good news!** If you prayed this prayer in your heart, you are a child of God, redeemed and saved by Christ. I encourage you to get a Bible, read it and go to God in prayer every day. Join us in worship. I also ask you to tell me or someone in church so we can celebrate what God is doing and support you in your new life.

*Let us pray ...*

**Psalm 27:1-5, 10-14 (CEB)**

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?

When evildoers come at me trying to eat me up -  
it's they, my foes and my enemies,  
who stumble and fall!

If an army camps against me,  
my heart won't be afraid.

If war comes up against me,

I will continue to trust in this:

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.

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.

Even if my father and mother left me all alone,  
the Lord would take me in.

Lord, teach me your way;

because of my opponents, lead me on a good path.

Don't give me over to the desires of my enemies,  
because false witnesses and violent accusers  
have taken their stand against me.

But I have sure faith

that I will experience the Lord's goodness  
in the land of the living!

Hope in the Lord!

Be strong! Let your heart take courage!

Hope in the Lord!

**Luke 13:31-35 (CEB)**

At that time, some Pharisees approached Jesus and said, “Go! Get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you.”

Jesus said to them, “Go, tell that fox, ‘Look, I’m throwing out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will complete my work. However, it’s necessary for me to travel today, tomorrow, and the next day because it’s impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those who were sent to you! How often I have wanted to gather your people just as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you didn’t want that. Look, your house is abandoned. I tell you, you won’t see me until the time comes when you say, *Blessings on the one who comes in the Lord’s name.*”