

# Waiting for God – with courage and fear

Pitt Street Uniting Church, Sunday 16 March 2025

A Reflection by Warren Talbot

Lent 2C

**Luke 13: 31-35; Contemporary reading: *Just Beyond Yourself*  
a poem by David Whyte; Psalm 27**

This worship service can be viewed on You Tube at <https://pittstreetuniting.org.au/spirit/reflections/>

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## Psalm 27: 1 - 6

God is my light and my salvation;  
whom then shall I fear?

God is the refuge of my life;  
of whom then shall I be afraid?

When the wicked, even my enemies,  
attack me to devour me,  
they stumble and fall back.

When a mighty army encamps against me,  
my heart shall not be afraid.  
When war rises up against me,  
I will put my trust in the Holy One.

One thing I asked of God that I will search after:  
to live in the house of God all the days of my life,  
to behold the beauty of my Creator,  
and to pray in the temple.

For God will hide me in their shelter in the day of trouble;  
God will conceal me under the cover of their tent.  
God will set me high on a mighty rock.

Now my head is lifted up above my enemies –

They are all around me.  
I will offer in God's tent  
sacrifices with shouts of joy.  
I will sing, and make melody to the Holy One.

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There are some Psalms we all know and love. I wonder: What's your favourite Psalm?

Most famously, we know Psalm 23, which we sang a few weeks back at the celebration of Susan Nicholson's life. Susan chose these words:

*"God is my shepherd, I shall not want".*

But not for one moment, did Susan think that she and all of us – didn't have to...roll up our sleeves, wash our hands thoroughly, and just get with it!

Psalm 27, which we are exploring this morning, is also very well known:

*God is my light and my salvation. Whom then shall I fear?*

The priestly editors who compiled the Jewish psalms, many years after the exile in Babylon, often merged two or more oral traditions. That's probably what we have in the Psalm this morning.

The first six verses offer praise to Yahweh: Verse 3 confidently declares:

*"War may break out, but I will trust in God."*

We might wonder: where is that happening in the world today?

The first six verses are a testament to courage and trust. I want to suggest that message of faith, is not that *"God will 'take care' of us"*.

That's our job. Yours and mine. To care for ourselves, others, and Mother Earth, our common home.

The message and confidence of faith is that the Loving and Gracious Reality we name as 'God' cares for us.

In the contemporary words of the poet David Whyte, the Psalmist is looking *"just beyond"* themselves to dimensions of love and care.

But... there is another voice in the nuance of this Psalm, which we will hear shortly.

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## **CHANT**

Psalm 27: 7-12

Hear, O God, when I cry aloud,  
have pity and answer my prayer!  
'Come,' my heart says, 'seek God's face!'  
Your face, O God, do I seek.

Do not hide your face from me,  
and turn your servant away in your anger.

You have been my help.  
Do not cast me off, do not forsake me,  
O God of my salvation!

Even if my parents forsake me,  
God will take me up.

Teach me your way, O God,  
and lead me on a level path  
because of my enemies.

Do not give me up to the will of my adversaries.  
They tell lies about me,  
and make violent threats.

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If this voice sounds like a different Psalmist, that's because it probably was. Or, a different group of people. Or, maybe just all of us, at some points in our lives.

The confidence and courage of the first six verses has gone. The second Psalmist is pleading with Yahweh. They think that God is hiding from them, and they are surrounded with lies and violence.

This, I think, is the voice of fear. In the words of David Whyte again: It's the fear of "*a road which is always beckoning.*"

Now...we can avoid this voice. This beckoning. We can pretend it isn't there. We can medicate it with drugs and alcohol, or the busyness of churchianity. But the unknown fear – the far horizon – remains.

The ancient Psalmist gives voice to our deepest fears.

But for the priestly editors, fear could not be the final word.

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**CHANT**

Psalm 27: 13, 14

I believe that I shall see the goodness of the Holy One  
in the land of the living.  
Wait for our God.

Be strong, and let your heart take courage.  
Wait ... for our God.

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The editors of this Psalm could not end on a note of fear –as real as the fear might be. So the lamenting pilgrim on their journey, regains faith in the goodness of life. Both voices, those of praise and lament, those of courage and those of fear, are authentic human voices.

Both ... are part of the journey of faith, for us as individuals, and for us as the Pitt Street community as we face change and challenge in 2025.

In April, we will welcome our interim Minister-in-Placement, the Revd Vlad Korotkov. Intentional interim ministry has evolved in the Uniting Church, to give space for congregations, between ongoing placements, to sort of press the pause button.

I'm not referring to writing a new mission plan and updating KPIs – as useful as those tools might be.

What I'm referring to is deep reflection on ourselves, as a community of faith, seeking to follow the Way of Jesus, in the heart of Sydney.

In this season of Lent, we journey with Jesus and their friends, in company, – yet strangely alone – on the road to the Cross.

May we know Grace and Peace as we move beyond our fears and touch the Heart of Life itself.

Amen.