

SANCTUARY
Sermon Series: "Five Strategic Sermons for Today"
April 15, 2018 –Psalm 27: 1-6 & 13-14
The Church of the Covenant

I want you all to take a moment and fix in your thoughts some recent news story related to violence. Now I want you to focus on an image that I will give you and I want us to spend the entire rest of this sermon thinking about that image and filling our heart and mind with feelings of peace, security and absolute trust in the Lord God Almighty. The image is this:

THE LORD IS THE STRONGHOLD OF MY LIFE...OF WHOM SHALL I BE AFRAID????

The Lord is the stronghold, the high tower, the mighty fortress of my life. I have ten foot thick walls of protection, love and power surrounding me. I have all the creative power of the universe that brought the universe into being protecting me. I have the grace and mercy and love of Jesus in my heart and perfect love, as the Bible says, casts out fear.

"The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?" is Psalm 27, written by David out in the wilderness when he was being pursued by King Saul and King Saul was endeavoring to kill this rival to the throne. But David, even as a young person, believed and trusted in the Lord God Almighty, that indeed "the battle is the Lord's". Do you believe that the Lord is the stronghold of your life? Can that peace and assurance cast out fear and concern for you?

It is interesting that in David's contest with the behemoth giant of a warrior, Goliath of Gath, that David focuses on the Lord, not the adversary. His compatriots in Israel are quaking in their boots. They are confronted by a much larger Philistine army and a champion in Goliath who is immense in size and seeks to take their very life. But David makes 7 statements as part of his confrontation with Goliath. Only two of them in any way focus on Goliath and these only in a diminishing way; but the other FIVE statements all focus on the Lord; the Lord's power; the Lord's protection; the Lord's goodness. My favorite statement of David is this –*"And who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the Living God?" (1 Samuel 17: 26)* *"The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion...will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."* (v. 37) For David indeed the Lord IS the "stronghold of his life" and so even though he is just a little shepherd boy he can trust in the Lord to protect and save him. And when the Lord is the stronghold of our lives then, like David, we may say...*"of whom shall I be afraid?"*

The Church of the Covenant IS sanctuary. Yes, it has a "sanctuary", a literal room referred to as the sanctuary. That's not what I mean. The church *en toto* IS sanctuary. It is a safe place. It is a place of safety, refreshment and renewal. When we come on Sunday it is a place of Sabbath rest. It is a place to encounter the Lord Jesus Christ and to sense and feel the living presence of the Lord of the Universe. *"Be still and know that I am God"* says Psalm 46. It is a place where the Holy Spirit surrounds us. Stillness. Peace. It is a place to pray and then to hear God's voice. It is a place of calm in the midst of the storms of life. It is separate and set apart and in that sense it is HOLY. It is unlike the world. It is unlike the wrangling and the tumult and the

disagreements and the lack of peace and the violence that is outside the walls of this church. Its why I dislike disagreement within the walls of the church so much; there is far too much of that going on out there, so let's keep it out there where it belongs and don't bring it in here, because in here is meant to be SANCTUARY. Set apart. Different from the world. Stronghold and strong tower of the God of the Universe who spoke a Word and said, *"Let there be light"* and there was light. His power and His presence and His glory and His LIGHT is all around us today...of whom and of what shall I be afraid????

Now I and your staff and your session, your God-called spiritual leaders, are absolutely committed to The Church of the Covenant being and remaining SANCTUARY, a safe place set apart, a place of rest and renewal protected from the dangers of the world outside. We love our Preschool and we love the children in our preschool. We love our Sunday School and we love the children and youth in our church. Every fiber within our being wants you to have the highest degree of confidence that when you are here you are safe and there is no need to fear. I would be a bad shepherd if I didn't have a love for my sheep and the littlest of lambs and use my rod and my staff to comfort them and keep them safe. You will hear today in the Let There Be Light Gathering Luncheon of the excellence of our preschool and when you come back on May 6th you will hear of all our plans to keep our children safe. To keep this place SANCTUARY.

But the world out there is dark and darkening. But the world in here is filled with light. We are here to shine the light of Christ into the hearts of little children and young people. We are here to make certain that light is never extinguished, never diminished, never flickers nor grows dim. The light that shines into the hearts of these little ones must always shine here in our church. We must always be clear about that. Darkness you cannot have our children. Dark and darkening world you have no permission to enter here into SANCTUARY. Love casts out fear. Light casts out darkness. God has said, *"Let there be light" "And there was light. And God saw that it was GOOD."* (Genesis 1: 3-4) Beloved, let us stand for the light today. Let our light shine before men and the world. May the light of Christ always shine forth from this church in abundance and power. From our stained glass windows, from our Preschool, from our worship, from our preaching, from our teaching, from our praying. The light shineth in the darkness and the darkness has not and never will overcome it. For in that is our safety, our strength and our stronghold. *"The Lord is the stronghold of my life. Of whom and of what shall I be afraid?"* Amen and Amen.

**By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!**