

First Sunday in Lent

Sermon text: Psalm 91

Related text: Romans 10:8b-13

Date preached: February 14, 2016

Sermon Title: Where do you live?

One of the most frequently asked questions are “Where do you live”? Any time you fill out a form, be it an application, insurance, doctor, enrollment for school, sports, etc. is a line for your address.

If you want to see if someone is paying attention to you in the conversation you might answer the question by saying that you live “in the shelter of the Most High.”

The images from Psalm 91 are strong ones. Refuge, shelter, fortress, a shield, a guard are images of protection and security that come from residing with the Lord our God.

Such images of defense are significant because throughout our lives we do face trials and temptations. We tend to think of such trials and temptations as something we cause upon ourselves, and that is most certainly true. In our sinful nature we leave the shelter of the Lord for what we are led to believe are more exciting and fun places. Yet those places lead to death.

It is also true as the Psalm points out that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare. Too often we fail to talk in these terms, but the reality is that the devil is all too eager to lead us away from God by whatever means he can.

The devil will use horrible circumstances in the world and in our personal lives as a means of creating doubt. The devil wants us to think that things are so bad in our lives that even God has left us.

The manifestations of this are numerous:

- The illness of a loved one in the prime of their life
- The increased levels of drug use, of which heroin is seemingly most prevalent in our communities
- I myself remember being bullied at school and many a time silently questioned my self worth.
- For some it comes in the form a depression that leaves us in such a fog that we don't even want to take a chance of stumbling out of bed.

The devil will use these and other ways to lure us from God. Even more troublesome is the lie of the

devil that we don't need God's help to face trouble, that we'll handle problems on our own.

The devil will even use things that are good in our lives.

The devil delights in keeping us so busy that worship doesn't fit into our schedule. In so doing, we slowly dehydrate. Instead of drinking from the living water that is Jesus we drink from the soda pop of momentary pleasure, feasting off of that which gives instant and immediate gratification.

There are then times in our lives where the devil wants us to prove God's love. He used that tactic on Jesus, as our Lord was tempted in the wilderness. The devil even goes so far as to quote Psalm 91:11 to justify his challenge of Jesus.

“And the devil took him up to Jerusalem and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, ‘If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, for it is written, ‘For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus replied with an admonishment from Deuteronomy 6:16. “You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.”

In addition, Jesus shows us that the Lord our God is indeed trustworthy. The truth is that God has not abandoned you. God who is steadfast is merciful and forgiving. He is not repulsed by your sin to the point of casting you aside like litter along the road. Rather, he picks you up, joins you to Christ and in so doing makes of you a new creation.

God’s love for you is not dependent upon you earning his favor. God’s love for you is God’s choice. It is His desires to love, shield, defend and protect you from the real dangers of sin, death and the devil. Not only does God desire these things but he has accomplished them.

Through Jesus Christ, you have been brought to dwell in the love of God. It is not a temporary residence, but an eternal home filled with every blessing.

In this earthly residence we face the spiritual warfare. We endure through the promises of God, that nothing can separate us from his love. Our security for the living of these days comes from the truth that the

Father, Son and Holy Spirit have kept every promise.
Jesus won for you a place in the shelter of the
Almighty by rising from the dead.

Fear not the terrors of the night. Fear not the troubles
of the day. Fear not, for you belong to God. Live in
the shelter of the Most High. AMEN.