

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
Des Moines, WA
December 31, 2012**

New Year's Eve

"The Lord is My Light!"

Psalm 27

Hymns: 69 – 70 – 306 – 316 – 334

All Scripture quotations from NIV 1984

*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?*

² *When evil men advance against me
to devour my flesh, when my enemies and my foes
attack me, they will stumble and fall.*

³ *Though an army besiege me, my heart will not
fear; though war break out against me,
even then will I be confident.*

⁴ *One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of
the LORD all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek him in his temple.*⁵ *For in the day of
trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will
hide me in the shelter of his tabernacle and set me
high upon a rock.*

⁶ *Then my head will be exalted above the enemies
who surround me; at his tabernacle will I sacrifice
with shouts of joy; I will sing and make music to the
LORD.*⁷ *Hear my voice when I call, O LORD; be
merciful to me and answer me.*⁸ *My heart says of
you, "Seek his face!" Your face, LORD, I will seek.*

⁹ *Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your
servant away in anger; you have been my helper.
Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior.*

¹⁰ *Though my father and mother forsake me,
the LORD will receive me.*¹¹ *Teach me your way, O
LORD; lead me in a straight path
because of my oppressors.*¹² *Do not turn me over to
the desire of my foes, for false witnesses rise up
against me, breathing out violence.*

¹³ *I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness
of the LORD in the land of the living.*¹⁴ *Wait for the*

*LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the
LORD. (PSALM 27)*

If you were giving an assessment, you would have to say that the year 2012 is ending in a bit of darkness. Yes, we just celebrated Christmas. We just joyfully welcomed the Savior into the world with songs, lights, and celebration. But for most people, December 2012 will be remembered for the great tragedy that took place just a couple of weeks ago in Newtown, Connecticut. There is no other way to describe it than a day of darkness. No doubt, that sad day will be at the center of the many year-end reviews that come out at this time of year, a reminder that the year ended in a veil of darkness.

And now, moving forward into 2013, most would say that we are beginning the New Year with a bit of darkness in front of us as well. As the news has been reminding us repeatedly, our nation is headed for the so-called "fiscal cliff." And in whatever ways that it might affect our lives, heading off of a cliff is never a particularly enticing way to ring in a new year. With that tragedy sending out the old year, and that uncertainty bringing in the New Year, many people have many questions. There is quite a bit of concern about our country and about our lives. Many of you might be a little, or a lot, wary of just what the future has in store for you, your family, and the rest of the people that you know and love.

Whether you are looking back, or looking ahead as we enter into the New Year, there is a bit of darkness that you will see. However, as we begin a New Year as children of God, let us remember just how different the outlook is for us. We will do that by looking today at the words of King David in Psalm 27, and I hope that it reminds all of us that no matter how dark the world is around us, "The Lord is our Light."

If anyone knew about the ups and downs of life, about the uncertainties of life, it was King David. Though he grew up as a gentle shepherd, he would be defined by the blood that he would shed in battle. Though he was the rich and powerful king of Israel, he spent good portions of his life in absolute turmoil. Though he was blessed to be called a friend of God, he had close friends and family members who wanted to destroy him. Certainly, there were many times when David must've felt great uncertainty about his

future. There were times when his life must've looked like a dark and dreadful picture, not only because of the work of his enemies, but also because of his own sin. And as we look to the many psalms that David wrote, we see the thoughts of a man who lived that life. Often in his words, his confidence seemed to waver. Many times, we hear him crying to God for relief. Other times, we hear him wondering whether God was even by his side.

Yet, the song that we have before us tonight is a bit different. In this psalm, David speaks confidently. He boldly proclaims God to be his light, and he states that he has no reason in this world to be afraid. The psalm is punctuated with confidence. In verse 3, he declares, "*My heart shall not fear.*" He says plainly, "*I will be confident.*" He speaks of deliverance in verse 5 saying, "*He will keep me safe; he will hide me; he will set me high upon a rock.*" And he knows that he will sing and "*look upon the Lord.*"

And David's confidence, given to him by the Spirit of God, can also be your confidence. There are certainly times in life where we have wavered just like David. You've probably spent days and nights in the darkness, crying for relief. In the past weeks, maybe you've doubted God's goodness. Perhaps, as you look forward, you cringe at what the future might bring to our lives.

But it is the Word that brings us light. It is powerful. It builds and strengthens our faith. This light from God illuminates what is in front of us and banishes all fears. And because God's Word is in our lives, there is nothing for us to fear.

Yet the author of this psalm was not an idealist, and he is not calling us to be that way either. The Word never promises that the darkness will be eliminated from our lives. In fact, David tells us in his psalm just how real the darkness of this world can be. He gives examples of how the darkness touched his life. David looked and saw evil men advancing to devour his flesh. He saw armies breaking out in war against him. He wasn't just talking about the physical threats to his kingdom. More than anything, David saw the spiritual threats that Satan was waging against him.

It would be hard to imagine a day going by where Satan did not remind David of the darkness of his past sins; adultery, murder, failings as a father and as

a leader. Through those attacks, Satan sought to bring David into the darkness and keep him from seeing the light of God. He tried to use the trouble in David's life to have David forget what he so confidently proclaimed in this psalm. See, the Word would not eliminate all that threatened to give David trouble. However, when David turned to the Word, when he turned to God, he would be reminded again and again that those enemies should not cause any fear.

And as we begin a new year, we also must spend time acknowledging and identifying the enemies that will come against us in an attempt to destroy us. It is a reality for those who live in a sinful world. It is a reality for those who are sinful.

As it was with David, the devil knows us well. Each and every day, his sole purpose is to keep those who have been called out of their sin and unbelief in that darkness. For each of you, he has a plan. For each of you, he has his battle tactics laid out. I can't tell each of you how Satan will try to pull you back into the darkness, but I know that he will; through guilt, through doubt, through indifference, through pride, through worry, through pettiness. There are so many lines of battle. And that could certainly fill us with fear as we forge ahead into another year of our spiritual lives.

But that is why it is such a blessing to still have the reminders of God light up all around us. The Christmas trees, the decorations, they are all up to remind us very clearly of what just happened. Because of what happened, we aren't just hoping that the light will outshine the darkness in the New Year. We aren't just hoping that we might hang on to our faith and avoid the attacks of the devil for one more year. We know that will be the case. We were just reminded that the Light came into this world at Christmas. And though the devil did all he could to devour and destroy that Light, even putting him to death on a cross, we know that Light overcame the darkness. As the devil tries to fill your life with darkness, hold up before him the Light found in the manger; hold up before him the Light that went to the cross; hold up before him the Light that burst forth out of the tomb. With that Light in your life, you truly have nothing to fear, from what has happened in the past year, from what will happen in the year ahead, even from what will happen in eternity.

Between the darkness of Newtown and the approaching fiscal cliff, something amazing happened that marked 2012 as a great year and ensured that 2013 will be much more of the same. On Christmas, we were reminded that the Light of Salvation came into this world. And so, today, in a world of darkness, you can confidently declare, "The Lord is my Light and salvation." Amen