

“No Fear” // Psalm 27
Youth Sunday 2010
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College, for the majority of high schooler's, represents freedom, a higher education and most importantly, the start of the rest of your life. I remember sitting in the choir loft as a freshman listening to Wes Patterson, Julie Champion, Kristen Helveston, and Julie Maloney and being envious. Following our Garden City Beach Retreat in July, they would return home and pack up their things to leave at the end of the summer to start this rite of passage. I still had a few more years to go, and I wanted to be leaving with them. Today I am a senior, who has pushed himself through a rigorous International Baccalaureate program, SAT tests and the college application process. And now, with just under six months before I leave and after having persevered through all of this, I stand before you today to tell you all, I am afraid. I am absolutely scared of what lies on the path ahead of me. Before I knew better, as a sophomore and junior, I was excited to be leaving, but now as my future becomes more of a reality as each day passes I am terrified of leaving my life here behind. For the first eighteen years, my life has been awesome. The comforts of home have, if at all possible, been too comforting. The idea of leaving this all too familiar and loving place and immersing my being into the student body of a campus with hundreds of other students is frightening.

So how do I cope? How do we cope with different kinds of fear? Fear of snakes, fear of heights, fear of the unknown, fear of God? Because we cannot know what God is, is this fear legitimate? He is omnipotent, but he is also abstract. The scripture from Psalm 27, however, does not put God in this fearful, abstract perspective. “The Lord is my light and my salvation”, “he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble, he will conceal me under the cover of his tent, he will set me high on a rock.” God in this passage is comforting, God is caring and loving. These verses illuminate God in a glorious light, one that is praise worthy. Psalm 27 is all about hope, and finding what comforts and consoles you, when you are afraid. That is why I think we come to church, to relieve our fear of God, of the unknown. During our hour of worship we are able to know God, to see God, to feel God and when we are in this place and we are with each other, studying and sharing and building relationships with God and with one another, we are no longer scared or afraid. We have no fear. But what about during the week? And what about other things that are “outside” of our faith practices. The Psalm states, “Come, my heart says, seek his face! Your face, Lord, do I seek.”

After applying to three universities I was worried about only one, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I come from a long line of Chapel Hill alums and for some reason I hoped for the best but feared what their answer might be. How I would deal with that answer, whether it be good or bad? Was I good enough to get into the top public university the nation had to offer? This thought was on top of my mind day and night, as I struggled to concentrate on things in the present. On Sunday, January 31st, I was informed that I had not gotten into Carolina. I was disappointed and upset for a while and was struggling to find a reason why I had not gotten in, was it my SAT, was it my essay, or was it just bad luck? Then it hit me, it was alright that I had not gotten in, it was not the end of the world because whatever the situation, with God's help, was I was going to dive deep into it with a positive attitude and a smile on my face. This is what we must do as human beings. “Seek his face!” This means to take initiative. Live life as it is naturally served to you. God will be there to grab hold of the ropes. This is how

we face our fears. We have to show courage and be willing to step into the unknown, a place where we do not know the outcome.

In my Theory of Knowledge class, we recently discussed Religion. I am usually one to voice my opinion about different topics in that class, but the discussions we held in those few classes, I was silent. I didn't know what to say? I am confused as a Christian and I, like everyone, has their doubts about things in the bible. I question everyday why we as a church believe what we believe, and how much of it is true, how much of it is meant literally and how much is meant symbolically. Did Jesus's miracles actually happen? Was he the son of God? We all have doubts, whatever they may be. Even Mother Teresa, had doubts. In a collection of correspondences, entitled, *Mother Teresa: Come Be My Light*, she writes to a priest, "Jesus has a very special love for you. [But as for me], the silence and emptiness is so great, that I look and do not see, — listen and do not hear — the tongue moves [in prayer] but does not speak... I want you to pray for me — that I let Jesus have [my] free hand." We have all felt like this at one time or another. Faith is a constant battle of trust and belief in what we cannot know and see. In Hebrews 11:1, it says, "Now faith is the assurance of things, hope for the conviction of things not seen.". Blind faith as some may call it. Faith is a supernatural feeling. You have to feel its presence otherwise you are just going through the motions without meaning. The importance of this Psalm is that it preaches a confidence, realistic and human confidence to have trust in God. It is like a guideline on how to live, and is that not what religion and a book of worship are? Guidelines for us, as humans, to live a better and healthier life, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

I have two colleges I can attend next fall, UNC Asheville or UNC Wilmington. Whatever my decision may be I must rise above my fears and face them head on, and wait for God. This is our true test of faith and trust in God to be there when we need him. Psalm 27 finishes, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord." This finishes up the Psalm nicely, but offers the question, what if the Lord doesn't come? How long should we wait? This is part of the instant gratification of today's society. We want it now, we need God's help now. But we must remember that God is always beside us, silently watching over us, always comforting. This verse, Joshua 1:9 offers us this comfort, "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."