



This line forms the last verse of a psalm composed by Judah's King David – with its famous opening verse The LORD is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? Psalm 27 has an interesting “voice” and mood. It is as if David is speaking to his own heart and quietening the fear, anxiety and panic he feels welling up there. We might say that the psalm is part prayer- and part “self-talk.” It sees David, reminding himself of who God really is in the face of all the dangers, disappointments and foes he is facing in his life: before or after he becomes king. He flees from opponents, he fights Goliath and he must face his own most fearful enemy – his own mortally sinful self.

The key word we find in verse 14- is in the Hebrew: *qaveh-* (kawah) – it means to wait patiently. There a number of other Hebrew words for different kinds of waiting. The word also means “to gather” together in anticipation of a purpose. In the first book of Genesis for instance – the waters are depicted as *qawwah-* “gathering together” - awaiting the Lord Creator's purpose and plans for them on the face of the earth.

It is not only Creation (as St Paul reminds us many centuries later) that waits like an expectant woman about to give birth, but Scripture is full of so many different types of waiting people who are signs of the story of Salvation.

There are those in the Old Testament waiting for God's justice, his light and help even if it is the waiting of Job who sits in desolation, darkness and pain. There is old Symeon in the Temple (Luke 2:25-32) whose waiting is fulfilled with the arrival of the Infant Messiah. There are the sisters Martha and Mary – both “waiting” on Jesus in their different ways. There is the parable of the 10 Wise and Foolish Bridesmaids.

Today we find waiting incredibly hard. Instant devices and timeplans- make our concentration and patience wear very thin. Ironically- while we believe everything is all up to us (thus forgetting it is God's time) we are too impatient to “gather” what it is God is helping us do and be in our salvation.

David prays in the middle of Psalm 27 to be granted the courage, patience and confident faith

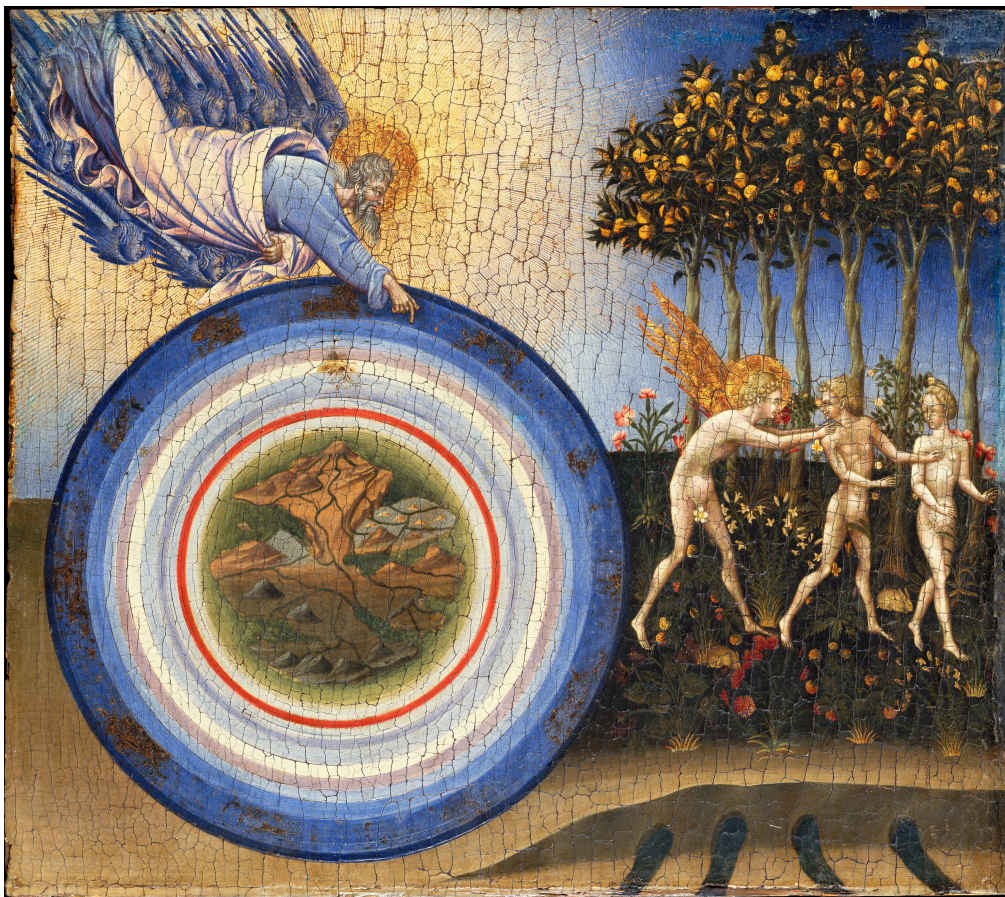
to be able to focus more intently on the Lord God: “to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”

One of the aims of Lent is to remind ourselves of this ultimate purpose too. One of the great errors of secular culture is that it teaches us to think of waiting as empty and passive space. Waiting seems to lack our agency and control. The culture makes us impatient – because it is trying to make us hunger after something else to consume or to plug into.

In the Scriptural sense the opposite is true. True patience requires the grace of “self-mastery” and attention to the fullness of every second of our lives- realising that the Lord is waiting for us there. The Lord is waiting for us to listen to his purpose for us – and waiting for us to return to Him with all our hearts.

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*Creation of the world and Expulsion from Paradise - By Giovanni di Paolo*