

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas. Now comes the New Year. It seems to me there's a drop-off after a major holiday. Friends and family have come and gone. From Thanksgiving through Christmas and into the New Year we ride a roller coaster of emotions and energy highs and lows. We go from Black Friday, that BIG shopping day after Thanksgiving, which sounds dark and depressing to me, to Panic Saturday, which really sounds scary. That's the new term Britons have come up with for the busiest shopping day of the year, the Saturday before Christmas.

Psalm 57 calls us out of our slumber to awaken to a new day. Yet, we're moving slow after being sated with good food and plenty of desserts. The author calls us to awaken our souls, awaken the music of the morning – Awaken the dawn!

Recently I was given a book titled *The Way To Start A Day*. It suggests that the way to start a new day (we could stretch that to a new year) is to, “go outside and face the east and greet the sun with some kind of blessing or chant or song that you made yourself and keep for early morning.” The book goes on to say, “When you feel the sun you'll feel the song too. Just sing it...A morning needs to be sung to. A new day needs to be welcomed and recognized.”

I wonder how each of us greets the new day. Is your greeting a rousing “Yes! Thank you Lord for a new day!” Or is it more like Eeyore, the little donkey

in Winnie the Pooh stories, who can't keep his tail on, has a rain cloud over him because he's always glum and says, "O bother!"

Do you wake up grouchy or good-natured? Do you wake up saying, "My back hurts. I need a new mattress!" How we greet the new day depends on our mood, our attitude, our outlook on life. Faith in God can help us greet a new day.

I wonder if we don't change our attitudes a bit as Christmas approaches and work at being upbeat and positive – after all, we're celebrating the birth of our Lord and Savior. Right? Yet, the days before Christmas can be anxious and tense. Perhaps we have guests in our home, young ones and their parents, or others whose lifestyles are considerably different than our own, especially the hour at which they go to bed.

Surely on Christmas day we greet the new day with an awesome thanksgiving to God for the gift of his Son. Right? Oh, sorry! I didn't realize you had 17 people coming over for Christmas dinner.

I like the Psalms. They are deeply personal; it's why we relate to them. They give us a glimpse into the life of the writer. Psalm 57 is ascribed to David. After fleeing from Saul he hid in a cave. Is this the time of year you feel like hiding in a cave?

Maybe; maybe not. Well, this psalm is both a complaint and a thanksgiving. At first the writer seems to be swallowed up by life, crying out to God to be

merciful because he's in the midst of lions and ravenous beasts. Holiday shopping on Panic Saturday sounds like being in the midst of ravenous beasts. And yet, the writer trusts God to save him.

Do we feel any different this Sunday than last? God has sent his son, Jesus, to save us. We've waited during Advent for the Christ child – we've waited in life for things to work out – we've waited for things to get better. Christmas came and went and has that old feeling returned to our lives; where is God?

I believe our lives are much like the writer of this psalm: deep, down in our soul we trust God. We trust God to take away the evil in our world, to fend off our enemies and those who persecute others. We seek the refuge of God here, in the sanctuary. This is where we find peace and protection, in the shadow of God's wings.

But, we treat each day as nothing special. Why do we not acknowledge God as we awaken the dawn? Do we really have nothing to say to God? God has promised to send us his love and faithfulness which is showered on us daily. **And we have nothing to say!**

Perhaps we complain about what's not right – voice frustrations with what's not working – cry out for what's holding us back from living the life we desire.

So we wait, like at Advent. We wait for God to act. And God will act but we don't much like the waiting. It is humbling to wait for God to act. We want to take

matters into our own hands. Isn't it true that we want to go get the enemy and slay them ourselves?

When we have a crisis in our life, we struggle to wait for God to act. We cry out to God to act now; help me, I'm in trouble; things are not what I had hoped or imagined. They've spread a net around my feet. I'm depressed! There's too much violence; terrorism; abuse and scams against the elderly. All ravenous beasts with teeth like spears and arrows. O dear Lord, am I forced to dwell with them? Pretty ugly picture! Prayer seems a futile and a daunting task.

The psalmist complains, then tells of his confidence in God, then complains some more, then prays, then trusts God, back and forth, back and forth he goes. Trust God – Take matters into our own hands. Sound familiar?

The psalmist prays, “Be exalted, O God, above the heavens; let your glory be over all the earth.” Trusting in God is waiting for God to act. As we wait, how will we awaken the new day? The psalmist provides the clues.

Keep your heart steadfast!

Sing and make music. Let your soul be awakened!

And awaken the dawn!

In other words, Lord, we will worship you, no matter what happens in our lives or in the world. We will sing and make music to you God because you have

given us your Son to save us from our sins. That's a pretty good way to awaken the dawn!

How will you greet the sunrise, the new dawn? Witnessing to God – praising God -- thanking God – singing to God – making music to God –

Another way to awaken the dawn is to lift up God in worship and in our prayers. Let us seek God's protection and find help from God in the sanctuary. Let us bring to our daily life a worshipful and prayerful attitude. There is confidence in this prayer. Are we that confident? Was Mary, the mother of Jesus so confident? Today's anthem raised questions likely contemplated by Mary. Did she really know what God was doing, how God was acting in her life? Mary needed confidence too.

God, through Christ, saves us so we can be confident of God's love and faithfulness.

The writer opened his heart to God – He's awakened to God. - His confidence grew and now he's in a joyful mood of thanksgiving. The Spirit has taken possession of his soul – his heart is fixed on God and his salvation. His whole being is filled with thoughts of God.

The presence of God is the essence of trust and confidence. Knowing God is with us gives us confidence to face this world and whatever is happening in our lives.

When we awaken we begin to move – we take action – we wake up from what holds us back! Awaken suggests we move from being vulnerable as when we sleep, to taking the initiative. Where do you want to take initiative in the New Year? What is it God is calling you to do and be in 2016? Awaken yourself to God working in your life.

Our psalmist's prayer has been answered. God has taken complete hold of him; he feels inspired and hails the dawn of another day. Is it just another day? Not for this author. Not for you or for me. God has given us his Son, Jesus. He is forever with us. And that changes everything!

The birth of Jesus changes our lives. We can live passionately – love passionately – and hope passionately because Jesus came to save us. Let us awaken to each new dawn with a confident trust in God's love and faithfulness. Hallelujah. Amen.