

*“Shelter from the Rock”*

[The video, “*Wait*” was shown.]

Our Scripture, Psalm 27, focuses on the need of shelter from God during times of trouble. From time to time, Round Grove United Church has welcomed homeless guests in our Worship and other activities. Their difficulties have made them vulnerable. It is crucial that they receive a warm welcome. **It is also very important for us to be instruments of our Divine Parent’s Agape Love and Shelter for those, who are need.** Recently, we had a good number of members and friends work at the Christian Community Action Food Pantry to help the hungry in our community. **Our church’s budget includes a sizeable contribution to CCA each year and we have the opportunity to sponsor donations to the CCA Pantry.** You can do that by signing up on the sheet on the Narthex table in front of the Bulletin Board opposite this Sanctuary and turning in your donation designated for the CCA Pantry. **On Saturday, October 13th, we will have a group of members and friends, who will be joining in the Metrocrest CROP Walk** to help the hungry locally, nationally, and internationally. We also have the opportunity to support the CROP Hunger Walk Program financially.

**Verse 5 of our Scripture emphasizes the need for God to provide shelter. The psalmist stated, “*In times of trouble He will shelter me; He will keep me safe in His Temple and make me secure on a high rock.*”** The truth is everyone needs the protection of God’s Shelter – the shelter of God – the Shelter of the Rock, especially during times of trouble. Frankly, there are many of our family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and acquaintances, who are currently going through serious difficulties. As our Prayers Requested Sheet reveals, hardships, illnesses, and losses are numerous. Even if some of us are not currently experiencing problems, suffering is pervasive for many in our relationships.

The psalm’s statements, such as, “*keep me safe in His Temple*” point to our Rock – Shelter being God’s Sanctuary – the Temple – this sanctuary – other sacred places. Indeed, for those, who have been abused or who have felt rejected, this congregation functions as God’s Rock Shelter from the emotional and psychological attacks they have experienced! **So, no matter who we are or where we are on life’s journey, we all suffer and need comfort, empowerment for life, and shelter from the storms of the difficulties we face.**

Coming to the Church – the Body of Christ, especially this local manifestation of the Church, we find the Rock Shelter we need as we live out God’s Agape Love, Welcome, Forgiveness, and Healing with and for one another. **The psalmist said in**

verse 4, ***“I have asked the LORD for one thing; one thing only do I want: to live in the LORD’s House all my life, to marvel there at His Goodness, and to ask for His Guidance.”*** This community of believers is called to receive those blessings, as we come together in Worship and the Praise of our Divine Parent. We are also called to be instruments of those expressions of God’s Agape Love to others, who are in great need of protection from the Shelter of God – of God’s Rock.

The psalm also addressed the issue of feeling abandoned, while we are in the midst of our troubles. **We find this in verses 9c-10 and 12, when the psalmist sang, “You have been my Help; don’t leave me, don’t abandon me, O God, my Savior. My father and mother may abandon me, but the LORD will take care of me. ... Don’t abandon me to my enemies, who attack me with lies and threats.”** The Jews have experienced many times, when they have felt abandoned – the Fall of Jerusalem and the Destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C. – the fifty years of the Babylonian Exile until 537 B.C. and much more recently, the Holocaust during World War II. Have you ever or do you now feel abandoned by God? It boils down to being a matter of Trust – Faith in God’s Agape Love and Trustworthiness! **Do you Trust – Faith in God’s Agape Love for you?**

The psalm concluded with a powerful expression of Trust in God’s Shelter – in our Divine Parent’s Agape Love and Care for everyone – yes, for you and me! **The psalmist sang in verses 13-14, “I know that I will live to see the LORD’s Goodness in this present life. Trust in the LORD. Have faith, do not despair. Trust in the LORD.”**

I am concluding this message with another video. This one is an inspiring message moving from despair to soaring trust in God’s Agape Love. [The video, “*Faith in the Desert*” was shown.]

Whether we need physical shelter in the form of a place to hang our hats, emotional shelter in the form of encouragement and affirmation amidst life’s struggles, or spiritual shelter in the form of a supportive faith community, **Shelter is the Gift of God’s Grace** which we can participate in bringing to the world. How can we help the homeless in our community? How can we offer the ministry of shelter with and through agencies already doing good work? How will each of us be God’s Agents of helping to Shelter those in need? **Will you and I trust in God’s Shelter – the Shelter of our Rock and boldly live the New Life in Jesus Christ – the life of manifesting our Divine Parent’s Agape – Suffering and Self-Giving Love for all people? Amen.**