

## **Be still!**

Dear listeners,

We live in troubling and confusing times. News stories are often disheartening, disturbing and unsettling. Policies and positions taken by many political leaders leave us bewildered. Just when you thought it couldn't get more ridiculous – it does. In a society that preaches tolerance we have become extremely intolerant and we don't even see it for ourselves! We are intolerant of any view that differs from our own. For example, to proclaim the exclusive claims of Jesus is considered intolerable, unloving, outdated and judgmental. We judge those we consider judgemental!

In such a time as this, it is crucial that we stand our ground and are not quickly shaken by the prevailing winds of modern thought. And isn't that the message of Psalm 46? This psalm not only provides us with comfort and a mental lift as we observe the dangerous environment in which the Christian church finds itself today but also as we ponder personal peril and pain -- dealing with serious health issues, feeling the pain of loss and loneliness, struggling with accepting God's will for our lives. When we find our refuge and strength in God we will not be knocked down by fear or anxiety.

I'd like to read this psalm with you and say a few words about it. It is my prayer that as you listen to this Psalm, with your own burdens on your heart, your own fears, personal suffering, disappointments, you might be deeply moved and touched by it. Psalm 46 reads:

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.' The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

The psalm begins: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble." Why does this psalm tell us what it does about God and who he is? It does so to get us to the bottom line of Psalm 46:10a, "Be still and know that I am God." This is what you and I need to do in the face of all adversity and affliction: don't be pessimistic but trust him who is your refuge and strength.

But now another question: What is God telling us to do when he says, "Be still and know that I am God"? The word for "be still" comes from a verb meaning to release or to let go. Being still means letting go and finding strength outside of yourself in God. "Be still, and know that I am God" means we are to let go and let God be God. This is what we are called to do today and every day into the future – to let go so that we might know God -- and not just in some intellectual way but by living in a relationship with Him. It means that we get rid of the clutter that prevents us from doing so. I surrender my will to God's. "Being still" I let go of all the negative experiences, burdens and pains of life and I let God be God. And when I do that I will have peace of mind. God is my refuge and I am safe in the hands of him who charts my life's direction.

The context of Psalm 46 helps us understand this more clearly. This psalm pictures the nations pitting themselves against God and his people. This opposition is declared to be utter nonsense. Why? Well, take a look at what God is doing! "Come and see ... what desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars

to cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire” (46:8–9). In other words, what foolishness for anyone to think that they can defeat God through mockery or might! Then God himself enters the fray in verse 10 and he says: “Enough! Just zip it! Know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth. Abandon your efforts to oppose me because you are wasting your time and energy.” God says, “Be still! Know that I am God. Don’t let the noise of human experience or all those things that are vying for your attention distract you from what is really going on in this world.” The command to be still, to let go and let God, forces me to think deeper about the reality of life; to get outside the bubble of my own narrow view of reality. I am a miniscule, finite creature before an infinite and awesome God and that is why I need to chill out and stop thinking I am in charge or that the world cannot do without me. There is a far greater reality beyond what you experience and see with the physical eye. This is why you need to surrender, to let go and let God. The Lord speaks to all resistance and he says, “Let go! Give it up” You are not in charge. I reign and I will be exalted over all the earth.”

We are to surrender our hearts and lives into the hands of the Lord, even if the whole world, including our own, collapses. The psalmist says, even if everything in creation is undone and loses its stability you are still okay! There is nothing to worry about because the Lord, the almighty King of creation, has the power to protect us against anything and everything. We are safe in the middle of the most violent upheaval.

The trademark of those who are still, who let go, is that they do not fear. Oh, for sure, concern persists and we do not throw caution to the wind. But we can proceed as we find refuge in him and comfort in his love. God is our refuge and strength and an ever-present help in trouble. That means he will never let you down! The Lord is an ever-present help when you think it cannot get any worse, be more traumatic or tumultuous.

Dear listeners, if you are anxious or deeply concerned about your health, future, children, the state of this world – let go! You can, because when God is your refuge, your strength and your ever-present help – nothing can shake you. God is infinitely greater than all the forces in this world combined. At times we may feel blind-sided by trials and hardships but God isn’t blind-sided or surprised by suffering and pain! In fact, there are times when the Lord needs to shake what appears to be solid and secure so that we learn to hold on to what lasts forever.

“Be still!” What the Lord directs us to do is only possible through Jesus. When people mocked and jeered, He remained silent in order that he should deliver us out of all our troubles. Since he endured the cross and came under the curse of God, there is now a river of blessings that flows to us when our life is in him and when we find refuge in the place where he provides us with shelter. In the church, Christ supplies us with the water of life. Yes, there is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. Jesus sustains and refreshes our thirsty souls with his grace, love and mercy.

Today God says to you, whoever you are, “Be still and know that I am God.” Let go of everything that is preventing you from enjoying the riches of life in Christ! When you let go you are given grace, hope, comfort, peace, refuge, strength, forgiveness, assurance, life, joy unending, peace, heaven and paradise.

Well then, it is time to put your shoulders back, to step forward, to be still, and to let go and let God!