

PSALM 46

OUR SHELTER AMID STORMS

Bible Study: Jordan Lutheran Church

As we look around these days, doesn't it seem as though the world is in a state of chaos? COVID-19 continues to rage, the stock market is tanking along with our retirement accounts, and morals in general are getting thrown out the window. Even the busyness of our own lives can overwhelm us: work, kids, activities, deadlines, accidents, sickness, death, etc... It's easy for us to feel that everything is on the verge of falling apart. When faced by the chaos around us, Psalm 46 reminds us where to find calm and peace. Surrounded by the storms of life, the believer can live in peace, surrounded by the fortress of God's loving presence.

THE PSALMS

The Psalter, or book of Psalms, is a collection of the songs of the people of Israel written over a period of centuries, from the time of Moses until after the return from Babylon. There are 150 psalms in the book that cover nearly every aspect of Christian life and worship. This book is especially suited for use in your personal devotional life.

PSALM 46 – WHO WROTE IT?

The Sons of Korah. In Numbers 16, we learn that Korah himself was a wicked man who rebelled against God and Moses. Korah's much later descendents, however, were Levites who had important positions in the religious life of the Israelites. Psalms 42-49, 84-85, and 87-88 were written by the Sons of Korah.

THE HYMN – “A MIGHTY FORTRESS”

1) A might fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;
He helps us free from ev'ry need That has us now o'ertaken.
The old evil foe
Now means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might Are
his dread arms in fight; On earth is not his equal.

2) With might of ours can naught be done; Soon were
our loss effected.
But for us fights the valiant one Whom God himself
elected.
You ask, “Who is this?” Jesus Christ it is,
The almighty Lord.
And there's no other God; He holds the field forever.

MAIN TAKE-AWAY

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

SOME UNIQUE FEATURES

Note the unique names given to God in this Psalm: the “Most High” (4), the “LORD Almighty” (7,11), and the “God of Jacob” (7,11).

FURTHER COMFORT FROM GOD'S WORD

God's deliverance of Israel - **Isaiah 36-37**

God's perfect deliverance for us - **Revelation 22**

Afraid – Ps 34:4; Matt. 10:28; 2 Tim 1:7; Heb 13:5,8

Facing Crisis – Ps. 121; Matt. 6:25-34; Hebrews 11

Disaster Threatens – Ps. 91; Ps. 118:5,6; Lk 8:22-25

3) Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to
devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower
us. This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done! One little word can fell
him.

4) The Word they still shall let remain, Nor any thanks
have for it;
He's by our side upon the plain With his good gifts and
Spirit. And do what they will –
Hate, steal, hurt, or kill – Though all may be gone, Our
victory is won;
The kingdom's ours forever!

Psalm 46:1 - God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

1. What is a refuge? What does it mean for your life that God is your refuge *and* strength?
2. The word for “trouble” here means “narrow/tight places.” How do troubles squeeze you in?
3. Agree/Disagree: I find it easy to remember that God is my “ever-present help.”

Verses 2-3: 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.

4. What waves and mountains are churning around us? When will this happen for real? (Luke 21:25-28)

A: Every problem and pain, every sneeze and sniffle remind us that we are sinful human beings who are subject to disease and death. These things also remind us that this world has an expiration date. Daily spiritual preparation is vital. Confess your sins. Trust in Jesus’ payment for those sins. Live a life of joyful service to God and to others.

5. Agree/Disagree: “If you really understand and believe the truth of the first verse (God is with us!) your attitude cannot be anything other than complete fearlessness.”

A: Yes! In Jesus we are new creations, redeemed by His blood, eager to do what is good and pleasing in His sight. As His people we have full confidence in His love and power and fear nothing! But, sometimes “**no**” because our sinful nature causes us to doubt God’s promises and we waver in our weakness. Thankfully Jesus has fully and freely covered those sins.

6. What is *Selah*?

A: *Selah* seems to be a musical notation of some kind but its true meaning and purpose is unknown to us. Remember that the Psalms were the hymns of the Old Testament and sung by God’s people. One guess is that “*Selah*” indicated to the worshipers the place in the psalm where an instrumental interlude was going to take place.

Verses 4-5: 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.

7. Where/what is the city of God? Where/what is the river? (Revelation 22:1-6) What makes this city so special?

A: The “City of God” is the Church – that is – all true Christians on earth. The river/stream that makes God’s people happy is the life-giving Gospel in Word and Sacrament. God’s power sustains us here and hereafter in heaven.

8. Why is it appropriate to call God “Most High”?
9. How does God’s presence give you peace amidst family troubles? job loss? sickness?

A: The familiar picture of the Christian as an “ocean” is helpful here. The storms of life (COVID-19) can rage all around us and cause chaos on the surface – just like angry waves on the surface of an ocean. But underneath the surface of that ocean – in our heart of hearts - all is calm because we know that God is with us and will take care of us.

Verses 6-7: 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.

Note that the voice of God, the Word of God, has the power to melt the earth. His Word alone created all things at the beginning. Do we trust in the power of His Word to create faith? To sustain faith? In times of trouble (depression, anxiety, etc.) do we push God’s Word away because we think, “It won’t help me anyway”? [The devil’s ploy to keep us from the Word]

10. What comfort do God’s names “LORD Almighty” and “God of Jacob” bring us?

A: In short, “God of Jacob” is comforting in one aspect because Jacob was quite often a conniver and deceiver. So, if God kept all of His promises to Jacob (a sinner), then He will also keep all of His promises to us (also sinners).

Verses 8-11: Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. ¹⁰ He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.” ¹¹ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

11. Does verse 9 encourage anti-war movements?

A: Not really. It is true, though, that the best wars are the ones that are never fought. Here, however, the Psalmist is reminding us of how God shaped Israel’s history and world history to accomplish His good purposes. Verse 9 finds its ultimate fulfillment in heaven, where there will be perfect peace forevermore.

12. In the midst of chaos, God says: “Be still.” These are words of rebuke and words of comfort. Explain.

A. “Be still” are words of *rebuke* to all those who rebel against God in unbelief. “God reigns whether you like it or not” would be the sentiment here. “Be still” are words of *comfort* for Christians. “God reigns – and you’re His people – so relax!”

Conclusion:

What examples of God’s great deliverances can you recall from the Bible?

Where does true calm and peace come from?
(Hint: Jesus and His Word!)

Prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We don’t fully understand the depth of this crisis our country and the whole world is presently enduring. Nor do we know its ultimate outcome. Yet we do have to confess as a nation that we have deserved to be visited by Your heavy hand of judgment. We have worshiped other gods. We have lived lives of open rebellion against You and Your Word. Even as Your people we have too often neglected worship and Your Word and slipped into the sins of the people around us.

Yet, for the sake of Jesus, Your Son, our Lord, have mercy and compassion on us. Set aside our guilt and give us new life through the merits of Your Son. Bring relief to all who suffer. Strengthen doctors, nurses and all who care for the sick and aged. Protect Your people and those in our communities from disease. Ease the anxieties of those who are distressed. And, finally, give us relief and release from this trial that we may be free to give You glory and thanks for deliverance in the day of trouble. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Luther’s Morning Prayer

In the name of God the Father, Son † and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Luther’s Evening Prayer

In the name of God the Father, Son † and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.