

**Be Still and Know that I Am God – Psalm 46**  
**Argyle – 1/21/18 – Psalms**

**Introduction to Worship**

The psalmist wrote, “God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.” Are you in trouble or troubled by something this morning? If so, you’ve come to the right place. We worship the God who as one translation puts it, is “always ready to help in times of trouble.” Ask him to reveal himself to you this morning, to speak into your troubled heart.

**Introduction to Scripture**

Do you have a favorite Psalm? Today is the second week in our mini-series on the Psalms, in which I am looking at three of my favorite Psalms – Psalms 27, 46 and 139. Each of these psalms begin with memorable words.

- Psalm 27 – “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?”
- Psalm 46 – “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.”
- Psalm 139 – “You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.”

I have about a dozen favorite psalms and I am working on developing some more. I have to admit that the psalms aren’t easy for me to read and understand because they are poetry. If you know me, you know that beyond “Roses are red

and violets are blue,” I am not a big poetry guy. One of the most challenging classes I took in college was Introduction to Poetry. I am pretty sure the authors of some of the poems we studied did not mean what we thought their poems meant. I would just shake my head as the professor would say, “What the author is saying here is....” The challenge to understanding poetry is that it uses symbolic language and symbolic language can sometimes be hard to understand. On the other hand, symbolic language has beauty and power and depth to it.

For instance, I can tell you that God loves us and is with us and will take care of us, or I can say “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me the lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul.” Or, I can say, “I lift my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.” Or I can say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” The psalmists words are more memorable and more meaningful. So, I am working at getting more of their words into my mind while I still can. Today we are looking at a psalm that I quote often to suffering people when I am talking to them and in my prayers for them – Psalm 46 (Read)

## **There is Trouble in River City**

Friends there is trouble in River City. Some of you remember this line from the musical, *The Music Man*.” Professor Harold Hill, a slick talking salesman is trying to convince the citizens of River City, Iowa that they have a problem and the only solution to that problem is to start a marching band. Coincidentally, Hill sells musical instruments.

We don’t need anyone to convince us that we have trouble and our troubles are far from the imaginary ones of River City. If I were to divide us up this morning in small groups to share what we are concerned about, I might not be able to get your attention again. Our concerns would range from personal to politics, from disease to disaster, from family to famine, from termites to terrorism. There is trouble in River City and New York and Washington and everywhere else in this world.

The psalmist talks about natural disasters like earthquakes and floods as well as human disasters like political upheaval and war. He may, also, have been alluding to family disasters in his reference to God as “the God of Jacob.” If you’ve read about Jacob and his 12 sons in the Book of Genesis, you know that they were one dysfunctional family. One commentator describes Jacob’s family as “seething with crises and dramas, deceptions and feuds, rebellion and heartache and colliding personalities...” Wouldn’t you love to see their genogram? No

matter where we look in this world, there is trouble. In fact, we don't need to look any further than our own lives. There is trouble in River City.

### **But We Needn't Fear**

But we needn't fear. The psalmist gave his readers and us two reasons that we needn't be afraid in the midst of the troubles we face - God's presence and God's promises.

"God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." "Ever present" means that God is ready, he is predisposed to help his people. The psalmist uses three metaphors to communicate the protection that God presence provides for us in the midst of trouble. Each shows a slightly different dimension of God's presence.

First, he says that God is refuge. Last Friday night the Session was at Christ the King Spiritual Life Center during the ice and snow storm. The storm began in the middle of the night and you could hear the wind howling and the sleet hitting the windows and the tin roof. Yet, we were safely and warmly inside. We had a refuge from the storm that protected us.

God is also our strength. Recently the fire company was called to assist the rescue squad with lifting a man who had fallen. He was big and none of us were strong enough to lift him. But we were able to get a blanket under him so that four of us could lift him off the floor. Together we had the strength we needed.

The third metaphor the psalmist uses is fortress. How many of you have been to Ft. Ticondoroga (picture)? Look at those walls and cannons. Where would you rather be in a battle - on the inside or outside of a fort? In the midst of trouble we needn't fear because God is present with us as our refuge, strength and fortress. Run to him.

And we needn't fear because of God's promises. Throughout Scripture God promises that "the day of the Lord" is coming. The "day of the Lord" will be a decisive time at the end of history when God will intervene and restore this world to his creational intent. In the New Testament we learn that the day of the Lord will be when Jesus returns. That promise is what the writer is talking about in the third stanza of this psalm. "Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire."

The day of the Lord will be a day of judgment for God's enemies, but one of blessing for his people. Among the many other great things that will happen in the day of the Lord is that the Prince of Peace will bring an end to war. Imagine a world without war, in fact without conflict. In addition to the ceasing of warfare, we know from other places in the Bible that in the day of the Lord, God will be exalted and recognized by everyone for who he is; every knee will bow down and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord; the proud will be brought down and

the humble will be lifted up; evil will be destroyed; justice will triumph; and God will wipe away every tear from our eyes because there will be no more death and pain and suffering.” So, in the midst of the troubles of this world we needn’t fear because we can look forward to a time when the troubles of this world will disappear. Sin and its consequences do not get the last word. God does.

### **Therefore - Be Still and Know that God is God**

There is trouble in River City, but we needn’t fear. Therefore, be still and know that God is God. The commentators have two different understandings of this phrase. The first is that God is saying to his people “be still and know that I am God.” In other words, “stop and remember who I am and what I have done and what I promise so that you can rest in me.” That is a message we all need to hear. I saw an article this week about three things you can do to make yourself a genius. I am a sucker for articles like that. It said that if you reflect for 15 minutes a day, read for 20 minutes a day and concentrate for 30 minutes a day you will become a genius. It may be too late for me to become a genius, but I know that if I stop what I am doing a couple of times a day to read Scripture and pray and reflect on who God is and what he has done, I’ll be less afraid. Reflecting on who God is and what he has done and what he has promised reminds me that God is in control and is with me and loves me and is coming back. So one way commentators

understand this phrase is a command to believers to be still and know that God is God.

The other perspective is that this is addressed to unbelievers. It is a command to stop what they are doing so they will recognize the existence of God and what he expects of them. It is a prophetic warning to the nations and kingdoms mentioned in verse 6 to stop going in the direction they are going and recognize God's sovereign rule over everything.

I think it is okay to understand these words both ways. As believers we need to be told regularly to "Be still and know that God is God." And, that is a message we need to communicate to the lost world around us. "Stop and pay attention. There is a God and he wants to be a part of your life and there are consequences if you reject him."

### **Conclusion**

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Boy am I glad that is true, because there is trouble in River City. But we needn't fear because God is with us now and will be coming in the person of his Son someday. So, be still and know that God is God. Stop and use the spiritual disciplines of study and prayer and worship and meditation and solitude and fasting to help you lean into God and prepare for his return. And gently warn those around you to stop and pay attention to God, the God who created them.

“God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” Say it with me...“God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.” Say it again and say that last phrase in the defiant tone that it is written in. “God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in trouble. **Therefore we will not fear!**”