

May 3, 2020

“The City of God”
Psalm 46

FCF: Unsettled by our fear

PROPOSITION: (anchor) We need not fear
(magnet) for ours is the city of God.

SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:

As some of you may know, I have a German Shepherd named Lucy. She is a rescue dog, the unofficial mascot of the church office, and an instrument in my character refinement. Lucy has energy. Though she’s had her walk, playtime, and opportunity to attend to her business, she will start pacing and panting for no apparent reason. At which point I say, “Come. Sit. Down.” And she does. She lays down beside me, a calm comes over her, and soon she is snoring.

I often need someone to tell me to do that. We all do. Which brings us to Psalm 46.

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 46**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION****SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

Fear is a recurring theme in the Bible. Not just holy reverence of God but our worry and terror towards a host of things - the forces of nature, death and calamity, hostile people, warring nations, the final end. Such fears are still with us today and we could surely expand the list. We know fear. What are its signs? Often one of these three - control, anger, or withdrawal. We’re afraid so we try to work our will. Or we blow a fuse. Or we pull back. Felt any of those lately?

Control, anger, and withdrawal. Think of how much we live in those places. Which then brings us to Psalm 46. The psalmist tells us that we need not fear, that it is possible for the disciple of Christ to live no longer enslaved to fear. But how? It comes by remembering where you live, laying hold of your citizenship in the city of God - not an earthly city but the holy place of God’s dwelling, the royal people of His delight - saved and secure. That’s the city of God.

The great message of Psalm 46 is that we need not fear because ours is the city of God. We need not fear for ours is the city of God. So what do we learn about this city? At least these three things. First, the power of God. Second, the presence of God. Third, the purpose of God.

I. THE POWER OF GOD

First, the power of God. That is, we see God’s rule over all things (**READ Psalm 46:1-3**).

A) The Worst Convulsions

The psalmist begins by painting a picture of the worst convulsions we can imagine.

1. Natural disasters

Natural disasters - earthquakes and a raging sea. Truly terrifying with no protection or cover.

2. Worst-case scenario

But the picture seems to be describing something beyond even that, a worst-case scenario. The undoing of creation and the collapse of all we know. Truly, the end of the world as we know it.

B) The Great Assurance

The worst of convulsions. Yet, even with that, he speaks with and of great assurance.

1. God's power

Such shaking is overmatched by God's power. God is our refuge and strength - our shelter, a place of safety with mighty walls that hold fast against the very worst of storms or assaults.

2. God's protection

And with God's power is His sure protection. Look out upon the earth and sea, and say with a defiant voice, "I will not fear you. I need not fear you. For God is my refuge and my strength."

That's the message. Because of the power of God, we need not fear.

Application:

What is your worst case scenario? The certainties of modern life exposed, technology and science unable to instantly save? The economy in the tank and your financial future rattled? Or perhaps we could get more personal. Betrayal and abandonment, your secrets and insecurities all brought to light. Or a loss too horrible to even imagine. What is your worst-case scenario?

And how do we face that? God's power. We need not fear for ours is the city of God.

II. THE PRESENCE OF GOD

But there is also the presence of God. He is with us in all things (**READ Psalm 46:4-7**).

A) The World's Resistance

There is nothing Pollyanish about this. The psalmist knows well the world's resistance.

1. A raging rebellion

A raging rebellion, the nations and all those opposed to the LORD, the rightful king and all His people. A deep hostility and animosity traced all the way back into the pit of Satan's ploys.

2. Clearly unstable

A raging rebellion but clearly unstable - tottering, staggering in resistance to the one true Ruler.

B) The Great Promise

The psalmist knows the world's resistance. But he has also heard the great promise.

1. God's presence

A promise of God's presence. The "holy habitation" - the Temple, God's dwelling among us. A river within the city - though under siege, it cannot fall because of these harnessed steady waters.

2. God's rescue

A promise of God's presence. And His rescue. His help comes as "morning dawns" - after the long night, as the battle starts. God's voice, the one that made the world, speaks. And all melts.

What do we learn? Because of the presence of God, we need not fear.

Application:

Where do you feel under siege? Where are your walls pressed and shaking? This city cannot fall for God is with us. That is the refrain of the psalm (**READ Psalm 46:7, 11**). And it is the refrain of the whole Bible. "Do not fear for I am with you." Isn't that the root of our worry,

the thoughts that keep us awake in the middle of the night - that we will be abandoned and have to face things alone? To that voice, the psalmist is clear. That will not happen. It cannot happen.

Psalm 46 assures us of God's presence. We need not fear for ours is the city of God.

III. THE PURPOSE OF GOD

So we see God's power - His rule over all things. We see His presence - His being with us in all things. And now God's purpose - His sure plan for all things (**READ Psalm 46:8-11**).

A) The Harsh Reality

Again, this is no blind optimism. The psalmist is facing the harsh reality of life.

1. The continual waves

He knows the continual waves of pain and suffering, wars on the battlefield and the living room.

2. The besetting weariness

He knows the continual waves and a besetting weariness they bring. Most throw up their hands and say, "This is just how it is!" And even God's people are forced to cry out, "How long?"

B) The Great Reversal

But that harsh reality is more than offset by a great reversal that has come and is coming.

1. A summons given

Hear the summons. "Come and see what I am doing. My rule is coming in full. So be still and be calmed." Note these are words of rebuke to the nations. As with Jesus to the stormy sea.

2. A foretaste shown

"Come, see, and be still." See His mighty works on behalf of His people. And know that those are but a preview, a foretaste of what will be as the King returns and the kingdom comes in full.

What do we learn then? Because of the sure purpose of God, we need not fear.

Application:

Where is your hope? Replay the tapes. "If I can just get the right look, better toys, more education, then I'll be satisfied. Then I'll have enough." Will you? Your bar is too low. "If I can just get this figured out, sorted out, worked out, then life will be okay." Will it? Again, your bar is too low. You are chasing after a mist that cannot be caught and will never satisfy you.

Put your hope in God's sure purposes. We need not fear for ours is the city of God.

CONCLUSION:

Let's put some feet on this. Recognizing a problem is a good but to deal with it you have to trace it upstream and get to the source. Think of this pandemic. The medical community knew there was a problem. But they had to know where it came from. So they began to look at the data - the who, where, and when of the cases. They traced the symptoms back to the source. To address a problem, you have to do more than treat symptoms. You have to get at the source.

The desire to control, the outbursts of anger, the temptation to withdraw - those are all real issues and struggles. But they may also be symptoms of fear. So if those are themes in your

life, you need to take that to the Lord and ask Him, “Is this fear? Jesus, where am I not hearing and believing your words to me? Help me see. And help me to embrace these promises.”

“Help me remember where I live, to lay hold of my citizenship in the city of God, to cast my eyes to your power, presence, and purposes.” We need not fear. For ours is the city of God.

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