



“OUR VERY PRESENT GOD”

Psalm 46:1-11

June 7th, 2020

This morning we are going set our attention on Psalm 46. Many of you will recognize the language of this Psalm immediately. It might be familiar to you because it is in your Scripture memory bank. You might also recognize this Psalm from the hymns and the songs that we sing. Many of us have memorized verses from this Psalm. Many of us enjoy singing lyrics that are drawn from this Psalm. They fill our hearts with the truths of the Lord.

If you have not been introduced to this Psalm yet, it is my joy to open it up with you. Those of you who have been studying it for years, those of you who are being introduced to it today, this is a rich Psalm.

I want to let you know it does not teach us the God is present. Instead, it teaches us that He is VERY present. He is ever present, so very close to His people especially in the midst of the troubles of life. We see it revealed to us here in this portion of Scripture.

Let’s set our attention on Psalm 46, reading it together. This is the Word of the Lord. The caption of this Psalm reads:

To the choirmaster. Of the sons of Korah. According to Alamoth. A Song.

Psalm 46, Verse 1:

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.**
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,**
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah***

- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.**
- 5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.**
- 6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.**
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.**
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;**

- he burns the chariots with fire.**
- 10 “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 of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

The title of this morning’s message is *Our Very Present God*. That is because this Psalm is filled with the truth of God’s very, very close presence with His people. We see it in the first verse, where it says that He is our very present help in trouble.

We see again in the fifth verse, where it is revealed that God is in the midst of His city. We see it again in the seventh verse, where it says that the Lord of hosts, the Lord of armies, is with us. That statement is again echoed in the eleventh verse, where it once again says that the Lord of hosts is with us.

Brothers and sisters, let’s stop for a moment and consider the meaning of that word *present*. He is our ever present help. What does that word *present* mean? Stop and consider some synonyms of the word *present*. It means near; close by; at hand; next to. Let these things soak in. God is near. God is present. God is close by. God is next to. God is even so close that He is within. God is with us. This is the wonderful truth of presence of God.

I believe that the vast majority of evangelical Christians would affirm the doctrine of God’s omnipresence. The word *omni* means all. He is the all-present One. Most Christians will have understood from Scripture that in fact He is everywhere present. Yet at the same time, He is very, very close to each one of us individually.

If somebody were to take a true/false theology test, most Christians would check of the omnipresence as true, and they ought to! It is truth. But, brothers and sisters, at particular points in life, do we take it to heart; do we believe that God is present?

How about at those moments of temptation—as Christians we still deal with the sinful nature? The remnants of it are there even after we have been justified by faith. Can we humble ourselves with that truth?

What about those times when our flesh is pulling us in the of sin, something that we know to be transgression? Something that we know to be iniquity? Maybe a sin of our speech, where we speak unkind words to or about somebody else—words that are intended to harm?

What about times when we are tempted to view or live out in the flesh, something that is sexually impure, whether it is internet X-rated material or being physically intimate with somebody not our spouse? Do we believe in the very God who entered into this world to spill His blood to redeem us from that very sin? Do we believe in the One who paid the price for our sin and who is close to us still, with His grace to give us power over that sin? Do we believe that He is right with us at that moment?

Getting closer to the heart and the context of this Psalm, what about the times of pain and distress and hardship and difficulty of life? This Psalm speaks of different kinds of upheaval that occurs. What about when upheaval is happening globally or nationally or locally or personally, when things are being turned over in our lives? Do we believe in the presence of God to hold us up and together and to see us through?

What we have in this Psalm is an expression of Spirit filled faith in the presence of God. Whoever wrote this was filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to us the truth. As we read this Psalm and take it to heart. It is my prayer that, by the work of the Spirit, we will have that same kind of faith rising up in us, knowing God is at hand to give us courage and strength during the hard times of life.

Brothers and sisters, believe this: Psalm 46 and everything else in Scripture is the Word of the Lord. Not only is it the Word of the Lord to everyone, but this is God's Word to us. This is God speaking to us. I believe that we all need to receive this humbly, longing for the Spirit to cause these truths to be planted in our hearts and to bear fruit in our lives; lives of worship by the grace of God in the life that we have been given in the Messiah.

We are going to do what this Psalm tells us to do. Did you notice that little word *Selah* three times as we read through this passage? That word *Selah* means to pause and think about this. Pause and reflect upon this. Pause and consider this.

With each one of those *Selah*'s there is a different spheres within this Psalm teach us about times when God is right there with us, even when it seems like the world might be coming undone.

Let's see what is here. We will ask the question like this: When is God present? When is He with us? This Psalm is filled with wonderful answers to that question. First, let's notice that:

1. God is with us with the mountains (1-3)

God is there to give us strength and courage in those times when the earth is shifting and the mountains move. Let's look again at Psalm 46 and Verses 1 through 3:

- 1 God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.**
- 2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,**
- 3 though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah***

Reading through the picture that is given to us in those verses, I see a picture of cataclysm. I read that and I was reminded of a section of geology class called Plate Tectonics. You have the surface of the earth, its crust, and there are fault lines, with movement along those fault lines. When those fault lines move, earthquakes!

We are still waiting for the big one. I have been around for forty-six years and at about ten-years old is when I remember those ominous warnings of the big one that is going to be coming. We have had some pretty significant ones, but what is described here is like the big one, to the point where like the Sierra Nevada's are starting to fall. Tragically, Half-Dome crashing down.

It is an intense scene that is put before us here. I think that we can understand what is written for us here in this Psalm, either literally or figuratively or both. This could be speaking of the devastation and the destruction and the pain and the hardship that occurs when there are natural disasters, and there is loss of life, and there are painful things that happen.

It could be speaking literally or it also could be speaking figuratively of the hardest times of life. You will notice that the book of Psalms is filled with poetic language. So here in this text, when we have this language of the mountains, they may very well represent those things in life that are so steady; that are so firm; that are so consistent; the things that we depend on. Things that are always there.

As much as I love oceans, they are tumultuous. Throughout the pages of Scripture, they kind of represent the things that are restless and menacing, so imagine this upheaval in life where everything that we stand upon, everything that seems so secure, starts falling into a menacing abyss. That is what is being depicted here.

Just think about those times in life that seem like they are the worst times in life; the most painful times in life. Loss of spouse. Loss of health. Loss of home. Loss of your retirement investment. Loss of your business, where things are crumbling.

That is what is being depicted here, and the author of this Psalm, filled with the Holy Spirit, is saying, But God is our refuge. God is our strength. God is our very, very, very present help in trouble.

Listen to me: Nowhere does Scripture teach the child of God that they will be exempt from the painful and cataclysmic things that come as a result of living in a cursed and fallen world. There is a whole form of teaching called *Prosperity Gospel* which is heresy. They teach that if you go through any kind of health or financial cataclysm it is because you don't have enough faith. The theological word for that is hogwash!

There is no promise in Scripture that the child of God will be exempt from painful and hard things. The promise of God given to us in Scripture is that we will never face them alone. God will be there with us. God will be there to be our strength when the mountains are not there anymore, to be the foundation of our lives, God will be there. He is present with us. He will hold us up. He will see us through as we are carried by the power of the His Spirit. He will be a very present help to be our strength and our refuge.

What so many believers have found is that by the working of God's grace, even in the midst of our brokenness, as we walk through the trials with the Lord, those difficult times became affective and fruitful times, where the power of the witness of the Kingdom of Jesus was released through lives in ways that are a bit out of the usual.

Scripture tells us not to try to escape trials. The New Testament doctrine is not to run away and hide and cower from pain and suffering as the flesh wants to do. Rather Scriptures tells us to walk through it with the Lord, knowing that He is going to bear testimony to the power of His grace in our lives as we abide in His strength.

God is present with us when the mountains move. Through this life, the mountains are going to move. Through this life, we are going to face hard things. I have faced some already. Other people have faced things much harder than I have faced. In this world you will have trouble, but Jesus said, Take heart, I have overcome the world.

The pains of this fallen world are going to issue forth in a kingdom that is forever. But in this short span of time, this vapor that we call time, we are going find our strength in God and bear witness to the King of king, who suffered for us and died on the cross, with the hope that people who are going through broken and painful times will see the hope that is available through the new life, the forgiveness of sin, and being born again that comes with Jesus Christ.

God is present with us when the mountains move. That is the first sphere of this Psalm. We continue and we see another time when God is with us:

2. God is with us when the nations rage (4-7)

God is even there to give us gladness of heart in the midst of raging nations. Did you notice that in Verse 4 through 7? Verse 4:

- 4** There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy habitation of the Most High.
5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
6 The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
7 The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

These verses teach us that God is present with us. God is there even when the nations rage. Sometimes we see globally that nations rage against nations. Sometimes we find that a nation rages within itself.

That has happened throughout the history of these United States. It seems like we are at a point in our history where it is happening again, where we see people raging against one another. Either way, whether national or internal rage, whether it is international or internal, there can be a sense that the equilibrium of life seems like it is offset.

We see this depicted in the language that is in Verse 6. It says,

- 6** The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;

They wobble. They stagger. It seems like the things that are foundational are being moved. It can be an intense time. It can be a very fearful time when there is warfare. But there in the midst of the rage of the nations, you have the city of God.

Even with the firestorm happening all around it, the city of God is depicted here as a place of peace; a place of gladness. It is almost this tranquil and placid scene as this city uniquely is made glad by the river of God. Did you see that here?

4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

Throughout the Psalms, the city of God is Zion. We are talking about Jerusalem here. But it is so interesting because there is no river in Jerusalem, so what is this talking about? There is the little stream of Gihon, but that does not qualify as a flowing river. The closest river would be the River Jordan, which is about ten to fifteen miles away from Jerusalem.

The River Jordan is not flowing through Jerusalem. What is the river that is in Zion? What is this verse talking about then? Brothers and sisters, throughout the pages of Scripture God depicts Himself as rivers of living water.

So that later in the history of redemption when the Messiah was on the earth, there He was having a conversation with a brokenhearted Samaritan woman. The precious Messiah put His attention and care upon her. As He interacted with her, talking about the details of her life, He said, If you knew who it was that is talking to you, you would have asked him for water and he would have given you water that wells up to life.

Jesus went on to express to her that that water is the Spirit of God. Jesus made it very clear at the Feast of the Tabernacle in John Chapter 7 and Verses 37 through 39,

³⁷If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. ³⁹Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

The Lord Himself, God Himself, He is the stream of living water.

Even when there is a fire storm going on in the world with nations raging against nations, with a nation raging within itself, there you have the people of God dwelling in the peace of God, worshiping the Living God with gladness in God.

That does not mean that there are not times when our hearts break. That does not mean that there are not times when we go sit in the corner Indian-style with hearts that are so heavy. There are those times. In fact, much of the time what we find is that we are like Paul, sorrowful and always rejoicing.

There is heaviness and there is joy that comes together, but the depiction here is that this city with the stream of living water flowing in it, it makes the people of God glad. Read Revelation 22 and you will see that in the new Zion, the new Jerusalem, the eternal capital of Heaven, there is going to be the river of living water flowing directly from the throne of God.

In the midst of this world that has so many troubles, the people of God are to be distinct as those who are worshiping God with a river that is loosened from them. Brothers and sisters, in the midst of the hardships of this world, we need to go before the Lord, abiding in Him, drinking the living water, partaking of it, communing with the Lord that His life might come through us that we might be those who spread His grace, truth, goodness, and His mercy.

We are to be those who partake of the water of life and we are to be those who share the knowledge of this water with the world around us. The depiction that is given to us here in this text is that the nations will rage, yet there is a city that is glad. And the mission of the church is to tell the people that are caught up in the rage that there is river of life. There is salvation in the Lord.

They may enter into this city through repentance and faith in the Messiah. The King who is enthroned, the King who rules this city is a king that is rich in mercy. He is the King who came into this world and shed His blood for the cleansing of sin. He is the King who came into this world and suffered the wrath God for His people, paying the price that their sin deserved.

In the midst of this world where there is so much rage going on, we are to be agents of this city and this kingdom, telling people that there is a way in and that way comes through the Messiah, the King who is enthroned. We invite them to turn from their sin and trust in Him that they may be citizens of this city along with us.

At this moment in time I think it's worth emphasizing that all around us, you will find rage among all the nations, all the people groups, all the ethnicities that is living in all of our hearts. Those who are called in by the grace of God to become citizens of this city, they come with all kinds of different shades of skin, all kinds of cultural backgrounds, all kinds of different physical distinctions in the middle of the human race, so that this city is a multiracial city of God, centered on the worship of the Messiah.

God is present when the nations rage. He helps us to be a city of peace in the midst of the fallen things in this world. I pray that this will be a vision that is set before us at Bethel Grace, that is, to be this city of peace in our neck of the woods here on this planet earth.

God is present when the nations rage. Third,

3. God is with us when the peace prevails (8-11)

Did you see that going into the final portion of the Psalm? God is with us when the peace prevails. In the end, peace will finally triumph on the earth. There will not just be pockets of peace but a pervasive peace and shalom everywhere. But it is going to require the strong arm of the Lord to bring it about.

That is depicted for us first in Verses 8 and 9:

- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
 how he has brought desolations on the earth.**
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
 he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
 he burns the chariots with fire.**

Brothers and sisters, what we see depicted for us here is what we would call divine intervention. That is God breaking in a dramatic way, destroying even the instruments of warfare and making wars cease to the end of the earth.

This is a picture of the termination of warfare everywhere. I studied geography when I was a college student. I did not study history, although I find history very interesting. I sometimes like to read history books, especially biographical history books.

All this is to say that in the midst of my limited study of history, I am pretty sure that there has not ever been a point since the fall into sin where this kind of universal peace has been manifested on the earth.

There has always been a war going on somewhere, whether it is world war or tribal war. This text depicts a time when there will be peace to the end of the earth. That is biblical language for everywhere. It is going to take divine intervention to bring that about.

The Lord will come with judgement and there is a very fearsome picture that is depicted of our Messiah that helps us to stand in awe of the One who loves us and the One that we love, because He first loved us.

Reading Revelation Chapter 19, you will see that it is powerful. It is intense. It is the return of Christ. It is King Jesus coming back, riding on a white horse; coming to judge all the ongoing unrepentant sin and sinners on this earth that have not entered into His kingdom of peace by looking to Him and having faith in Him. Jesus is going to come back and that chapter says that He is going to strike the earth with the sword of His mouth. I understand that to be another symbol of the fact that all it is going to take is His word. His word will inflict the judgment that is deserved and is just. His word will bring peace. It is going to be a powerful, powerful thing.

This is what is depicted for us, and the Lord is going to be with us through all of the moments that lead up to that day. The depiction of Scripture in the end times is that it keeps getting darker and darker before the magnificent return of Jesus Christ.

We are going to see some painful things on this earth. We are going to be the city of peace in the midst of those things, inviting people to come in and drink the Living Water. As things get dim, He is with us every step of the way, empowering us as His distinct people on the earth.

We just need to lay ourselves before the Lord praying that He would renew us, empower us, strengthen us, and the He would do things in us that we can't do ourselves. We can't just conjure it up and say we are going to be the distinct people of God based on of our merits and abilities.

No! It is all His grace. We are saved by grace and we are sanctified by grace. We need to say, Lord, fill us up that we might be distinct and carry out Your purposes as Your witnesses in this world. There is the depiction that He is going to be with us when the peace prevails and when all the conditions start moving, He is going to be with us when things in this world get difficult.

In view of this Psalm, notice with me how the voice changes. All along in this Psalm it has been a Spirit-filled brother in the Lord telling us about God. Now with one verse, it changes as the voice of the Lord speaks to us. Verse 10:

**10 “Be still, and know that I am God.
 I will be exalted among the nations,
 I will be exalted in the earth!”**

The redeemed heart says, Yes Lord! That is good!

This language *be still and know that I am God* took me back in to the New Testament days, God incarnate on the earth. The Messiah was here among us. The Messiah went with His disciples out on a boat, into the Sea of Galilee.

It was in the darkness of the night. Then the winds began whipping. The waves began rising. A storm began to bear down turning that Sea of Galilee into a tumultuous sea. The disciples, they were scared. They were literally scared to death. They thought they were going to die, so they woke Jesus up and said, Lord, don't you care that we are going to die?

Have any of you ever been tempted or have said, Lord, don't you care?! There are such times, aren't there? The disciples were saying, Lord, don't you care that we are going to die!

Jesus woke up and He rebuked the wind and the waves and said, Quiet, be still. Then Lake Galilee became Lake Placid to an uncanny degree. It became a sheet of glass. The disciples then said, Who is this that the winds and the waves obey him? What was the answer? He is King Jesus. He is King of creation. He is the Creator in the creation, showing His command over it.

There is going to be a time when He comes to this earth. I don't know if it will be with these exact words or not, but He is going say, Quiet, be still. And all the rage and tumult is going to come to an end.

We have an eternal state to look forward to that is going to be an eternity of peace and joy and love and happy dancing in the Messiah. I will finally be able to keep a rhythm when I dance in heaven. In the meantime, the Lord speaks this word to us. This is the Word of the Lord to us: Be still and know that I am God.

Not only is He God in the heavens, not only is God who reigns over this earth with all its people and princes like grasshoppers. Not only is He God enthroned above all, He is God who is an ever present help; a very present help. That's the truth that arises of faith as demonstrated to us in this Psalm. He is with us.

**11 The LORD of hosts is with us;
 the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah***

Chew on that. Ponder that. Take that to heart. If you have entered the city through the Messiah, He is with you in this way and He is going to help you through it all.

I close with the picture that is painted for us back in Verse 5.

**5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved;
 God will help her when morning dawns.**

What came to my mind as I was reading this was, Lord, why wait until the morning dawns. In the midst of the ominous heavy distress of night, how about the now? Why does that kind of help come when the morning dawns?

The Lord allows us to walk through trials that are heavy. He even designs such trials for us that we may approach Him, beckoned and moved by His Spirit that we will go to Him for help. When we go to God for help, we find that we get more than His help. We get God Himself. He is with us.

Right now, there are have been some acts of looting and rioting that have happened. If you have been paying attention to it, maybe you have also noticed that some of the businesses have shuttered their doors and windows, protecting their property. That is wise.

As I was thinking about this city of peace in this world of tumult, the gates to the city are not shuttered shut. They are open for sinners to enter in. To use another metaphor that is given in John Chapter 10, Jesus talking about the sheep fold, said, I am the door by which one may enter the fold.

It is the same thing. Jesus, the Messiah, He is the entryway into the city of God. Jesus is the Savior. Jesus is the Lord. Apart from Christ there is no other way in. It is only through the washing that comes through the shedding of His blood and its application to the sinner.

Jesus forgives and cleanses and gives His gift of righteousness to sinners who approach Him in faith, all the while being carried by His Spirit to do so. If you are listening to this sermon and you have not yet approached Christ, confessing your sin and looking to Him in faith, I invite you to put your trust in Jesus, the King of the city.

He went the cross where He paid the wrath deserving our sin. If you don't approach Christ and receive forgiveness through Him, God's wrath abides on you and someday, you will experience the judgment of your sin in a place called hell, which is a place called judgement.

But in Christ, there is peace, joy, eternal life, forgiveness of sin, newness of life, everlasting life. It comes by being attached in faith to the One who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. Put your trust in Jesus.

In the midst of the hard times of life, put your trust in Jesus. Abide in Him, knowing that His hands are undergirding you all along. We must be renewing our minds so that we remain aware of these things and that we draw close to Him in faith.

Let's close in a word of prayer.