**Be Still Series**

**“Be Still and Know”**

**Psalm 46**

**Introduction:**

Last week we launched our new series on “Be Still” – “Slowing Down in a Busy World.” The Holiday Season is upon us and many people consider this time as the busiest time of the year. Family gatherings, travel, shopping, and holiday parties all sound great but these things get us out of our routine and often create stress. During this series we will be seeking to discover the importance on intentional time to “be still” before God.

Last week Jordan’s sermon focused on “Be Still and have Faith” and in the weeks to come we will “Be Still and Pray,” “Be Still and See,” and “Be Still and Listen.”

This morning I want us to “Be Still and Know” as we look at Psalm 46.

***1*** *God is our refuge and strength,*

*A very present help in trouble.****2****Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change*

*And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;****3****Though its waters roar and foam,*

*Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.* Selah.

***4****There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,*

*The holy dwelling places of the Most High.****5****God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;*

*God will help her when morning dawns.****6****The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;*

*He raised His voice, the earth melted.****7****The Lord of hosts is with us;*

*The God of Jacob is our stronghold.* Selah.

***8****Come, behold the works of the Lord,*

*Who has wrought desolations in the earth.****9****He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;*

*He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;*

*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 stronghold.* Selah.

For the choir director: *A Psalm* of the sons of Korah, set to Alamoth. A Song.

**Be Still and Know**

The book of Psalms is a collection of God inspired songs teaching us how to praise, complain, and lament to God. The Psalms are written in the style known as Hebrew Poetry. Hebrew Poetry is a distinct form of literature because focuses on matching ideas instead of matching sounds. The Hebrew Poets paint mental pictures creating verbal images that confront the reader. If you can get away from the need to hear rhyme and rhythm the reader can gain an appreciation for Hebrew Poetry. Hebrew Poets were “word-smiths” and “thought-smiths” that used words to paint on the canvas of contrasting ideas.

Psalm 46 is one of the “Zion Psalms” that was written to honor God’s presence with His people. (Ps.46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122) Zion is the city of God where God’s people enjoy the presence of God. (Heb.12.22, Rev.14.1) So, a Zion Psalm celebrates God’s presence dwelling with His people.

The fact that God dwells with His people is noted throughout the Psalm 46.

***1*** *God is our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble.*

***5****God is in the midst of her,* ***7****The Lord of hosts is with us;* ***11****The Lord of hosts is with us;*

The author of this Psalm is unknown and it is very unlikely that David was the author. Some scholars suggest that Psalm 46 was written and sung in 2 Chronicles 20 when Judah was surrounded by foreign armies and King *Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshiping the Lord. The Levites, from . . . the sons of the Korahites, stood up to praise the Lord God of Israel, with a very loud voice.* (2Chr.20.18-19)

John Calvin relates Psalm 46 to the time when the army of Assyrians surrounded King Hezekiah of Judah and it looked like it was only a matter of time before the city fell. (2Chr.32) Psalm 46 inspired the great reformer, Martin Luther, to write his triumphant hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God” when Luther faced numerous dangers and threats on his life. Psalm 46 has been a resource for the people of God throughout the ages to be still and to know that the Lord is God.

Psalm 46 is divided into three sections. The first section describes “The Coming Chaos.” The second section describes “The Cosmic Comfort of God.” And the third section describes “The Call to Come.”

**The Coming Chaos**

Let’s first consider “The Coming Chaos.” The Psalmist describes a state of complete confusion and disorder.

*2b though the earth should change*

*And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;****3****Though its waters roar and foam,*

*Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride*

The Psalmist is describing chaos of the highest order where the earth as we know it ceases to exist, the mountains slip into the heart of the sea, the waters roar and foam in uncontrollable rage, and the most stable and majestic thing we know in the created world, mountains, quake and swell as though they will explode into partials dust at any moment. (Ps.46.2b-3)

Remember, I told you that Hebrew Poets paint mental pictures creating verbal images that confront the reader. And here in Psalm 46 it is not important to know who or what the Psalmist is referring to because all of God’s people will face chaos in our lives.

This is the type of chaos where the world as we know it doesn’t seem to exist any longer. It is the type of chaos that comes through divorce, the untimely death, or when a hurricane, tornado, or flood devastates your home, property, and community. This is the type of chaos that turns your world upside down and inside out. It is the type of chaos that comes when your child slowing slips into addiction or your parents slowly slip into dementia and poor health. It is the type of chaos that comes when the stability of your job seems to be on the verge of collapse or when the stability of your health is shaken by a bad diagnosis.

But when these enemies of our faith surround us, seeking to wage war against our souls, the child of God remembers that *God is our refuge and strength,* a *very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.* (46.1-2a) The Alps and Andes may tremble and the Rockies may crumble into dust but the child of God can be still and know that *God is our refuge and strength,* a *very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear*. The Oceans may pound their relentless waves against the shores of our heart but the child of God can be still and know that *God is our refuge and strength,* a *very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear*. The world as we know it may seem to have disappeared but we can be still and know that *God is our refuge and strength,* a *very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear.*

We can be still and know because *we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves;**we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; . . . , so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.* (2Cor.4.7-10)

The first section closes with the word “*Selah*” which means to pause, take a breath, rest. Many believe that Selah is a musical instruction but I believe it has a deeper meaning. I think it is God instruction to us to pause, take a breath, and rest. I think Selah is telling us to stop and think about what has just been said. And in this case we should pause and remember that as a child of God faces chaos the Lord is with us. He is our refuge and strength, our abundantly available help in time of need.

**The Cosmic Comfort of God**

After creating verbal images of chaos, this assault against our faith, the Psalmist changes the scene and describes the cosmic comfort of God. *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy dwelling places of the Most High.* (Ps.46.4) This is a beautiful verbal image of the refuge we enjoy with God. (Ps.46.1)

*There is a river.* Jerusalem is one of the major cities in the world that is not built near a river, lake, or ocean. Water is essential for any civilization to survive. Therefore aqueducts were built to transport water into the city of Jerusalem. This water came from sources outside of the city and its arrival made the citizens of Jerusalem very happy.

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God.* The Psalmist is using the aqueducts as an analogy of the refreshment the presence of God brings to the citizens of the city of God. God’s presence is like *a river whose streams make glad the city of God.* His presence comes from a source outside of ourselves and its arrival makes us glad.

And to make point of God’s comfort stronger the Psalmist writes, *God is in the midst of her* (the city, the citizens of Zion)*, she* (they) *will not be moved;* *God will help her*(them) *when morning dawns.* (Ps.46.5) Stating that “God is in the midst of the city” emphasizes ongoing presence with His people. By stating that “they will not be moved” underscores God’s stabilizing influence in the affairs of His people. And by saying, “God will help them when morning dawns,” shows that even though we might go though periods of darkness, God will penetrate the darkness with His marvelous light. *The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.* (Lam.3.22-23) The child of God can be still and know that *weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.* (Ps.30.5)

The nations may be in uproar and the kingdoms of this world may totter but the people of God can be still and know that God is still in control. Our God raises His voice and the earth melts. (Ps.46.6) Heaven and earth may pass away but God’s Word will never pass away! (Mt.24.35) The nations might be in uproar and people might devise vain things but He who sits in heaven laughs because He has installed His King, our Lord Jesus Christ, in Zion, the city of God. (Ps.2.1-6) The people of God can be still and know that the Lord of Hosts is with us! (Ps.46.6a)

The second section closes with *“Selah.”* Pause, take a breath, and rest. Think about what has just been said before you move on. And in this case pause and remember that God always provides streams of refreshment for His people, His presence forever dwells with them, and we will not be moved.

**The Call to Come**

After creating verbal images of God’s comfort the Psalmist issues a call to come and behold the strength of our God. (Ps.46.1)

***8****Come, behold the works of the Lord,*

*Who has wrought desolations in the earth.****9****He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;*

*He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;*

*He burns the chariots with fire.*

The Psalmist summons the people of God to “*Come, behold the works of the Lord.”* He then reminds them of God’s strength on their behalf. The destroyers He destroys, the desolators He desolates. The Father has put all things in subjection under the feet of Christ and has given Christ all authority in heaven and on earth. (Eph.1.22, Mt.28.18) Christ has conquered all of His and our enemies. There is no disease, no addiction, no demon, no bad habit, no fault, no vice, no weakness, that Christ will not overcome. He makes wars to cease having triumphed over them by the cross. (Col.2.15) He disarms the enemy by breaking the bow and cuts the spear in two. He extinguishes all the flaming missiles of the evil one. (Eph.6.16) He burns the chariots with fire. No weapon that is formed against you will prosper. (Is.54.17)

And with the strength of the Lord fully in mind the Psalmist calls us to rest in God’s presence.

***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;*

Be still, sit down, take a break, stop for a minute, and know that I am God. Know that I will be exalted among the nations! Know that I will be exalted in the earth! Embrace My sovereignty. Embrace My deity. Know that I am your refuge from the storm. Know that I am your strength in the midst of chaos. Know that I will be a constant source of refreshment for you. Know that I will not be moved. Know that I am with you. Know that in this world you have had tribulations but take courage the Lord Jesus Christ has overcome the world. (Jn.16.33)

Know that the Lord will give you *crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.* Know that the Lord will do this for you so that you will *be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of His splendor.* (Is.61.3)

Stop, take a seat, relax, rest – Selah.

**Conclusion**

As I conclude this morning I want to draw your attention to two things.

First, I want to point out the two verses I haven’t commented on this morning. Verse 7b and 11b reads, “*The God of Jacob is our stronghold*.” Anytime the Bible refers to Jacob we should take comfort in God’s forgiveness and grace. Jacob’s name means “supplanter” or “deceiver” and that’s how Jacob lived his life until the Lord got a hold of him. Even though Jacob was undeserving God would not let him go. Here in Psalm 46 we are told twice that *The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

What’s the point? Our strength isn’t because we are strong but because God is. Jacob was a weak individual always thinking that he had to deceive, connive, or manipulate to get ahead. But God wouldn’t let Jacob go. The Lord pursued him until Jacob surrendered to the grace of God. (Gen.32.22-32) Jacob came to the point when he surrendered his weakness for God’s strength.

What a bargain! My weakness for God’s strength but is exactly the transaction God desires to make with each one of us. God desires for us to surrender our weakness for His strength. He knows we are weak but the Lord has chosen the weak things in the world to shame the strong. (ICor.1.27) The Lord desires that you confess, *The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation. This is my God, and I will praise Him;* This is Jacob’s God, *and I will exalt Him.* (Ex.15.2)

Lastly, I want you to notice the choir director the Psalmist chose to sing this Psalm – the sons of Korah.

*For the choir director: A Psalm of the sons of Korah*

The Bible tells us that Korah’s ancestors rebelled against Moses and God judge them harshly for their rebellion. (Num.16.1-35; 26.9-11) 250 people died that day but the sons of Korah were spared. By the time of David, the desendants of Korah had become one of the great choirs that sang praises to God in Temple worship.

Of all of the Psalms, eleven are attributed to the sons of Korah. These beautiful psalms express a spirit of great gratitude and humility to an awesome, mighty God. They express a longing for God and deep devotion. (Ps.42-50, 62, 72-85) They sang lyrics such as “As the deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God.” “How lovely is your dwelling place, O God.” “God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”

One wonders if the sons of Korah, as they sang Psalm 46 in the Temple choir, remembered their rebellious heritage. I wonder if they remembered their ancestor who perished for his pride and rebellion. Maybe you are here today and you come from a rebellious past. And you are thinking “there is no way God desires for me to sing Him a song.” Well, you’re wrong – He does!

God desires for each of us to sing songs of redemption and renewal that flow out of a heart of humility as we remember the fallen state of our rebellion and how He by His grace raised us up in Christ and seated us with Christ in heavenly places. (Eph.2.6) O’ sing to the Lord a new song for He has done marvelous things. (Ps.98.1) He has forgiven our transgressions and remembers our sins no more. As far as the east if from the west, so far as He has removed our transgressions from us. (Ps.103.12) Although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, yet He has now reconciled you through Christ so that you would sing praise to the glory of His grace. (Col.1.22; Eph.1.6)

God desires that you would be still and know that He is your refuge and strength. He desires that you would draw from the resources of His grace. He desires that you would sing praises to His Holy Name. He desires that you would be still and know that He is God!

**Call to Prayer**

*“Be still and know that I am God”* (Ps.46.10a)

**Benediction**

*May blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”* (Rev.7.12)