

“Having a Fortress Mentality”

I love watching storms. It is one of my favorite things to do. When storms roll in you will most likely find me standing outside watching intently. I like to feel and see the power of a storm. I love watching the fast-moving clouds and feel the cool air brought in by a drastic temperature change. I am amazed by the power of the storm to whip large tree branches around like little twigs. I love to see the sky light up with lightning bolts and hear the loud crack of thunder. Storms have always been a great reminder to me of God’s power on display in His creation. I real do like a good storm. But most normal people do not stand outside when they see storms coming. Most normal people seek out the most trustworthy shelter possible to help protect them through the storm.

Unlike the storms I just mentioned, there is another kind of storm. Let us call them the storms of life. Those things that can bring heartache, hardships, and trials. Storms that may cause us to be anxious and gripped with fear. Throughout scripture, heartache, hardships, and trials are nothing new to the people of God. With all the uncertainties of the times we live in, we need help when the worst imaginable calamities come upon us. We need a secure and trustworthy shelter from the storms of life. Maybe you have recently found out you have cancer. Maybe, you are experiencing the pain of losing a loved one unexpectedly; Maybe You were let go from a job; your marriage is falling apart; you have overwhelming debt; family conflict; or are battling addiction. You, maybe wondering, as I have at times, “Where do we go when we need refuge for the most difficult times in our lives”. The good news for us is that God through the psalmist answers this very important question. Today in Psalm 46 we shall see that GOD’S PEOPLE CAN FACE THE MOST DIFFICULT SITUATIONS UNAFRAID BECAUSE GOD IS OUR REFUGE.

PLEASE STAND IF YOU ARE ABLE AS I READ PSALM 46:1-11

LET US PRAY

PSALM 46 WAS WRITTEN AS A **SONG** OF GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD IN THE FACE OF OVERWHELMING CIRCUMSTANCES.

Before we jump right into the text this morning, I want to give a brief storyline of events that lead up to the writing of this psalm. It with help us to make sense of why this psalm was written, it is original intent and guide us as we seek to apply it to our lives today.

In Isaiah 8 the prophet Isaiah warns God’s people of coming judgement because of their sins against God-God’s people find out it is the mighty Assyrians who are coming to capture them- In Isaiah 31, God’s people try to find refuge in making an alliance with the Egyptian army to help them fight against Assyria-God is not happy about their desire to align themselves with Egypt (they should have repented and turned back to Him for help) so He thwarts their plan.

In 2 Kings 18 Assyria attacks and captures 46 of the fortified cities of Judah(the southern kingdom)-In fear, Hezekiah then strips their place of worship(the Temple) of gold and silver, sending a peace offering to Assyria-Sennacherib, Assyria's king rejects the offering, mocks God, and sends his army to surround Jerusalem-God sends word to Hezekiah that Assyria will not set one foot in Jerusalem and they should not be afraid-Sennacherib sends a letter telling Hezekiah not to trust God and to surrender-In 2 Kings 19 Hezekiah takes the letter, lays it before the Lord, and asks God to deliver them-That night the Angel of the Lord(probably the preincarnate Christ) destroys 185,000 Assyrians. The next day Sennacherib sees the bodies of his soldiers and retreats. Goosebumps

This Psalm (a song), was written to the chief Musician, and breaks out into three sections. Each section is broken up by the word Selah, a word used to signify a break in singing and the start of an instrumental music.

In verses 1-3, we will see A Refuge in Times of Trouble; In Verses 4-7 A City Not Moved; and Verses 8-11, A Trust Vindicated.

Look with me again at verses 1-3.

I. A Refuge in Times of Trouble 1-3

In verse one we see this incredible profession of faith by the people of God. "God is our refuge and strength" God is not a refuge. He is not even the refuge. No, He alone is our refuge.

Derek Kidner in His commentary on this Psalm says, "Our true security is in God, not in God plus anything else." God alone should be one we go to as our refuge. A refuge is a place where people seek shelter and security from danger. A place of protection and/or salvation in the face of overwhelming threat. The people of God were singing a song of confidence together; HE—ALONE--IS--OUR—REFUGE. There is no other comparable refuge. There is no one like our God.

What is most notable about these verses is not that they had confidence in God as their refuge but that their confidence in God as their refuge was during a time of great difficulty. I do not know about you, but it is easy to trust God when things are going well. I could sing on the highest mountain tops that God is my refuge when life is good. But then I receive a call that a family member has overdosed on pills is on their way to the hospital and it is uncertain if they will make it. Just like that the wind in my song is knocked out of me. In those moments we can be left wondering to what or whom do we turn when the circumstances of life are overwhelming.

When looking for answers to life's most difficult questions we should turn to God's word to find them. This song of confidence in Psalm 46 teaches us we can face the most difficult circumstances unafraid because **God is our refuge in the most difficult times.**

Brothers and Sisters, living in fear is not a biblical response to calamities. Faith is the biblical response to calamities. When faced with the most difficult situations in our lives we should turn to God for answers and have great confidence that He will take care of us. Faith is not minimizing or avoiding the reality of the troubles we face, but it is trusting in God and his promises to get us through them. It is remembering and trusting all His promises to us. It is trusting in what we know (God's word), instead of living in fear of what we see. When we trust God, it means we stop trying to control others, or our circumstances to get the expected output we desire. It means when we are anxious, we pray or recite scripture. When we are in a difficult trial and finding it difficult to do anything, we can ask others to pray or share their favorite verses of scriptures with us. When I am anxious, I started listening to the musical group Shane and Shane. The reason I picked them is because so many of their songs are written exclusively from scripture. This has on so many occasions calmed my anxious heart.

Psalm 46 verses 2-3 teach us that when it all breaks loose, and the worst imaginable situations arise we do not need to fear because God is with us. Not only is He our Refuge, but He is our strength. To all those God has redeemed, He has also given the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives us power to endure hardships as we walk obediently with Him. To fight spiritual battles, temptation, and to bear up under persecution. God upholds and equips us for the most difficult times. We are not alone and will never be alone because God is a very present help in times of trouble.

This phrase "**very present help**" has the idea of one who is faithful, ready, and enough. God is the help that can be found when needed.

One of the best places we see God provide refuge for His people is through the church. Tim Chester and Steve Timmis state in an article they wrote, "It is in the family of God that I am able to care and be cared for; love and be loved; forgive and be forgiven; rebuke and be rebuked; encourage and be encouraged. All of which is essential to the task of being a disciple of the risen Lord Jesus."

But how can Trinity Church be that kind of place, if we are torn apart by divisions over masks, politics, family disputes, and the decisions of the session?

We should be deeply troubled that we are so divided on things that have very little eternal significance. Have we become more concerned about the comfort of our lives than the spiritual condition of our souls? May we ask God to show us if we are the ones causing

divisions in the church and if so, we must repent of it. May God use this church, as a place of refuge for those who are seeking answers for the trials they are facing in their lives.

Let us now turn our attention to verses 4-7. In these verses we will see:

II. A City Not Moved 4-7

In verses 4-7, the psalmist shifts our attention from chaos in creation to a calm in the city. Think back for a moment to the background for this Psalm. We are at the point in the story where the city of Jerusalem was surrounded by the armies of the enemies of God. The Assyrians were assembled with their mighty army to overtake the city of Jerusalem. The smoke from their destruction and carnage from previous victories could be seen for miles. Defeat seems imminent for the people of God. But inside the city, the psalmist describes a much different picture. Look again at what he says in verse 4-7. The psalmist describes a peaceful city, a city unshakeable; One filled with the refreshing waters of a life-giving river. A city where God himself dwells. A city that is safe because God is an ever and always present help. Verse 6 says that If God were to utter one word, His enemies would melt. Just as God spoke this world into existence, He too can destroy His enemies by the sound of His voice. It is important to note here, as good as the structure of the city might have been, it was God's presence in the city that made them safe. God's presence made them immovable. They were His people and He was their God. There was no safer place for them to be then in His presence. God's presence in their lives did not keep them from troubling times (the armies were still surrounding them), but God's presence in their lives assured them that He would be there to see them through. Both in Matthew 28:20 and Hebrews 13:5 God promises to always be with us. God does not promise us trouble free lives. We all face hardships of all kinds and at many times. But God promises to be with His people in midst of our circumstances. God's presence in the lives of His people makes them immovable. Let me explain a little more. The imagery in verses 4-7 are prophetically pointing to a future city. A city greater than the one described here. It is not bound by any geographical location. It is not tied to a specific people. This city is everlasting. It is the one we see described by John in Revelation 21:2-7.

² the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. ⁴ And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."⁵ Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."⁶ And He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning, and

the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. ⁷ He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.

This city of God is not a location, but a people made up of all those who are united to Christ by faith in Him alone. God's people, Christians, are the city of God. A people who were once enemies of God because of sin. But Jesus rescued them from sin, death, and hell, the true enemies of humanity. He became their refuge (a Savior) in their time of trouble. Not only does He save all those who trust him, but he pours out the Holy Spirit into our lives like a life-giving river. Listen to John 7:37-39

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. ³⁸ Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" ³⁹ Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

The City of God (God's People) will never be destroyed, defeated, or moved because we will live for forever. The Church is not a place, it is a people. As great as this building is, the building is not the church. The church is the people and we suffer when people do not come to worship on Sunday mornings. We would not expect our hand to last long if we cut it off our body. So, if the church is called the body of Christ, how can we expect to survive spiritually if we cut ourselves off from it. Online services should not be a substitute for gathering with God's people, if we are healthy enough to do so. We have areas for people with masks and areas for people without masks. Brothers and Sisters, I miss you and long to see you soon. Please do not forsake the gathering with God's people if you are able.

Church, the world may hate us, just as they hated Christ. They may mock us, try to keep us from gathering, lock us up, burn our churches, and even in some cases put us to death. But what they cannot do is keep us from one day gathering in a kingdom that is not of this world. God has promised to build His church and the gates of hell will not prevail. We should have great joy in knowing we are citizens of a city that cannot be moved. The Heidelberg Catechism question #1 asks, "What is your only comfort in life and death?"

It answers the question this way

That I am not my own, but belong with body and soul, both in life and in death,

to my **faithful Savior Jesus Christ**. He has fully **paid for all my sins**

with his precious blood and has **set me free from all the power of the devil**.

He also **preserves me** in such a way that without the **will of my heavenly Father**

not a hair can fall from my head; indeed, all things must work together for my salvation.

Therefore, by his **Holy Spirit** he also **assures me of eternal life** and **makes me heartily willing** and **ready**

from now on to live for him.

Puritan Richard Sibbes said “All earthly things are as salt water, that increase the appetite, but satisfy not!”

Think through this past week, what kingdom or kingdoms have we been investing in? The kingdoms of this world will leave us thirsty and never satisfied. We should be about the business of expanding God’s kingdom through the sharing of the gospel. Are we investing time, talent, or treasure in such activities? Are the posts on our social media accounts any indication of what kind of kingdoms we are living for?

So far, we have seen; God is our Refuge in times of Troubles and God’s people are a city not moved.

In these final verses in Psalm 46, we will see a Trust Vindicated.

III. A Trust Vindicated 8-11

Let us journey back one last time to the biblical story line that the psalmist used as the background for this Psalm. In 2 Kings 19:14 Hezekiah has just received a letter from Sennacherib telling him to surrender. Let us see how he responds

¹⁴ Hezekiah received the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it; and Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD AND spread it before the LORD. ¹⁵ Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said: “O LORD God of Israel, *the One* who dwells *between* the cherubim, you are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. ¹⁶ Incline Your ear, O LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, O LORD, and see; and hear the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. ¹⁷ Truly, LORD, the kings of Assyria have laid waste the nations and their lands, ¹⁸ and have cast their gods into the fire; for they *were* not gods, but the work of men’s hands—wood and stone. Therefore, they destroyed them. ¹⁹ Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You *are* the LORD God, You alone.”

Well there—it-- is, did you catch that? Did you see what Hezekiah did right there? **Faith**. Not Fear, but **Faith**. Hezekiah after all his poor attempts to fix this most difficult situation with the ineptest solutions, finally put his trust in the Lord for deliverance. He let go of trying to find refuge in other kingdoms and put his trust in a King whose kingdom will never be defeated.

Let us see how God answered His prayer in 2 Kings 19:35-36.

That night the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning--there were all the dead bodies! So, Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there.

In God's deliverance of His people, God vindicated Hezekiah's faith in His promises. God said, this is what I will do. Put your trust in me and watch me work. Hezekiah trusted God's promises and watched God work.

That is what verses 8-11 are all about. The Psalmist is telling us come watch, come behold, come marvel at the mighty works of God on the behalf of His people. He is the God who wipes out armies and makes wars to cease. He is the God who on one night, with one angel, wiped out 185,000 men. He is the Lord of Hosts. The one who has armies of angels at his command. He destroys His enemies with great precision and ease. He is the God who was with David when he faced Goliath, Daniel in the lion den, and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace. He is the One who says, "Be still and know that I am God", Which means "Lay down your arms and surrender." It is the gospel call to all the enemies of God, to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Just as Hezekiah's faith in God was vindicated through the defeat of His enemies, God vindicates our trust in Him as well.

The vindication of our faith is God's deliverance. Not from troubles, hardships, or trials. Although at times that may be true. But ultimately, He delivers us for sin, death, and hell. The object of our faith is Christ, and the reward of our faith is eternal life. A gift from faith is the Holy Spirit, which produces in us love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. At the cross of Christ, God vindicated the faith of His people by defeating all our enemies: the world, the flesh, the devil, sin, and death. These final verses teach us to see the glorious victory of God over all His enemies. We should live bold and unafraid lives because the Lord of hosts is with us. He will establish his kingdom forever, and not even the gates of hell will prevail against us.

God is our refuge in times of trouble, God's people are a city not moved, and God vindicates our trust in Him by destroying our enemies

Do you ever wish there were an emergency kit for times of trouble? Ten easy steps to handle adversity. Step by step instruction how to make it through hard times. God has given us so much more than an emergency kit. God has poured out His Spirit into the lives of all those who trust in Christ. God has given us His word, which is a lamp unto our feet and light unto

our path. Finally, He has given us the church as a place of refuge for those who need shelter from the storm. He uses all three to carry us through the most difficult times in life until we see Him face to face.

On a rainy night on October 30th, 1976 while driving 3X over the legal limit for alcohol, my father, Dennis Young crossed the center line and killed an 18-year-old passenger in the oncoming vehicle. For the previous 12 years of his life he had lived in the refuge of alcohol. That night, the refuge he had trusted in for so long was now the source of all his brokenness and trouble. The refuge that once helped him deal with life was now the same refuge that ended his marriage to my mom. One day when the withdrawals from alcohol got so bad, he began to shake violently and hallucinated. It was in his darkest moment when he cried to the Lord to save him. And God did. That day my dad surrendered his life to the Lord. That day he found refuge in the arms of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My dad never looked back after that day. He spent every minute sharing his faith with: Jailers, prisoners, co-workers; and anyone that would listen. Through it all my dad saw the faithfulness of the Lord. When I was 6 years old my mom and dad remarried. Soon after, my mom recommitted her life to Christ. Yes, his life at times was still full of hardships, heartaches, and trials but through it all he saw God's faithfulness to him and to his family. Before he died two years ago, you could find him at his shop "Young's Body Repair" telling someone about the one who rescued him in times of troubles. Christian, let us not forget we can face any trial with great confidence because God is with us!