

The Lord is our refuge

It is a small thing to God - His word is peace - We are His children - His promises are forever

Psalm 46:1-11 God *is* our refuge and strength, A very present help in trouble. ² Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; ³ *Though* its waters roar *and* be troubled, *Though* the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah ⁴ *There is* a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, The holy *place* of the tabernacle of the Most High. ⁵ God *is* in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn. ⁶ The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted. ⁷ The LORD of hosts *is* with us; The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah ⁸ Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth. ⁹ He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the 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 refuge. Selah

So the Coronavirus is all anyone is talking about. School is canceled for almost a month. Apparently all the toilet paper is gone from the stores. How is everyone feeling? scared, worried, confused, or upset? What are we to think and what are we to do? Many people are on TV saying this is very dangerous, very terrible. Others say it's not such a big deal. Who are we to listen to?

I can tell you that no matter how bad it is it is not a big deal. I can say that not because I'm a doctor or a nurse or know anything about the coronavirus but because of what our Psalm says. In our Psalm the mountains are falling. The sea is crashing. The earth is melting and the Psalmist shrugs his shoulders, so what he says, "The Lord of hosts is my refuge."

The coronavirus may be as bad as its hype of even worse or not nearly as bad. But no matter what it is not as bad as the earth melting all around us. And so I can tell you with assurance it is a small thing. It is a small thing in comparison to the strength of our God. It is a small thing in comparison to the Love of our God. It is a small thing for our Lord, and the Lord will take care of it.

It is a small thing and the it doesn't even matter. Today it is the coronavirus, yesterday it was SARS and before that housing market crash. Tomorrow it will be something different. But no matter what "it" is it is small compared to our Lord.

Therefore we will not fear, Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

The people of this world have nothing save this life only. When this life is threatened it is time for fear and panic. But we are different. We know that this life is only a journey, a boat ride, if it ends we will go home. This is not something to fear or avoid. It is something to look forward to.

Therefore the Psalmist is able to stand and eat popcorn while a great tidal wave builds up and is about to crash down. And on the other side of him the mountain is falling around him. It doesn't matter. It is a small thing for God to take care of.

Remember our Psalm from last week. "Even in a flood of great waters they will not come near you." The waves crash around us but we are safe in the rock, the refuge of our Lord.

The Sea roars, the river of God give peace

The psalmist makes a vivid contrast. On the one hand you have the water of the sea which are greatly troubled and turbulent, crashing and pounding, causing noise and destruction. On the other hand you have this quiet calm river. The sea creates fear. The river gives peace to the city of God

What a vivid contrast the psalmist paints between the words and attitude of sinful men and the word of God.

A little thing happens, whether it's a new disease or something else, and the media hypes it up. The stock market goes up and down. Some leaders start shouting doom. The borders are closed the airlines are empty. Some of these things may or may not be good ideas, but regardless of whether they are good ideas or not they stand in sharp contrast to the calm quiet voice of our Lord and shepherd.

I am your God. I am your king. I am your shepherd. I am your father. Come to me. I am a rock, a refuge, a sure and safe hiding place. Nothing will come near you. Nothing will touch you.

The voice of God is the quiet stream of peace.

Normally many would think and say just the opposite. They would say the word of God is judgmental and condemning. He won't let me live the way I want. The voice of the world is what I want to hear. The world lets me live the way I want. Do the things I want. Yet when even the smallest trouble comes, there is no comfort, no peace, no joy.

On the other hand we have the voice of God which does not hide truth from us but at the same time promises real solutions to all our problems.

The world says sin isn't real, we can live as we want and do what we want.

God says, "Yes sin is very real and you are a terrible sinner, but I sent my Son to die for you and save you."

The world says fifty years from now all life is going to die from global climate change.

God's word says "man is sinful and ruins everything with his sin, yet while the earth remains seed time and harvest shall not cease."

The world says plague, violence, wars, earthquakes etc.

God's word says, "I am your refuge, and you hiding place.

God's word is the peaceful river that gives joy to the people of God.

The city of God, the holy place of the most high

We see from the context that the city of God which is made joyful by this river is clearly a reference to the Church, that is the gathering of all believers. God will help her.

Anyone see that movie "John Q" starring Denzel Washington. In that movie the man's son was in terrible need of a transplant but John had lost his insurance without knowing. The hospital wasn't going to give the transplant. And so John ended up holding the hospital and doctor hostage at gun point to force them to give his son a transplant. John Q ended up in prison but his son got the transplant.

I think we can all sympathize with this man. What wouldn't you do for you children? Even if it means going to prison. How much more will not God do anything for us.

Matthew 7:11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

That is to say what wouldn't God our Father do for us?

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

"God will help her, "our psalmist says, "just at the break of dawn." That is to say, when things look their worst, when the night is darkest and coldest, when the enemy surrounds us and it looks as if there is no hope. Then will come the dawn of God's deliverance. Then shall the sun of God's salvation rise. That is not to say that God will purposely wait until everything looks as bad as possible. But if often seems to us that way. It seems to use like things are the worst they can be. There is no more hope. But God does come with His salvation.

The Lord of Hosts is With Us – that is the Lord who commands ten thousand times ten thousand angel armies. There is nothing that can stand against His armies. Not the smallest plague or the largest bomb. Elisha's servant saw those armies standing between him and the Syrians. Those same armies surround us.

The God of Jacob is our refuge

You remember the story of Jacob. How he spent the night on the east side of the river, in fear all night of what would happen when he saw his brother Esau again. And the Lord appeared to him that night and Jacob wrestled with the Lord. And Jacob grabbed on to the Lord and would not let him go until he blessed him. And the Lord said to Jacob you have wrestled with God and you have won. Why? Because Jacob held on to the promises of God.

As Jacob won by grasping the promises of God so also we can win with His promises. The promises of God surround us like a fortress. They lift us up in every situation they keep us safe and well. We come back to the promises of God and we build our life upon them.

Be still, and know that I *am* God

That is to say, be at peace. Don't worry. I am your God.

The word translated "be still" here literally means, to be lazy. Sit back in your lawn chair with your lemonade and favorite book, or in your easy chair with the game. So what if the world is falling apart outside, "I am your God, I am your shepherd," says the Lord.

When it is time for the war to end I will speak and it will cease. When it is time for the plague to be done it will be done.

The problems of this world including the coronavirus are a small thing. They are a small thing in comparison to the problem of our sin and the Lord has taken care of that. They are a small thing in comparison to the Lord's strength. They are a small thing in comparison to death and the devil and the Lord has defeated them all.

This too will pass like a blade of grass in the field. It is here today and gone tomorrow. It may be that before it passes some of us will go home to be with our Savior, it may not. But that is always true. More importantly nothing, not the smallest virus or the greatest storm, will ever touch a hair of our head without God allowing it. Nothing can separate us from the Love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen