



## Mother's Day



# The Lord of Hosts is With Us

## A Sermon on Psalm 46

### **Psalms 46** (English Standard Version)

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,

<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

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

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

<sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD,  
how he has brought desolations on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the chariots with fire.

<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"

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

## Introduction

The past few weeks we've been focusing on the events that unfolded following Jesus' resurrection. We saw Jesus present himself alive to the disciples on the first day of his resurrection. He then returned one week later on the following Sunday and appeared to them a second time. He did this particularly for the benefit of Thomas, who had been absent at his first appearance. The second appearance was in order to solidify Thomas' faith.

Then we watched as Jesus revealed himself His disciples on the shore of the sea of Galilee, just as he had promised before his crucifixion.<sup>1</sup> Then, last week, we listened in on the conversation Jesus had with Peter after breakfast that morning. Peter reaffirmed his love for Jesus and Jesus reassured Peter that despite his failure (in denying Jesus), he would still be useful to Jesus in caring for his people. Jesus sweetly and kindly made clear to Peter that He still loved Him and commissioned Him to care for His flock. From that conversation we learn that Jesus still loves his children despite our failures. He knows in advance all of our weaknesses and future failures and yet He chooses to lavish His love on us anyway!

Jesus is amazing. Jesus is risen.

And Jesus is with His people today! And we see this truth in the words of Psalm 46. This week, I read the words of psalm 46, and they were like water to my thirsty soul. I pray these words will be water to your soul, as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 14:28; 16:7.

## I. God Is Present (vs. 1-3)

Psalms 46 is divided into three stanzas, with each concluding with the word '*selah*,' which is a Hebrew musical term that indicates a pause. Thus, we will consider this psalm in three portions. The first stanza is verses one through three. In it, the psalmist highlights the stabilizing presence of God against the instability of present in the world.

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Verse one proclaims the truth that **God is present with his people**. He simply *is*. He is present as **refuge**. He is present as **strength**. He is present as **help in trouble**. He is present in all three of these ways. He *is* now. He is not past, but He is present. He is, not was. He is with his people—always present, even now, and today. He *IS* present. He is here. He is not distant. He is near. He is present, with me as I speak and with you as you listen. He is with us.

### He Is Present Even If We Think or Feel He Is Not

God is present even though we may think or feel like He is not present. His presence is declared to be a fact that is independent of our experience. His presence is a fact that does not require you or I to affirm it in order for it to be true. This means that even if God does not feel to you like He is present, yet He *is* present nonetheless. Remember the words of Jacob,

Genesis 28:16 (ESV)

"Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it."

God's ability to be present is not contingent upon any human awareness of the fact. He *is* here, "in this place," whether we know it or not. But we ought to know this and take comfort in this sweet fact. We ought to treasure this truth. God is present with His people.

### He Is Present As Refuge

How is God present to his people? He is present to them as a **refuge**. He is a place of shelter and safety from the storm. When it is time to *retreat*, we go to Him as a place of refuge. When we are wounded and weary, God is present to us as a place of refuge. When we cannot advance, we retreat and seek refuge in Him. When we are weak and need to remove ourselves from the battle, it is to Him that we flee. He is our refuge. When our body is weak and our soul is weary, we run to Him for rest. And, like David, we fling ourselves into His strong arms and,

Psalms 131:2 (ESV)

"...calm and quieted my soul like weaned child with his mother."

When any child needs refuge, he almost always chooses to run to his mother. When we are sick, we want mother. When my son is away at college and he gets sick, he always calls his mother. He never calls me. I have yet to receive one phone call from him saying, "Dad, I'm tired and achy and my nose is running and I have a slight fever, what should I do?" No. I do not receive those calls. Only his mother has the privilege of that kind of call for refuge. From where do mothers get that quality? They get it from God. Mothers are uniquely endowed with the quality to be a place of refuge for their children by God Himself, because HE is the ultimate place of refuge.

Today is Mother's Day. We should all thank God for the mother's He has given us. And we should praise Him for revealing some of His own qualities to us through the way in which a mother cares for and loves her children.

### He Is Present As Strength

God is also present to His children as **strength**. He is a provider of strength. God is the source of and possessor of all power. Thus He is the greatest and best provider of strength. He is a means of **advance**. When God's people need to move forward, He is present to provide power and strength to do so. After having been present to His people as a refuge, God also is present to His people to give them strength to stand up again, leave the refuge, and return to the battle.

Psalms 73:26 (ESV)

God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

God is present to His people as strength.

### He Is Present As Help In Trouble

Furthermore, God is present to **help in trouble**. God is with his people to *help in times of trouble*. 'Trouble' is certainly an apt descriptor of the days in which we live, isn't it? Job said it best,

Job 14:1 (ESV)

"Man who is born of a woman is few of days and full of trouble."

God is not absent when trouble is present. Rather, He is present to His people to help them *through* the trouble. God's help in trouble does not always result in the immediate removal of the trouble, but rather by providing daily grace to sustain you through it.<sup>2</sup> He does not

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<sup>2</sup> See 2 Cor. 12:9.

promise to prevent us from entering the valley of the shadow of death, but He does promise to be there with us to help us through it. Whatever the trouble may be, God is present to his children—those who have surrendered to Him and received His Spirit—to help them in the trouble.

If you are His child, then He is with you in trouble at work. He is with you in the trouble and fear of failing health or even or dying because of coronavirus. He is with His people in the trouble of loss of income. He is with us in trouble at home; in relational trouble between husband and wife or parents and children. If you are His child, then He is with you in trouble. And He is not merely present, doing nothing. He is present in trouble, to **help**! He is “a very present *help* in trouble.”

### Because God is Present, We Ought Not Fear Instability

Because God is with us, **therefore** we ought not to fear in the midst of this unstable world. The presence of God in the lives of His children, ought to provide an unshakably sure foundation for the stability of our souls. The sovereign God who created and reigns over all this world is the same God who is with us. That fact ought to drive fear out from our souls. If our hope is in this world alone, then we have everything to fear. However, if our hope is in God alone, then we nothing to fear.

This world is an unstable world. We think the earth is stable, but it isn't. We think mountains are stable and unmovable, but they are not. There are days when the mountains move. The good people of New Hampshire thought the Old Man of the Mountain would give way, but on May 3, 2003 his face fell off.

There are many people who live on the coast of California and along the shoreline of Lake Michigan who built their homes upon what they thought was stable ground, but over the past few years they have watched their back yards, their homes, and apartment buildings fall into the sea as the ground beneath gives way and is beaten down by continual crashing waves.

There is nothing stable in the city of man. We may think that our health is stable, but we can discover in a single visit to the doctor that it has given way to disease. We may think our finances are stable, but in a single day the markets can crash and we discover that our wealth has given way to loss. We can think our education is stable, but in a single moment we receive an email and discover that we cannot return to class. We can think that our relationships are stable, but in a single moment we can discover that stability has given way to unfaithfulness and infidelity. We can think our jobs are stable, but in a single second we can receive notice that our employment has given way to unemployment.

If your faith and confidence are in the unstable things of this world, then certainly you will be filled with fear. If your hope and trust are found only in the city of man, then certainly you will be filled with fear.

However, if your faith and confidence is in stable presence of the God who is with you, then you need not fear. And if your hope and trust is in God, who is near, who is with you in trouble, then fear need not dominate your days.

By faith let all the children of God say, “Even though the earth itself gives way and the highest mountains collapse into the depths of the roaring, raging, overflowing sea, we the people of God will not fear. Rather, we will calm and quiet our souls in You, O God, who is near.”

## II. God Is Present to Give Gladness and Grant Deliverance

The second stanza, vs. 4-7, highlights the fact that God is present to give gladness and grant deliverance. The psalmist now contrasts the unhappiness in the city of man over against the gladness in the city of God.

Psalm 46:4-7 (ESV)

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

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

<sup>6</sup> The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

### The Gladness of God's Presence

The city of man is like a joyless, salty sea that swells and foams uncontrollably as nations rage against each other. However, the kingdom of God is like a peaceful, controlled river that flows gently through a city, giving life and gladness to all who are nourished by its sweet waters.

Whereas the mountains of men totter and are moved into the sea, the city of God is *unmovable*, because God is in the midst of it. The city of God shall not be moved. Whereas the city of man brings fear and unrest, the city of God yields gladness and deliverance.

The cities of men are full of loud raging and competing kingdoms, while the city of God is full of peace and protection. There is no joy in the city of man, but there is gladness forevermore in the city of God—because he is with us!

### Deliverance Comes at Dawn (v.5)

The fact that help comes “*when morning dawns*,” points to the fact the God is at work even when we can't see what He is doing. The LORD of hosts is working deliverance for his people

even while they must lay down their work and rest. While the righteous sleep, God is working their deliverance. God never sleeps. God never tires, thus he works protection and provision even while, from our perspective, nothing is happening. While God's people are unable to work, due to lack of light, the night does not hinder Him from progressing His plan.

Psalm 121:4

"He who keeps watch over Israel does not slumber or sleep."

People of God, do not fear. Deliverance will come at just the right time. God is never late. Be patient through the dark nights of long, lonely waiting. God has not forgotten you. The **LORD of Hosts is with you**. Even in the dark He is at work effecting your deliverance and only when morning dawns we will have light enough to see what He has been up to. At the moment when the night seems darkest, and all hope is lost, just then the morning will dawn and you will see the deliverance God has worked.

The point is this, where God is there is peace, stability, gladness, and help. Where He is not, there is only strife, instability, fear, and raging. The city of God will never be moved, while the city of man will never be still. The central difference between the two cities is the presence of God in the one and not the other. At the conclusion of the stanza, the psalmist then grounds his readers once again in the presence of God.

Psalm 46:7 (ESV)

"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

### III. God Is Present to Give Peace and Evoke Worship (v.8-11)

The third stanza covers verses 8-11. Here, the psalmist invites the activation of your imagination. He wants us to ponder and behold the wondrous works and power of the sovereign God of Jacob in order to bring peace and evoke worship.

**Psalm 46:8-11(ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD,  
how he has brought desolations on the earth.  
<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;  
he burns the chariots with fire.  
<sup>10</sup> "Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"  
<sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our fortress. *Selah*

## Desolations that Bring Peace

First, behold that God works desolation in order to bring peace. The psalmist invites the people of God to recall the times when *“he has brought desolations on the earth.”* Most likely he’s referring to times when God’s judgments have brought desolation to the enemies of the people of God, such as Egypt. Recall that Pharaoh’s servants said to him,

Exodus 10:7 (ESV)

“How long shall this [Moses] be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not yet understand that Egypt is ruined?”

The plagues sent by God had destroyed the nation of Egypt. The land of Egypt was completely desolate because of God’s judgments against them.

God did a similar thing to the Ethiopians. Zera, the king of the Ethiopians, came against Israel with an army of one million men, while Asa, king of Israel, only had 580,000. Asa cried out to God for help and the LORD defeated the million man army, even though Israel was outnumbered nearly 2 to 1 (2 Chron. 14:9-15). Israel ended up victorious, not because they had the better army, but *because God was with them!*

Once again, God did the same with the Assyrians. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came against Jerusalem during the reign of Hezekiah. Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance and that night God sent one angel who in one night destroyed the entire 185,000 men of the Assyrian army. Israel ended up victorious, not because they were stronger, but rather, because the *LORD of hosts was with them!*

Behold the works of God, how He brought desolation on the armies of the enemies of His people. With the desolations of the enemies, the people of God enjoy peace.

## He Makes Wars to Cease (v.9)

When thinking about such instances, it is easy to imagine why the next line would be, *“he makes wars to cease.”* When God chooses to exercise His power, neither man nor army of men, can successfully oppose Him. When God fights for His people, the battle is over. When Yahweh of hosts fights for his children, He *“breaks the bow, shatters the spear, and burns the chariots [of the enemies] with fire.”* Behold the works of the LORD. Ponder the power of the Almighty. Stand in awe of Him and worship Him.

When the Egyptian army went into the Red Sea after the Israelites, God caused the walls of water on their right and on their left to collapse in upon them so that the entire Egyptian army was desolated. Israel had nothing to do but stand and watch. Moses said to the Israelites that day,

Exodus 14:13-14 (ESV)

And Moses said to the people, "Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent."

Exodus 14:17-18 (ESV)

"...I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. And the Egyptians will know that I am LORD..."

### Behold... Be Still, and Worship

If we were to truly be able to "*behold the works of the LORD*," we would each be struck silent in awestruck wonder and worship. This is God's purpose in working wonders among his people, *that He be worshiped*. This is God's purpose in walking His children through such troubling situations; that we would be still and He would be worshiped.

When we consider His power and His might, His sovereignty and His glory, then we are left completely speechless. Thus, the psalmist's next line, and the very words of God Himself,

Psalms 46:10 (ESV)

"Be still, and know that I am God.  
I will be exalted among the nations,  
I will be exalted in the earth!"

The stillness or worship is the proper response to "beholding the works of God." God works wonders in this world so that His name will be exalted and He would be worshiped among all nations of the earth. God hardened pharaoh's heart and the hearts of all the Egyptians in that day, desolating them in the Red Sea, so that His name would be worshiped and exalted in all the earth.<sup>3</sup> God said to Pharaoh,

Exodus 9:15-16 (ESV)

"For by now I could have put out my hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, and you would have been cut off from the earth. But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."

God prolonged the plagues in Egypt so that His name and His power would be proclaimed and cherished in all the earth. God walked with Israel through all that trouble so they would be still and know that there is no God like Him. There is no other god than Yahweh. He is the one true and living God and all the nations of the earth need to know this.

Let us be still of talking about our own strength and invite people to behold His strength. Let us stop inviting the world to take refuge in America and start inviting them to take refuge in the

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<sup>3</sup> See Ex. 14:17-18.

God of Jacob. Let us be still about how great we are and be steadfast in pointing out how great He is. Let us be still about striving to satisfy our own souls with our own ways and rather be delighted that God gives us eternal pleasures, if we would but go to Him in faith. Let us be still about trying to manufacture our own peace and instead turn to Yahweh of hosts to find His true and eternal peace. Let us still our hearts before the sovereign God and allow Him to melt away all our fear.

How are we to do these things? Because of verse 11.

Psalm 46:11 (ESV)  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our fortress.

Yahweh of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is with His people. This is the main point of this psalm. ***God is with his people who love Him and worship Him.***

God was with Jacob. One of Jacob's sons, descended from him down the line, was a man named Yeshua, which in Hebrew, means "Yahweh saves." We call him Jesus. God was with Jesus. Even His enemies acknowledged this fact.<sup>4</sup>

This Jesus, after He died and was resurrected from the dead, told His disciples, "*I am with you always*" (Mt. 28:20). Since Jesus defeated death, and now lives forever, there is nothing that can keep Him from keeping His promise. After making this promise, He ascended into heaven and received from the Father the right to pour out on man, His own Holy Spirit. Jesus earned the right to give His Holy Spirit to all who would call upon His name in faith and in truth. Thus, to everyone who believes in God through Jesus, He gives the gift of His Holy Spirit.

Romans 5:5 (ESV)  
God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Thus, the Spirit of God dwells within the heart and soul of all true believers in Jesus. This is the greatest gift in all the world. This is how it is true today that "God is with us." Yahweh is with us and within us because Jesus has poured His Spirit within the heart of all believers.

How great is the God who would show such kindness to such unworthy persons! How great is the Savior who would pour out within His children, His own Spirit! How great is the Son who would give us such hope! How kind is He who say to us today, "I am always with you!"

Church, the Lord is with you. He is with you today. Won't you praise Him for all these things? Praise Him with me.

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<sup>4</sup> John 3:2.