

ESF Lord's Day service message
11/15/2015

The Anchor in the Storm

Psalm 46:1-11

God is our refuge and strength,

an ever-present help in trouble.

² *Therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

³ *though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.*

⁴ *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

⁵ *God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*

⁶ *Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

⁷ *The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

⁸ *Come and see the works of the LORD,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

⁹ *He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields 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 Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

There are storms in our lives from which nothing, no one can protect us.
But Psalm 46 provides an anchor that protects us from all storms.

After ten years of leading the Reformation, a series of health problems assaulted Martin Luther. In April, 1527, a dizzy spell struck him while preaching. Things got worse. By July he wondered if he had long to live. He regained some strength, then was assaulted with depression, heart problems, and severe intestinal complications. At one point he wrote, "I spent more than a week in death and hell. My entire body was in pain. I labored under the vacillations and storms of desperation and blasphemy against God." That sounds like Job, who was tempted to "curse God and die."

Then the black plague struck Germany. His year old son became seriously ill. At that time, the 46th Psalm became his favorite. It inspired Martin Luther to write, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The hymn is so compelling that, ironically, it became a suggested hymn for Catholic Masses, appearing in the second edition of the Catholic Book of Worship, published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

When Martin Luther read Psalm 46 he wrote, "We sing this Psalm to the praise of God, because God is with us, and powerfully and miraculously preserves and defends his church and his word, against all fanatical spirits, against the gates of hell, against the implacable hatred of the devil, and against all the assaults of the world, the flesh and sin."

Anchor on God's refuge

The Psalmist describes storms in our lives in verses 2 and 3: *...the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, ...its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

Something immovable like the earth and the mountains is suddenly toppled. The word "roar," means something "tumultuous." It has the idea of something being shaken or moved in a violent manner so as to crush or be destroyed. It is like the waves of the sea beating against the

base of a cliff with enough force and regularity that the cliff eventually erodes and falls into the sea.

Sometimes the things we depend on, the things which are apparently immovable and dependable, are suddenly gone. We depend on them, and they topple and disappear. All our hopes and dreams may be washed away.

But, the Psalmist says, even if such things happen, he would still have hope.

Why? The answer is found in the first word in verse two: “*therefore.*” What does it mean? It means “on the basis of what has just been said.” And here is what has just been said: *God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.*

A refuge is a shelter that provides protection from all kinds of storms in our lives. When we seek refuge in God, He provides us with a place to run, a place to hide. Deuteronomy 33:27 contains this awesome, encouraging truth: *The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.*

In stormy times, some may depend on friends, strong people, or government. But our God is a far better refuge than any of these. When friends or strong people can't give us refuge and strength, God still can give us refuge and strength. When our government can't give us any help, God still can bring help for us.

At the time when the Israelites came out of Egypt, after traveling in the desert for a while, they arrived at a place near the promised land. Moses sent 12 spies to explore the land and check out its situation. The spies found out that the people in the land were tall and strong. The walls of the cities which protected the land was thick and formidable. Then they came back and gave their report. Ten out of 12 spies said that the land

was so difficult and people were so strong that they would not be able to enter the land. The other 2 spies said that they could fight and win over the strong people and enter the land. How could the 2 spies be so confident and courageous? The confidence and courage came from their faith that God is their refuge and strength.

You can be confident and courageous whenever you trust that God is your refuge and strength in all troubles. It does not matter what form the trouble takes, or how it is delivered, or how long it stays. God alone is our accessible, protected place of refuge and retreat. If we trust in God's protection nothing can come to us unless it comes through Him first.

Have you ever felt hopeless because everything you depend on has gone? Have you ever gotten scared by some storm in your life?

God wants you to trust that He is your refuge and strength. When you seek refuge and strength in Him, He will anchor you on His refuge and strength.

Anchor on God's Provision

In the storms of life, we can anchor on God's provision. This Psalm explains God's provision by way of a river in the city of God: *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.*

In ancient times, rivers were very valuable resources. They were essential to sustaining people's lives. They made agriculture possible and facilitated trade with other cities.

But the problem for the Israelites was that their capital city Jerusalem didn't have a river. However, this word gives promise that the city that

does not have a natural river will have a river by God's grace. It actually happened at the time of king Hezekiah.

2 Chronicles 32:30 tells us that king Hezekiah made a water channel to provide water to the city of Jerusalem. His project would provide an endless supply of water to the city even during siege. There was a spring called Gihon. It was just outside Jerusalem and never dried up. Hezekiah had that spring stopped up, then he built a tunnel through 1,749 feet of solid rock, through which the waters of the Spring of Gihon could flow. He channeled the water through an underground tunnel so that Jerusalem could have water even through a long siege.

If we are the people of God, if we are residents of the city of God, God will provide the water, the essential source of life. God's provision never dries up like the spring of Gihon. It is deeply hidden like Hezekiah's Tunnel. The Lord was in the midst of that underground water source. And He provided what was needed. He provides a river for us in times of crisis! And just like Jerusalem's river, it's flowing on the inside. The Lord has provided us with Living Water! We can depend on the river of God even during times of severe drought.

Jeremiah calls God "*the spring of living water*" (Jeremiah 17:13). Jesus said to a Samaritan woman who was living without hope with many troubles, "*but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life*" (John 4:14). Then Jesus further affirms that the Holy Spirit is the living water: ... "*If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.*" By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive. .. (John 7:37-39).

Do you need an everlasting provision in all circumstances? Trust and seek the living water of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to pour his living water on your life.

When you depend on outside resources to find security, your life will be broken into pieces in stormy times. Because all resources outside of God can be cut off and lost. But if you anchor your life on God's river, you can receive secure provisions even if you lose everything on the outside.

That is why the Psalmist says in Psalm 20:7-8, "*Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They are brought to their knees and fall, but we rise up and stand firm.*"

Anchor on God's control

When storms hit our lives, we can anchor on God who is in control of all storms. The Psalmist declares God who is in control of all things this way: *He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; breaks the bow and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.*

Wars are symbols of the worst trouble we face in this world. Often wars in this world seem to be out of control. Our problems seem to be out of control. But today's word declares that God is in control of all wars, and in all our troubles. God is in charge of everything and every event that happens in this world and He knows what He is doing.

Then why does God not get rid of all wars from our lives? If He is in control of all things, why can't He prevent us from falling into so many troubles?

God's control is not the absence of trouble, but strength and peace that enable us to overcome all troubles.

A trouble free life is not a blessing. It can bring more harm than benefit

to our lives. Researchers at the University of California at Berkeley did an experiment sometime ago that involved introducing an amoeba into a perfectly stress-free environment. Ideal temperature, optimal concentration of moisture, constant food supply-the amoeba had an environment to which it had to make no adjustment whatsoever. So you would guess that would make a happy little amoeba. Whatever it is that gives amoebas ulcers and high blood pressure was gone.

Yet, oddly enough, it died.

There is something essential about all living creatures, even amoebas that is needed to maintain healthy life. A healthy life demands challenge through some troubles. To maintain our lives healthy, we need challenge through troubles in the same way we require food and air. A trouble free life will make us weak and eventually kill us.

That is why Jesus said, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). Jesus never promised trouble free life but life in peace and power to overcome all troubles.

After the Israelites escaped from slavery in Egypt, they ended up at the Red Sea. They were sandwiched between Pharaoh’s army and the sea. They neither had power to fight the Egyptian army nor any way to cross over the sea. The situation was out of their control. They were terrified. But Moses had faith in God who was still in control. He said, *“Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still”*(Exodus 14:13-14). As Moses trusted, God provided a way of deliverance for them.

Through this event, God proves that He is in control of all things. Our confidence cannot be shaken in the midst of a storm, because we have

God who is in complete control. When we trust that God is in control of all our troubles, we can be still in the midst of troubles.

William Carey, who is called the father of modern missions, began his missionary career to India in 1793. He served the Lord in that country for 40 years, never once returning to his home in England. And throughout those years he translated portions of the Bible into over a dozen Indian languages.

But one afternoon, after 20 years of hard labor, a fire raged throughout his printing plant and warehouse. All of his printing equipment was destroyed and most of his precious manuscripts. Obviously, in that day there were no computer back-up copies or even photocopies kept somewhere else. Tragically, 20 years of non-stop labor was gone within a few hours.

Many people would have been devastated over the loss, but not William Carey. This is what he wrote to his pastor friend, Andrew Murray, in England:

"The ground must be labored over again, but we are not discouraged. We have all been supported under the affliction, and preserved from discouragement. To me the consideration of the divine sovereignty and wisdom has been very supporting." Then he quoted from Psalm 46:10, where the Lord Himself says, "Be still and know that I am God." Carey found peace and strength in God's sovereign plan for his own life, even if it included times of devastating loss.

We can find the same thing if we return to the Lord. God may not take you out of the storm, but He will give you peace in the storms of life. God converts discord into concord. He repairs broken relationships and causes them to be stronger as a result of His reconciliations. Let the Lord bring peace to the conflicts in your mind. Be still and wait for His deliverance.