

# **Be Still** and know that I am God

Psalm 46

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Pastor Jim Rademaker

Last Sunday, we were nearing the end of the church calendar year. The conclusion to the season of Pentecost, where the Good News of Jesus as a Savior for sinners has gone out into the world; the power of God to birth faith in our hearts, restoring our relationship with Him, bringing us eternal life!

This Sunday we've come to the last Sunday in the church year. Next Sunday is New Year's Day in the church. A new year with Christ, beginning with His Advent! Anticipating His coming to us in the flesh. God *with us* - as a babe in a feeding trough. But this Sunday is the END of the End. Anticipating Christ's yet *second* coming. God, not as a babe, but in His full power and glory!

... *"And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Truly troubling times, unlike anything we've ever seen or can possibly imagine.*

*And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."* (Luke 21)

As you live in these last troubling days, you're not to be pessimistic, but hopeful. Filled with optimism. Jesus gives a picture. The fig tree in spring, and all the trees. The world (in all its moral decay) may be sitting in the dead of winter. The whole planet (its people and plants and animals and environment), all of creation (the sun, moon, stars, planets and galaxies) groaning, as in labor pains. But the sign Jesus gives to those believing in Him, is not a sign of death, but of life. Summer is near, *even* in the dead of winter.

**"When?"** That's the question the disciples ask Jesus. "When will this happen?" The same question people have been asking ever since. But that's *not* the question Jesus ever answers. Instead, what does He say? *"See that you are not led astray.* These last troubling days we're living in, are not days for speculation, for panic, for anxiety, for uncertainty. They're days for alertness, for readiness, for expectation, for hopeful endurance.

Trouble. We all have it. Trouble comes to everyone at some point. Trouble at home, in our closest relationships. Trouble outside the home, with others, in our community, in our world. Trouble in our minds. Troubled hearts.

But, good thing "God doesn't give us more than we can handle?" Right? When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers about the trouble he was in, what did he say? "We were never worried for a second. After all, God won't give us more than we can handle." No. He said, *"For we do not want you to be unaware, brothers, of the affliction we experienced in Asia. For we were so utterly burdened beyond our strength that we despaired of life itself."*

*More than they could handle. Far more. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death. It was over! But that was to make us rely, not on ourselves, but on God, who raises the dead.* (2 Cor 1:8-9) ... who does the impossible!

As the Psalmist writes in times of trouble, facing the impossible, more than we can possibly handle: **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**

Six hundred of Pharaoh's fastest chariots approaching, his full army following behind. The full force of Egypt closing in. And the Israelites - the slave nation - trapped between Pharaoh and the Sea.

... *the Midianites and the Amalekites and the people of the East would come up against them. 4 They would encamp against them and devour the produce of the land, as far as Gaza, and leave no sustenance in Israel and no sheep or ox or donkey. ... so that they laid waste the land ....* (Judges 6)

*I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. My eye wastes away because of grief ...* (Psalm 6)

**God** is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. This Psalm could have provided comfort for God's people during many troubling days in Israel's history. But the scope of the Psalm extends, far beyond any one fulfillment in history. Ultimately, the peace established by Jesus and by His return one day, completes the fulfillment of this Psalm, for them and for us.

As followers of Jesus, we can remain calm, even in the midst of the greatest calamities, since God is our strong fortress. HIS help is ever-present, even to the end of the world. *2 Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, 3 though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.*

The upheavals described in these verses may represent *all* of the various kinds of calamities that strike us in our world. All of these are *signs*. Signs of the End. However, these verses will be fulfilled *literally* and *completely* on the Last Day, when the entire universe is destroyed by fire.

**2 Peter 3:7** ... *the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.*

What's more solid and sure than the earth and its mountains? But these too, will be dissolved one day. Even then, followers of Jesus will be *secure*; secure in the hand of God. Christ's appearance will be a cause for joy, not dread. Something to look forward to, with hopeful endurance. As Jesus said, "*When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" (Luke 21:28) (The People's Commentary)

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

The heavens and the earth *can* be shaken. One day, they will be shaken; destroyed. But **God's city** cannot fall. The city of God is the **church**, especially as it is at *peace* in heaven. The scene is described in Revelation 21.

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*

*And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."*

An eternal home. A strongly fortified city, in which God's people dwell in complete security.

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God .... As the waters of the sea of life are restless and dangerous, the river of God is peaceful and life-giving. **John 4:13** Jesus said to her ... whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

The river reminds us of the rivers of Eden that sustained life there. In this Psalm and in Revelation, the river represents the life-giving power of God that will sustain us, now, and throughout eternity. Revelation 22:1-5 describes our eternal home as a *new Eden*, watered by the river of the water of life. **Revelation 22** *Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city ...*

Since God's *Word* sustains our faith, it's often compared to waters of life, sustaining our faith now. Nevertheless, the *ultimate* fulfillment of the promises of these verses will come only in the new heavens and new earth.

(The People's Commentary)

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

**John 14** - *Let not your hearts be troubled.* Why not? Why *shouldn't* we let our hearts be troubled? Isn't there plenty of reason to be troubled? Isn't there a lot to be troubled about? The present state of affairs? The future? This world can be a pretty scary place at times! Trouble comes to everyone at some point. No one escapes it. If

you're not having a bad day today, just wait. You will. And then, what will you do? Where will you turn? Wouldn't it be good to have something to trust, *someone* to turn to? In times when everything seems to be shaking, unsteady, changing, wouldn't it be good to have something to depend upon, *someone* to depend on?

*"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe. Believe in God; believe also in Me."*

Remember Paul's troubling thorn in the flesh that he prayed to God to take away? What was God's response? *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 10 For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.* (1 Corinthians 12:9-10)

When everything around you might cause you to doubt and be troubled and fearing, don't give up. Don't be let astray. Hold on in faith. *Be still, and know that I am God. ... The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.* Or, as the psalmist says in Psalm 62, *For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.* (Ps 62:5)

As the people of Jerusalem could take comfort from the Psalm when they were surrounded by hostile armies, so we too can take comfort through any danger, even to the end of the world.

**1 Peter 1:3-7** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith - of greater worth than gold ... may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed!*

As the songs goes, *"Be still my soul the Lord is on thy side. Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide. In every change He faithful will remain. Be still my soul thy best, thy heavenly friend. Through thorny ways leads to a joyful end!"*

**BE STILL** and know that I am God. Our Refuge and Strength.