

Psalm 46

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[0 : 00] Well, Christ the King, it is so good to be worshiping with you all. I think I said this the last time I was here, but it is such a wonderful reminder when we are all able to come together and when you have a guest preacher or you have a guest group of people like the Grove Church Launch Team, which is up front here.

It is just such a good reminder of how big the kingdom of God is and how big the church is. So this morning we are going to be preaching from Psalm 46, but I'd like to start by telling a story of my week this week.

On Thursday night, I sat in my bed and it was 3 a.m. I was wide awake and I was staring into the darkness of my room and I was petting my dogs.

My chest felt tight and my mind was racing with questions. A million what-ifs.

What if I let my team down? What if I'm not a good enough leader? What if the Grove Church fails?

[1 : 11] What if I can't finish this sermon by Sunday? What if I can't pay my bills? What if my wife or children fall ill?

What if? The weight of worry pressed down on me at that moment. Now, funny enough, I don't struggle with anxiety typically.

But similar when you pray for patience in preparation of preaching this sermon, I had gotten more than I asked for.

What happened to me from Thursday through Friday is not unique. In fact, it's alarmingly common. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States.

They affect 40 million Americans. That's nearly 18% of the population. This struggle is shared by many.

[2 : 20] Our world today is one of constant connectivity. We all know this to be true, but it comes with a never-ending barrage of information, demands, and expectations.

The average American checks their phone 96 times a day. That is once every 10 minutes. And each glance brings a new reason to worry.

Whether it be breaking news or the comparisons that we make on social media between, Am I doing as well as that person? Oh, it's been a while since I was able to take my family on a vacation. Or our work emails or a personal to-do list that just keeps expanding, growing and growing, never really being finished.

Not able to shrink. The result is a society that is more anxious and stressed than ever before. You do not need to know the stats to understand this.

In fact, could you just do me a favor in this moment? I want you to answer a question in your head. How are you doing? How are you doing?

[3 : 32] Now, how many of you included something in your answer about your level of busyness and or productivity? And if you didn't this morning, how many would typically would answer that question Monday through Friday?

Well, I'm pretty busy, but this is what I'm getting done. Every single one of us would do that. Nearly 80% of adults are feeling significant stress over the future of our nation.

Shocker. It's an election year. Financial pressures, health concerns, political division, the relentless pace of our modern life, all have contributed to what many are calling an epidemic of anxiety.

And it's not just affecting our adults. Our children and teenagers are feeling it too. Many more schools than ever are reporting the troubles of our youth with the pressure of academic achievement, social media, and the feeling of an uncertain future.

In moments like the one that I had on Thursday, when the weight of worry feels unbearable, the world offers many solutions. We've all seen the self-help books.

[4 : 49] We've all seen meditation guiding apps. Heck, one of Apple's features, new features a few years ago, was a reminder on an Apple Watch to take a moment and breathe. Even our technology knows that there's something wrong.

And deep down we know that we are not going to find true peace in temporary distractions or surface-level solutions. We need a solution that addresses the depth of our soul's distress. We need something, someone stronger, steadier, and more secure. In this broken world, we need Jesus, our Christ, our God.

Psalm 46 speaks directly to our anxious hearts. God calls us to be still and know that I am God. It's exactly what this morning is.

It's an opportunity to be still and know that He is God. He will hold and He does hold the world and our lives in His very hands.

[6 : 00] This passage is a reassurance that God is our refuge and strength. He is ever-present as a helper in our trouble. And when everything feels unstable, God is our fortress.

He is in control and the one that we can rely on. This morning we will be still and work through Psalm 46. We will discover how this song of praise exposes a reprieve and a deep abiding peace that only comes from knowing God and trusting in His unshakable presence.

Amid our anxious society, amid money problems, amid losing your job, losing your significant other, physical pain or illness or relationship difficulty, amid leaving a perfectly healthy church to plant a new church, like the Grove Launch Team is doing, Psalm 46 reminds us that we are not alone and that we find our true and lasting security in God.

Did you catch that? God is our true and lasting security. Now with our minds on the weight of anxiety that presses down on so many of us, we turn to the words of Psalm 46.

The sermon is going to be in three major sections and each time we come into a section, I'm going to read the text associated with that. So for the first reading, we have Psalm 46, 1 through 3.

[7 : 31] God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear through the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

Psalm 46 begins with an affirmation. It says, God is our refuge and strength. Our refuge or our strength is a place of safety, where people flee when danger threatens.

It is a place of security where the enemies of our world, the enemies of Christ, of the way we believe and think and feel, they cannot reach us.

Anxiety in your mind cannot be reached either. The psalmist used this imagery to convey that God is the place of safety for His people. When life's storm rages, when the pressures of the world become too much to bear, God is our refuge.

He is the one we can run to, knowing that within His protection we are secure. God is not just a place of safety. He is also our strength.

[8 : 52] God empowers us to face the challenges ahead. We all need to hear this. God is not just a place we retreat to. He is our refuge, yes.

But He also provides the strength we need to move forward. In our strength, we often find ourselves overwhelmed, paralyzed by fear, and unsure of what to do next.

But God's strength is made perfect in our weakness. And when we feel like we can't go on, God's strength enables us to persevere, to push on, to push through.

The verse goes on to describe God as a very present help in trouble. This phrase is packed with meaning. God is not distant or detached.

He's not some lofty God that we don't know, that's not available, that's not there for us truly. He is very present. He is with us amid our struggles, not just as a passive observer, but as an active helper.

[9 : 58] Everyone here has that friend. I don't want you naming names, so just think them in your head. Has that friend that says, you know what, you need something, let me know. I'm available, I can help, I can do whatever it is you need me to do.

And yet, anytime we reach out to them, they happen to already be busy. There's already something going on in their life, and they actually can't come and help. That is not what is being said about God.

God is our very present helper. He isn't just available, he is present with us in real time, offering his help and strength exactly when we need it.

Whether the trouble we face is a crisis that has come out of nowhere, like it was for me at three o'clock in the morning on Thursday, or is a persistent struggle we've been battling for years. God is present and ready to help. With this understanding of God as our refuge and strength, the psalmist boldly declares in verses two to three, therefore we will not fear, though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

[11 : 10] Here the psalmist paints a vivid picture of natural disaster, events that are entirely outside of human control. The imagery of the earth giving way, mountains falling into the sea, the waters roaring, convey a sense of total chaos and destruction.

These are the kind of events that strike terror into the hearts of anyone experiencing them. Just the image, the idea. Yet in the face of such overwhelming forces, the psalmist declares, we will not fear. This is not some naive denial of reality, but rather a profound statement of trust in God. It is subtle, but you need to recognize he is not saying, because God is present, you do not need to fear. That's not what he's saying. He is saying, he is boldly speaking, the reality of God's presence and how we will live in that presence. It is not a call, it is not a command, but it is a description of our reality.

We will not fear. The psalmist's confidence is rooted not in the stability of the earth or the mountains, but in the unshakable nature of God.

[12 : 39] God remains steadfast. He is the one constant, the one refuge that cannot be moved. No matter how turbulent the world around us becomes, he will not move, and he is ultimately the one that controls that turbulence.

For us today, these verses speak directly to our own experiences. Our mountains may be financial crises, health problems, relationship struggles, societal unrest, all of the things of anxiety that have already been talked about this morning.

The roaring waters might be the overwhelming flood of information, responsibilities, expectations that are threatening to drown us each and every single day.

It could also be the very real natural disasters that we experience in this world, our earthquakes and tidal waves, volcanic explosions, and tornadoes. Yet like the psalmist, we can declare we will not fear.

not because we are strong in ourselves, but because God is our refuge and strength. He is with us and he is greater than anything that can come against us.

[13 : 54] In a world where so much feels uncertain and out of control, Psalm 46 calls us to anchor our hearts in the truth of who God is. He is our refuge, our strength, our ever-present help.

When we trust him, we can face even the most terrifying of circumstances with a peace that defies understanding.

This is the peace that is promised by Jesus. The peace that the world cannot give and it's ours when we take refuge in our mighty God. God is not only a protector but also deeply present with his people.

And the psalmist further explores God's presence in verses 4 through 7. Let me read that again for us. 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.

[15 : 00] The earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Verse 4 introduces us to a serene and life-giving image.

The psalmist invites us to imagine a peaceful river flowing through the city of God representing God's dwelling place among his people. In a world where roaring seas and mountains falling into the sea symbolize chaos as we've seen in the previous verses this river represents calm, stability, and life.

Rivers are often seen as a source of life and prosperity. They water the land, they sustain crops, and they provide for the needs of the people that are around it. The river symbolizes God's provision and blessing to his people.

In this river, this is not just a physical source of life, but it is a representation of spiritual nourishment and the joy that comes from God's presence. The city of God is made glad by the river because it is

a reminder that God is there sustaining and blessing his people.

The significance of this image deepens in verse 5 where we see God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. The city's stability is not due to its walls, its defenses, or any human effort, but because God is in the midst of her.

[16:35] His presence ensures that the city shall not be moved. No matter what threats arise, the city remains unshaken because God is in the midst of it.

This verse powerfully reminds us of God's presence in our lives, bringing stability and peace and when God is in our midst, when we are rooted in his presence, our lives are grounded no matter the circumstances.

The morning here could be symbolizing a new beginning after a night of fear or struggle like the one I had, emphasizing that God's help is timely and faithful just as, some of you guys might remember this, just as when the morning came and the Red Sea swallowed the armies of Egypt.

The morning came and the seas closed on the armies. The psalmist then contrasts the tranquility of God's presence with the state of the nations.

We see here in 6-7 that the nations rage, the kingdoms totter, and he utters his voice and the earth melts. The psalmist acknowledges the reality of political upheaval and instability.

[17:49] The nations rage and kingdoms totter paint a picture of a world in constant turmoil where power struggles and conflicts are the norm. Does that sound familiar to anyone right now?

The psalmist quickly shifts back to God's sovereignty. Despite the raging nations, God's mere voice has the power to melt the earth.

This is a vivid reminder that God is present with his people and is in control of the entire world. The political powers that seem so formidable are nothing before the Lord.

And with a single word, he can bring an end to all of this turmoil. I wasn't sure if I was going to say this this morning or not.

This might just be my Facebook profile feed. But I do ask, are we living out in this political age this truth?

[18:56] Are we living as if God is in our midst and he is in control of everything? Or are we fearfully posting, fearfully reading, fearfully following everything that is happening around us?

I hope not. And I pray that moving forward, we all know that God is in control and that we do not need to be fearful.

Verse 7 brings us back to this comforting refrain. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. This refrain serves as both a declaration and an escalation of something that we have already been told.

The Lord of hosts is referring to God's command over heavenly armies, emphasizing his power and authority. This is often used to point to Christ, who has authority over all angels, who rules today. The God of Jacob highlights his personal and covenantal relationship with his people. He is both mighty and intimately involved in the lives of his people. This refrain is crucial because it actually connects the power, his power, and his presence.

[20:16] The God who controls the fate of nations is the same God who is with us, protecting us, and sustaining us. He is our fortress, a place of safety that cannot be breached.

In a world where nations rage and kingdoms totter, where the news is often filled with reports of conflict and instability, this truth brings a profound comfort.

We are not at the mercy of the world's chaos because the Lord of hosts is with us. Jesus Christ has come and died on the cross for us.

For believers today, these verses offer a powerful message of hope. No matter how unstable the world may seem or how chaotic our personal lives might become, God is in our midst and he brings peace.

Where is God? He is with us. He is with us this very morning. It's what we just prayed for in our call to worship. And we all know the passage in Matthew 18 that says, where two or more are gathered in my name, I am there.

[21:28] Right? There's more than two. He is present with us this morning. Right? So one sure place that you can always feel the presence of God is right here with your church body at Christ the King.

He is present. He is with us. He is in our midst. We are being still and we are knowing God. Each and every single week when we gather to worship Him, where else do we know that God dwells

now?

In the Psalm of Praise, we know that He is in the Holy City. He is in the temple. What does 1 Corinthians 3 tell us? Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, the very Spirit of God, our very present helper, our refuge, our strength, our river of peace and life, dwells in you.

He's in you. He is in our midst, ensuring that we shall not be moved. Now listen, I tried really hard not to do this illustration, but I see Lord of the Rings illustrations all throughout this whole text.

[22 : 42] I'm only going to do one. This is going to be the only one I promise. So listen up. When Gandalf stands on the bridge and he says, you shall not pass.

And he drops his staff and the bridge breaks and the Balrog and him fall down into the depths. He had to leave those he was trying to protect.

He had to leave their presence and sacrifice himself and separate from them in order to protect them. And yet, we have a Savior that has always been in our midst.

We have the presence of God who says, we shall not be moved. We will not be moved. And for the Lord of the Rings book lovers, in the presence of God, we cannot be moved.

Fun fact, if you didn't know, you shall not be moved was a blooper. It's supposed to be, I cannot be moved. Or you shall not, you cannot pass. That's what I was trying to say. You cannot pass.

[23 : 43] And when the nations rage, we can rest in the assurance that God's voice, God's will, is sovereign over all. Our refuge is not in earthly powers or personal strength, but in the God who is with us and above all.

Amid anxiety and uncertainty, Psalm 46, 4-7 calls us to anchor ourselves in the presence of God.

To find our peace in the one who is with us and controls all things.

When we do, we can experience a peace that is not dependent on circumstances, but rooted in our sovereign God's unshakable presence. He is our true and lasting security.

We come to Psalm 46, 8-11. Let me read that for us here. 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 chariot with fire. Be still and know that I am God.

[24 : 54] 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. There are two calls or commands in this text and they are both found in this section of the song.

We are called to behold the works of the Lord, that is Yahweh here, which is a different word from the word translated as God that we have already seen in this text. I am not going to butcher the Hebrew text in front of my former Old Testament professor, Eric Tully.

You will just have to believe me and your Bible translators here. Then we are called to respond with stillness and trust. This is the pivotal point of the psalm where the focus shifts from describing God's protection and presence to a direct call for us to respond to Him in faith.

Come, behold the works of the Lord, how He has brought desolations on the earth. Here the psalmist calls us to come and behold, to recognize and witness what God has done.

This isn't some passive observation. It is an active call to pay attention to God's mighty works in the world. I can't think of any mightier work to pay witness to than the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[26 : 15] The defeat of sin. The defeat of death. The term desolations might initially seem unsettling, but it points to God's ability to bring about significant change, often by removing what is evil or oppressive.

In the historical context, this likely is referring to God's interventions in history where He delivered Israel from certain doom, usually through some dramatic and decisive acts in the final moments.

For example, the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army in the time of King Hezekiah could be one such work of the Lord that the people were encouraged to remember.

Verse 9 continues this theme by describing God's power to end conflicts. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire.

These are vivid images of God bringing an end to warfare and destruction. The bow, spear, and chariot were the most advanced weapons of time. Think of our assault rifles, our tanks, our nuclear weapons, our drones, all being destroyed by the snap of a finger or by the same voice that makes

the earth melt.

[27 : 31] All weapons of war melt. Yet God effortlessly destroys all of them bringing peace where conflict once existed. This part of the psalm reminds us that God is not only a refuge in times of trouble but the ultimate peacemaker.

He has the power to end wars and to bring about peace on a global scale. And when we look at the turmoil of our world today, the ongoing conflicts, the political strife, and the social unrest, these verses remind us that God is in control.

He is at work even when we cannot see it. He is at work. Then comes one of the Bible's most well-known and beloved verses.

In fact, I just saw it on a wall earlier this week. Be still and know that I am God. This command is as profound as it is simple.

While describing God's powerful acts, the psalmist relays God's direct command to us. Be still. Stop striving.

[28 : 43] Stop trying to control everything. Stop trying to save yourself. Stop and surrender all things to me. God is our true and lasting security.

This is an invitation to let go of our need to manage every detail of our lives and to trust that God is in control. This stillness is not merely about a physical rest, but a deep spiritual rest that comes from trusting in the sovereignty of God.

The second part of the verse says, Know that I am God. It is not simply enough to stop and rest. We must recognize and acknowledge who God is.

He is the one who is exalted above all nations. He is exalted in the earth. He is the one that speaks with His voice and the earth melts away. He is the one that is very present. To know God, we must live lives of worship and pursue a deep understanding of Him.

This knowledge, though, is not just intellectual. It does not stop at the mind. It must be experienced and brought to your heart. We are called to know God deeply, to experience His presence and power in our lives, and to rest in the assurance that He is indeed in control.

[30 : 09] My assumption is that none of this is new information to you. And yet, I know we all need this very reminder that God is in control.

In our anxiety driven culture, where busyness is often glorified and control seems elusive, this command to be still is challenging and countercultural.

But it is also profoundly liberating. It frees us from the tyranny of our efforts and invites us to a peace that can come only from knowing and trusting God.

The psalm closes with this refrain in verse 11. It's the same one we've already encountered. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

This repetition serves to solidify the psalm's central message in our hearts. It's as if the psalmist wants to leave us with this final resounding declaration.

[31 : 12] No matter what happens, no matter how chaotic the world may become, the Lord of hosts is with us and we are secured in His presence. God is our true and lasting security.

Jesus Christ is our true and lasting security. There is nothing we can do to rid ourselves of our sin.

There is nothing we can do to rid ourselves of the anxiety and pressures of the world. It is only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ, that we will see our true and lasting security.

Remember me just a couple nights ago sitting on my bed staring into the darkness overwhelmed by the weight of worry and anxiety. That single evening of struggle mirrors the experience of countless others in our anxious society.

Remember, 40 million Americans, adults, suffer from anxiety disorders. It is clear that we are a people in desperate need of security.

[32 : 20] We seek it in our careers, our money, our bank accounts, and even in our abilities. But these things as we have seen are ultimately unstable and unreliable.

Psalm 46 offers a radically different version of security. Not based on the transient and fragile things of this world, but on God's unshakable nature. We have explored how God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

He is not just a temporary shelter in times of crisis, but a constant enduring fortress where we can find true and lasting peace. He is our true and lasting security.

The psalmist shows us that in the midst of chaos, whether it be the tumultuous forces of nature or politics or the raging nations, God, is present in us and with us, bringing peace and stability. His presence is like a calm, life-giving river that sustains us even when everything else is falling apart. In the end, God calls us to be still and know that I am God, urging us to cease our frantic efforts to control our lives and instead to trust fully in Him.

[33 : 37] that's the call. Be still. Know that I am God. The application is clear for all of us who follow Christ, for my dear brothers and sisters that are in these pews.

We must regularly return to this truth and allow it to anchor our souls. We are invited to find our true security in God alone in a world that constantly bombards us with reasons to fear and worry. this means making time to be still before Him, to seek His presence and to remind ourselves daily that He is our fortress no matter what challenge we are facing.

But to those that aren't yet our brothers and sisters in Christ, to those that do not call themselves Christ, do not claim Christ as their Savior, do not know that they are sinners in need of a Savior, if you resonate with me a couple nights ago overwhelmed, anxious, and searching for something solid to hold on to, know that God is inviting you to discover the peace and security that can only be found in Him.

The invitation to be still and know that I am God is also for you. It's an invitation to stop striving on your own and to find rest in God, in the God who created you, loves you, and desires for you to be safe in life's storms and safe from the judgment of your own sins.

[35 : 05] In a world where everything else can and will fail, where we cannot save ourselves from the trouble of our lives, God alone is our true and lasting security.

Whether you are a believer who needs to remember this truth, or you are someone seeking stability in an unstable world, the message of Psalm 46 is the same. Turn to God, our refuge and strength. In Him you will find the peace that the world cannot give, a peace that is deep, abiding, and eternally secure. Let us pray. Father, we come before You with grateful hearts for the truth You've spoken to us through Psalm 46.

Lord, You are a refuge and strength. You are an ever-present help in trouble. We ask that You would plant this truth deep in our hearts today. In a world that often feels chaotic and overwhelming, help us be still and know that You are God.

Teach us to rely on You as our fortress, to find our peace and security in Your unshakable presence. For those of us who are struggling with anxiety, fear, or uncertainty, remind us that You are with us and that Your presence is the source of our stability.

[36 : 25] Help us to trust in Your sovereignty over all things and to rest in the peace that only You can give. Lord, we pray that as we leave this place, we will carry this truth with us, living each day confidently that You are our true and lasting security.

May our lives reflect this trust in You and may we be witnesses of Your peace to a world in need. In the powerful name of Jesus, we all pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.