

Christ the bridegroom

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Date: 29 July 2018

Preacher: Nick Hallett

[0:00] So, we're going to read Psalm 46, on page 565, or on some of the Bibles 566.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. 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.

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. Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth.

[1:18] 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. We'll do keep that passage open.

If you don't know me, my name is Andy Meadows. I'm the children's and youth minister here at Grace Church. And before we look at God's word, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you.

You have not left us in the dark about what you are like. We thank you for revealing yourself to us in your word. And so we pray now as we come to read it that you would help us understand more of you.

[2:16] Amen. Let me ask you a question as we start. What do you fear? What do you fear? There's spiders.

There's heights. Needles. Clowns. Those are some of the big hitters. For me, recently, it's been the fear of dropping my newborn son. Perhaps you can identify with that.

There's national and global fears. The implications of Brexit. Nuclear war. Global warming. Then there's everyday life fears.

Exams. Instability of work. Finances. Health. And then throw into the mix the extra London fears. Of getting knocked off your bike. Being mugged.

Or being caught up in a terrorist attack. Then there's the added fears of evangelism. Facing opposition. Facing opposition. And the very real fear of death.

[3:16] And in the face of trouble and fear. Where do we turn. For refuge and solace. We could turn to our phones.

And TV. Games or books. For distraction. We turn to work. To keep ourselves busy. Perhaps even alcohol. To numb the pain. Or we turn to the fridge.

For comfort. Yet when faced with real trouble. Psalm 46 calls on God's people. To look to God himself.

For refuge. We're not exactly sure when Psalm 46 was written. And what they are facing. It could be the Assyrian attack.

Led by Sennacherib. But it is a real time. Of pressure. And trouble. And in the face of it. They sing verse 2.

[4:13] Therefore we will not fear. With everything life is throwing at them. How can they say. That they will not fear.

How can we say that today. And how can we mean it. Well all because of verse 1. It's the headline. To the whole Psalm. Have a look down.

God is our refuge and strength. A very present help. In trouble. If you remember nothing else. From this morning. Remember that verse.

Perhaps commit it to memory. This week. When you've been kicked in the teeth. In life. This is the big truth. To remember and act on. Perhaps you're here this morning. And you've not really felt. That much tragedy. In life so far. Or pressure. Well this morning. You can store up these truths. To use.

[5 : 10] For yourself. And for others. For when it does come. There's the outline on the service sheet. On the back of your handout. So do. Follow along there. And so firstly.

In times of trouble and fear. Trust God's protection. Trust God's protection. Verse 1 again. God is our refuge and strength.

A very present help in trouble. 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. It's clear this is not describing. A holiday at the beach in Cornwall. With a glass of coke in one hand.

And a book in the other. But more. Something out of a disaster film. Like the day after tomorrow. If you remember that. Imagine Ben Nevis. Falling into the sea.

[6 : 10] And imagine you're there in the middle. Wave after wave. Crashes against the cliff edge. Until it crumbles. And falls.

This is what life was like for God's people. In Psalm 46. In a dangerous world. A world of floods. Raging storms.

Forest fires. Soaring temperatures. Earthquakes. A world of chaos. Of crashing. And banging. And when tragedy.

And fear. And fear. Of the natural world. Gripped God's people. They turned to the immovable God. For refuge and strength. Well as well as the literal waves.

It could be talking about the metaphorical waves. Battering God's people here. In Psalm 46.

Pressure. From verse 6. The raging nations. Around them.

[7 : 09] Enemy attacks. Crashing against them. Yet they trusted God's protection. Why? Because verse 1.

God is their refuge. That place of protection. And peace. And verse 7 and 11. Comes the repeated refrain as well.

What is God like? God is our fortress. It's a really gripping picture isn't it? One of the best places of protection. In the world.

Is inside the United States presidential car. It's known as the beast. Now only the secret service know how to open the doors. It's 5 inch thick bulletproof glass.

Only the windows of the driver's seat open. Only just by 3 inches. Just to pay the tolls. It has run flat tyres. And inside they're completely sealed off.

[8 : 04] In case of a chemical attack. And they have oxygen tanks inside. Apparently it's got rocket propelled grenades. Night vision optics. A tear gas cannon. And 2 pints of the blood.

In the president's blood type. It's a fortress. And so when trouble comes in the crowd. He's bundled inside. And finds refuge.

Inside the beast. It gives great refuge. And protection to the president. But in a much greater way. God gives.

His people refuge. And protection. In a dangerous world. And from their enemies. For Israel.

The first singers of this psalm. This pointed to the great city of Zion. Zion. The city where they found refuge. From the relentless waves. Crashing against them. With hundreds of thousands.

[9 : 02] Of Assyrian soldiers. Camped around them. God protected his people. And struck down. 185,000. In one night. And you can read about that.

In 2 Kings 19. And yet we today. Know more. Than the sons of Korah did. Who wrote this psalm. As we see.

God's refuge. And protection. Ultimately. In the Lord Jesus Christ. In him. Is the safest place. In a dangerous world.

The apostle Paul writes. In Romans 8. There is now. There is therefore now. No condemnation. For those who are in Christ. Jesus. In Jesus.

We find refuge. From God's judgment on sin. Because he went through that judgment. Himself. For us. We find refuge.

[9 : 58] From the devil's attacks. And he cannot snatch us. From his hand. And in Jesus. We find refuge.

From the fears of living. In a broken world. As Paul goes on to write. In Romans 8. We are more than conquerors. Through him who loved us.
For I am sure. That neither death. Nor life. Nor angels. Nor rulers. Nor things present. Nor things to come. Nor powers. Nor height. Nor depth. Nor anything else.
In all protection. Will be able to separate us. From the love of God. In Christ Jesus. Our Lord. God. So when the waves of sin.
Come crashing against us. The devil's attacks. Or the pain of life. We can trust in God's protection. And refuge in Jesus.

[10 : 54] And so when you're feeling the heat. When tragedy comes. And your world is falling apart. In Jesus. We know that God has our best interests at heart.

Nothing. Will separate us. From his love for us. Not even a sad reality. Of death. Jesus. Is our refuge. And fortress. A fortress much stronger than the president's car. Much stronger than anything that can be built on fortnight. And so we can say. In all confidence.
In verse 2. We will not fear. Maybe that still seems quite far off. To say that we will not fear. Well secondly.

In times of trouble and fear. We can know God's presence. There's a slight change from the handout there. Know God's presence. God's people would not fear.

[11 : 52] Because they knew. God was with them. The psalmist moves from the crashing and banging of relentless waves. To the calmness of a river.

And streams. Where God lives. Have a look down at verse 4. 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.

God's people were protected. Not because of the thickness of the city walls. Or their skill in battle. But because ultimately God was with them.

He was in their midst. And it comes back to the headline of verse 1. God is an ever present help. You see the contrast?

[12 : 51] The mountains move into the sea. But God's city shall not be moved. It will not shake. Now children don't need to be taught how to fear.

It just comes naturally, doesn't it? Fear of the dark at bedtime. Or the fear that comes after waking from a nightmare. I remember lying in my bed as a child.

Awaking from a bad dream or something. Or just scared. And just shouting, dad. Always dad, not mum. Nothing against mum. But it was always dad.

It was always dad I wanted. And I would shout. And I'd get louder. And louder and louder. I never went in. Louder and louder. Until he heard. And he came in.

Bleary eyed. And he knelt by my bed. And he would reassure me. That presence in the room. That presence in the house. Reassured.

[13 : 46] He was a very present help. In times of trouble. Well, in a much greater way. God's people knew God's presence with them each day.

Helping her when morning dawned. So when the Assyrians are camping around them. They go to bed scared. They wake up. They see the dead bodies. God was there helping them.

When morning dawned. They got up on a rainy Monday. God was with them on Tuesday. God was still with them. And so on. And so when the nations rage. The kingdoms totter.

God's people knew. Verse 7. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob. Is our fortress.

The Lord of hosts. That is the Lord of unbeatable armies. Was with them. When Pharaoh and his army chased after them.

[14 : 48] God wiped them out. When Sennacherib surrounded the city. God was there. God was there. And yet again. Here today.

This morning. We know more of God's presence now. Than they did back then. God no longer dwells. In an earthly city.

Because he dwell on earth. As a person. Jesus. Emmanuel. God with us. And yet we don't have to wait.

142 days. Until Christmas. When it's going to be nice and cold. To remind ourselves. Of that great truth. That Jesus. Came to earth.

As God. Emmanuel. In the midst. Of his people. To help them. In times of trouble. And ultimately.

[15:44] To save us. From sin. And Jesus. Continues to dwell. With his people now. As we've been. Focusing on. Through our service.

Paul writes. In Galatians. 4. God has sent. The spirit. Of his son. Into our hearts. And again. In Ephesians 2. In him. You.

That's the church. Are also. You also. Are being built together. Into a dwelling place. For God. By his spirit. Now.

The Lord. Of hosts. The Lord. Who put the stars. In the sky. Who sends thunder. Is with us now. As he reigns.

In the church. And in our hearts. He is with us now. As we meet together. Doesn't look. That impressive. Does it? In this room. School hall.

[16:39] We don't look. That impressive. Yet God. Is with us. And he's with us. During the week. Wherever we are. On the commute. To work. In the park.

With the kids. In that difficult conversation. With a friend. You're trying to witness to. In the real fear. In the real trouble. The Lord of hosts.

Is with us. To help us each day. In the real fear. When trouble comes. You're under the pump. At school. At work. We can know.

God's presence. With us. Through his spirit. In our hearts. And in the church. The Lord of hosts. Is with us. The God of Jacob. Is our fortress. He will never leave us.

Or forsake us. As he's promised. And nothing. Can separate us. From his love. In the Lord Jesus. Emmanuel. God. With us.

[17:36] And so when Satan. The enemy now. Batters the church. With wave. After wave. Of attack. Crashing. Against the rock. Both in the church.

This country. And worldwide. Well. How can we know. The church won't crumble. That God's people. Will stand. Not because of anything.

On our part. But ultimately. Because God. Is in our midst. So the church. Shall not be moved. A very present help.

In trouble. Well lastly. We move on to the last. Part. Verses 8 to 11. Which make us look to the future. So in times of trouble.

And fear. Behold God's power. Have a look down at verse 8. Come behold. Come behold. The works of the Lord.

[18:34] 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. Behold.

Simply means to look. But not just at a fleeting glance. But a fixed stare. Fear. And God's people. In Psalm 46. Will not fear.

Because they kept their eyes. On the power. Of their protector. Who is much stronger. Than anything they will face. They reminded themselves.

Just. Of who the world is dealing with. Death. I wonder. Whether like me. You woke up a few days ago. With that thunderstorm. At 5am. A small sample.

Of the work of the Lord. The power. The sheer power. In his hand. This is the powerful God. Who verse 9. Ends wars. Again.

[19:32] God's people saw that. With their own eyes. They saw how they did that. With the Assyrians. The Egyptians. Smashing their weapons. And yet. These acts in history.

Are only a trailer. A foretaste. Of what is to come. In the future. A time when God. Will end all wars. The ranging nations. Will be calmed.

Fully. And finally. All when God. Is exalted. In the earth. The UK. Current threat level. Is severe.

At one below. The highest level. Of critical. We live. In a dangerous world. A world. Of terrorism. Of brutal regimes.

Of world powers. Exchanging. Antagonistic rhetoric. And yet. No army. On earth. Is match. Is match. For God. The Lord.

[20:30] Of hosts. He breaks. The machine gun. He shatters. The tank. He ended. Wars. In the past. And he will do it. Fully. And finally. In the future.

And so. The application. Comes in verse 10. Be still. And know. That I am God. I will. Be exalted.

Among the nations. I will. Be exalted. In the earth. That first bit. It sounds. Like something. You might get on a poster. With a tranquil sea.

A picture of a mountain. But this is not a call. For quiet. Meditation. But a call. To stop raging. Against God. Stop.

Disobedience. Stop. The rebellion. The contrast there. The nations. Rage. The waters. Roar. And foam. God's command.

[21 : 28] In verse 10. Is stop. Know. Who you're dealing with. Like the disobedient pupil. Still. In front of the headmaster. The whole world.

Will one day. Be still. Before God. And for us now. We. We know more. Of. The son. Like the sons of Korah. We can behold.

God's power. In the actions. Of Jesus. When he was in a boat. With his disciples. The waters were roaring. And foaming. The disciples.

Were fearing. They wake Jesus up. We're going to drown. Jesus says. Be still. Stop it. And it was calm.

A very present. Help in trouble. For those disciples. I should imagine. And in Jesus death. On the cross. And we behold. God's power.

[22 : 25] Over his enemies. There he cancelled. The debt. Of sin. And the enemy. Satan. Disarming him. Defeating him. And defeating death.

With an empty tomb. Jesus has won. The decisive battle. He has defeated. Disarmed. And destroyed. The greatest enemies. That we face now.

Of sin. The devil. And death. And now. As they wage war. They do so. As defeated enemies. That one day.

Will cease. Forever. And on that day. In that future. When Jesus returns. It will be him. Who is exalted.

In all the earth. Philippians 2 says this. Jesus. Humbled himself. By becoming obedient. To the point of death.

[23 : 20] Even death. On a cross. Therefore God. Has highly exalted him. And bestowed on him. The name. That is above. Every name. So that. At that name.

Every knee should bow. In heaven. And on earth. And under the earth. And every tongue confess. That Jesus Christ is Lord. To the glory of God.

The Father. We live in a world. Where Jesus. Is ignored. Not exalted. At school. At work. In your road. But we hold on to the truth.

That one day. He. Will be exalted. When he will come in power. He will destroy death. Fully. Destroy wars.

And that all wrongs. Will be put right. Behold God's. Power. As we close. This psalm is often called. Martin Luther's psalm.

[24 : 20] In the thick. Of European. Reformation. Whenever there was any trouble. Luther. Used to say. To his co-worker. Philip Melanchthon.

Come. Philip. Let us sing. The 46th psalm. Together. And let the devil. Do his worst. How will the devil.

Do that to us. As he wages. Attack. After attack. We don't know. Both as a church. And individually. But through all the trouble.

And fear. That church will face. What we will face. We can lean on Jesus. Our refuge. Who was with us now. As this morning.

Wherever we go. Defending his church. Through the assaults. Of the world. And sin. And will one day. Return in power. Where he will be exalted.

[25 : 17] Forever. God is our refuge. And strength. A very present. Help in trouble. Therefore. We will not fear.

Let's pray. Father God. We thank you. That in the Lord Jesus. We find refuge. For sin. And for your judgment.

We find refuge. For the future to come. That you are with us now. Through him. And that you will be with us forever. When Jesus returns.

We pray that in times of trouble and fear. We will know you. And know your presence with us. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[26 : 20] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Am I. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.