

No Fear!

It's Halloween, although we in the church celebrate it as All Saints Day, or we Protestants are happy to refer to it as Reformation Day, or we call it Fall Fun Festival because we don't want to give credit to the devil. I will say, I'm not a fan of horror movies or scary things. I don't like glorifying the devil or demons nor do I like trivializing them. I've never seen any of those Jason movies, I don't watch anything with zombies or vampires. I don't know if I ever saw all of the original Frankenstein movie with Boris Karloff. I'm more of a Young Frankenstein kind of guy with Gene Wilder and Peter Boyle. You get my point.

The idea of doing something scary for Halloween this year seems redundant. The past year has been scary enough without dressing up in costumes. There is plenty of evil in the world without us mimicking or manufacturing more. The devil seems to be doing okay on his own without us promoting him or his cause. There are plenty of things to make us fearful in our lives.

Sarah mentioned Wednesday night her fear of cats. I'm not sure when that began for her, but I would say it's a phobia. Ailurophobia. Fear of cats. Phobia is from the Greek word *phobos* which means fear or horror. People fear all kinds of things. According to the DSM (the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders) the American Psychiatric Association outlines five categories of phobias. Fears related to animals (spiders, cats, dogs); fears related to natural environment (heights, thunder, darkness); fear related to blood, injury, medical issues (fear of falling, needles, broken bones); fear related to specific situations (riding in an elevator, confined spaces, driving) and then general others like choking, loud noises, drowning.

We Pentecostals and Evangelicals have our own fears: Fear of missing the rapture, fear of accidentally taking the mark of the beast, ("I just wanted the vaccine!"), fear we've committed the unpardonable sin, fear of certain foods at pot luck dinners, (casserophobia), fear that if I don't share that Facebook post people will think I don't love Jesus or I'm ashamed of him (On judgment day when the books are opened, Jesus will say, "I notice you didn't share that post about me, that may be a problem.") We all have fears about something.

The truth is, fear is not necessarily a bad thing. There is healthy fear. The devil didn't create or design fear, God did. In something I read this week the author, Jon Bloom wrote, "God designed fear so that we would flee real danger. Fear is meant to be a mercy. Its purpose is to direct us to safety." We respect God's design. That healthy fear he designed is what keeps us from picking up rattlesnakes or jumping out of planes without a parachute. There is a healthy

fear when it comes to spiritual things. We are to fear the Lord, that is to respect him, his character and nature, and his design and purpose for our lives. The bible says, **“The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom and to shun evil is understanding.” Job 28:28.** We were made to respect the Lord and his order of things and to turn away from evil. The devil perverts the truth and God’s design. What happens then is, **Instead of fearing the Lord and turning away from evil, the devil wants us to fear evil and turn away from the Lord.**

The devil wants us to fear him. The fear of the Lord is wisdom, the fear of the devil is torment and bondage. He wants us to live in fear, always feeling vulnerable, that life is out of control and we are no longer safe, that God is not with us, trusting God is foolish. He wants us to fear a million other things, just as long as we aren’t trusting in and resting in the Lord. But we know something even in the midst of our fear, we know God, we know his nature, his character and we can trust him. Knowing him helps us say no to fear.

Look with me at Psalm 46. I had a different plan but as I began writing this message the Lord seemed to redirect my thoughts to this Psalm. Psalm 46 shows us a reason we can say no to fear and offers us a word of comfort and peace instead. **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble.” Psalm 46:1** God is both our refuge, our place of hope and security and he is our strength, the resource for the power we need. There is no other refuge like him: eternal, unchanging, unmoved by the forces of evil or by the circumstances we find ourselves in. We can’t get through some of what we face alone, but we know He has been, is and will be our refuge, the one to whom we can run and find help, regardless of what’s happening in our world or in our personal lives. When we are under siege, when everything and everyone seems to be against us, He is our refuge. We run to him and he will care for us.

David said the Lord was our refuge and our strength and he is an ever present help in trouble. It can be translated “abundantly available for help in a tight place.” I can imagine David writing this while hiding in a cave, cramped, dark, wondering what the future would hold, and he affirms that God is his refuge – the one he runs to when he is frightened, running for his life, in a tight spot. David is trapped, but God is abundantly available for help. Feeling alone, no one else to trust or turn to, yet David affirms the Lord is his refuge when he is threatened and his strength when he is weak and outnumbered and can’t help himself. God is ever present, abundantly available when you are trapped and in trouble as well. He is present when you are under attack or in a tight spot. He is our refuge and our strength and we can trust him.

Because of the truth of verse 1, that God is our refuge and our strength and that he is with us in troubled times, then we can affirm the truth of the next verses. **V2-3 “Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”**

No fear! Because of what we know about our God, we will not fear, regardless. It doesn't matter how scary the monsters are, whatever is frightening us, God is our refuge and strength and we will not fear. It is easier said than done I know, but the truth is there. The facts are there. The history is there. Our experience is there. We can trust him and that trust drives away fear.

Look at the picture the psalmist paints for us. This is no minor problem he is describing. This isn't worrying about car trouble or being able to afford to fix the washer. He says the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea. I would call that a major catastrophe wouldn't you? We worry about all kinds of things, but I admit I haven't worried lately about the mountains falling into the sea or the earth giving way. King James reads, “though the earth be removed”. That can't be good. It can't get any more frightening or worrisome than this. The earth disappears from under us and the mountains fall into the sea. Everything gives way. Maybe it feels like your world has crumbled, the earth underneath you has given way, but in spite of it all, the psalmist says, “we will not fear”. We won't give into fear because God is our refuge and strength and he is still with us, right here, right now to help us, even when the earth beneath us crumbles and gives way. No fear!

Choose to believe that. Whatever you are going through, you need to decide, do I believe God is still with me or not? Can I run to him and lean on him right now, even in the worst of times? Choose to believe, run to him, lean on him and I believe you will find peace, even in the midst of the storm, peace when the earth gives way, peace and not fear. The psalmist says, this is what I know so I will not fear, regardless...!!!

Look at these next verses. **V4-7 “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. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”**

The Psalmist gives us this image of the world falling apart, and then he reminds us there is a world that we don't currently see with our physical eyes. There is a holy place and God the

Most High dwells there and he has everything under control. All the stuff we don't understand makes sense there. Although everything here is shaking and the kingdoms of this world are in an uproar, in that heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of God, everything remains unshaken and unmoved. It's the beauty of John's Revelation. The curtain is pulled back and we see another reality, a heavenly reality where God is worshiped, where the Lamb rules and reigns and where all is well. No more tears or injustice or pain, where everything is made new. We see it here in Psalm 46, the reminder of that reality, interjected in the midst of the earth being removed – all is well in the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within that place and it will not fall, it won't be moved and that same God dwells in our hearts. He makes his dwelling in us so I have to believe there is to be peace in my heart and life just as there is peace in that heavenly city where he dwells. Wherever he is, wherever his kingdom is established, there is peace! We have nothing to fear because God is in control. He will lift his voice and things change, the powers melt before him, the kingdoms fall before him but his kingdom endures forever! No fear!

Notice the verse says God will help at break of day. King James reads, **“God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved. God shall help her and that right early.”** God is going to help his city, his people, and she shall not be moved. First thing, when the morning dawns, when the new day arises, God is there to help us. His mercy is available to us once again, new every morning. His faithfulness is shown to us again, even in the midst of scary times and monsters and overwhelming circumstances. God is there to help us. We are at the top of his agenda for the day. At the top of his to do list it says, “Be with Phil. Help Phil.” There is no reason to let fear and worry and stress destroy us. God will help us at the break of day. Each day. He is our refuge, our strength, our help in trouble, therefore we will not fear!

Verse 7 says, **“The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”** What a declaration. What a comfort. The Lord is with us! Regardless of circumstances, even when you don't feel it, he's with you! The God of Jacob is our fortress. Jacob knew about struggle and trouble and loss. The God that provided for Jacob, He is our God.

Look now at verse 8. We are invited to come look at things from the vantage point of heaven! See what the Lord has done. See things from heaven's perspective. **V8-9 “Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.”**

There is no reason for fear. God is in control over all the earth. Look at all he has done. He makes wars to cease. He triumphs over all kinds of enemies and all kinds of warfare and he will triumph in the battles and wars of our life and circumstances as well. Regardless of what is going on, He will bring us to victory at the right time.

Now that we have heaven's perspective and see God acting sovereignly over the earth, then we hear him say to us, **V10 "Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."** Cease striving. Quiet your heart and mind and realize, recognize, God is God, the Lord over all. Stop fretting, worrying, panicking, and know that I am God! You don't have to live in fear. Know that God is going to handle the stuff you are worrying about. It's his kingdom, you are his child and he is watching over you. Trust him.

"Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted in the earth." And when the Psalmist hears the voice of the Lord saying that, he shouts, **V11 "The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."** No fear!

Don't let the stresses of life or fear overwhelm you. The Lord Almighty is with you! The God of Jacob is your fortress. Still your heart and hear him telling you, "I am God. I am with you. Don't be afraid. It's going to be all right."

The prophet Isaiah said, **"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast (stayed on you) because he trusts in you. Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord, is the Rock eternal." Isaiah 26:3-4**

We can trust him. We don't have to be afraid. No fear! We are standing on the Rock eternal. Can you picture Jesus pacing back and forth, worried over how it's all going to turn out for you? NO! It is calm in heaven, a peaceful stream flowing from the throne of God. And he invites you, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, (freedom from stress and anxiety, worry and fear.) For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." You can cast your stress, your anxiety, your cares upon him because he cares for you. No fear, instead, look to him! **"I sought the Lord and he heard me and delivered me from all my fears." Psalm 34:4**