

Psalm 46:10
Week #5 in the Series "Whose Verse is it Anyway?" 8:30 am

Alyia Rajnic

Good morning, St Paul's Church. It is so good to be here with you this morning. For those of you who haven't met me yet, I am Alyia Rajnic and I've been the ministry intern here this summer. And I'm going to take a moment now to read the verse and then pray before we head into our message.

Psalm 46:10. "He says, be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth."

Would you pray with me this morning? Dear God, I ask as we head into our service this morning that all of my words would come from you and that all my thoughts would come from you. I ask that you would lay grace over the preparation that I have had and the last several minutes that your strength would be in what I say and that it would be founded on your truth. From your word alone, God. I thank you for the ability to gather here. And I ask that, as we read your word, that we would do nothing but continue in worship of you. Amen.

So before we get into the message, I figured I'd give you guys a little bit of an update, just like I did in my last message about what I'm going to be doing as I move forward from here. And when I spoke a couple of months ago, you guys got to hear about my family and my friends and what I do at school and tomorrow at 7 a.m., I will be starting the drive back to Florida. Back to continue my education at Palm Beach Atlantic University. This semester, I will have the opportunity to learn about different cultures, to learn about how dance can be used as forms of worship. I'll be serving in a position where I will be helping freshmen to figure out what they want to study at school. And I will also have many opportunities to gather with some girls that I mentored last year in a Bible study so that I can continue to pour into them, and they can daily pour into me. I'm really excited to be heading back and also very saddened at the fact that I will be leaving my time here at St Paul's. I'll be around during Christmas, don't worry. I'll be excited to see everyone and to sing carols together. But it has been such a blessing to serve here this summer, and I thank you all for inviting me so kindly into this community.

As we begin to dive into God's word and we do something like a devotional message, which can seem sort of strange when you think about pastors usually spending a week or more diving deeply into scripture, taking this time to really look at the Greek and the Hebrew and prepare what they think. But there's something so valuable in a devotional improvisational message like this, because what it is saying is that in 10-15 minutes, someone with a Bible and the Internet can take time to see what is God saying here. And more than just a surface level, what was he speaking to the community around him? Those who were first reading this word. And what is he really saying to me now when I do more than just read the words on the page? And you might ask, why do I care about this so

much? One reason that I care is because God's heart is for His Word. In many of my Bible classes, one of the first verses that we always study is 2nd Timothy 3 verses 16 and 17, which read:

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training and righteousness that the Man of God may be complete and equipped for every good work.

This is one reason why I care so much about diving into God's Word. It's because he has told me, not only has He given it to me, but He has breathed it out for me, just like He breathed out creation. And so, I care about investing in it. And I also know that as I read it and as I study it, it is going to pour deeply into me for teaching and reproof and correction and training and righteousness. The other reason I care about studying Scripture is because not only God's heart for His Word, but because of God's heart for the world. I also spend a lot of time at school not just studying scripture but studying missions and studying the ways that we are meant to go out, the ways that we are sent into God's world. And for that, there's another verse that we often look at that I find extremely comforting, extremely meaningful to me. And that is Revelation 7 verses 9 to 10. Where it is written:

After this, I looked and behold a great multitude that no one could number from every nation. From all tribes and peoples and languages. Standing before the throne and before the lamb, clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands and crying out with a loud voice. Salvation belongs to a God who sits on the throne and to the lamb.

God has called us to worship him. He has not only called us to worship him, but He's called the nations to worship him. And if we want to learn what it means to worship God, there's no better place to turn than the Psalms. The Psalms are a place of crying out to the Lord, sometimes in joy and thankfulness, as this Psalm is. Sometimes in pain and with a broken heart. But it is all a reflection of how we cry out to God. And so, this morning, even though this was just one verse, Psalm 46:10, we're going to take a little bit of time to walk through Psalm 46 and see what God is saying to us here. So, I'm going to start with just reading this whole song, and then we will break it down a little bit and see how they were reflecting on God's glory and his goodness.

(1) God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (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. (4) There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God. The holy habitation of the most high. (5) God is in the midst of her. She shall not be moved. God will help her when morning dawns. (6) The nations rage, the kingdoms totter. He utters his voice. The earth melts. (7) The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. (8) Come behold the works of the Lord, how He is brought desolations 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

chariots 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 of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

When we look back at first one, it starts by telling us that God is a refuge and strength. This Bible that I have here was actually the Bible that I had at my graduation celebration several years ago when I graduated from high school, and we had this Bible there so that my friends and family could write in it, highlight their favorite verses. And funnily enough, one of the verses that was marked was the very beginning or actually all of Psalm 46, and it was marked by my brother-in-law, Christian, who's here today. So, I thank him for giving me some little bit of insight as I start to head into this passage. So, he himself knows a lot about Scripture, and I'm very thankful for anything he has to say about it. But he started by writing this. He said, I love this Psalm because it reminds me that God is sovereign even in the midst of the worst troubles that we can imagine. And that is how this Psalm starts. God is our refuge and strength, and he is present when we are in the midst of trouble. Verses two and three reflect on this even more deeply, he says, because he's our refuge in strength. For that reason, we do not need to fear, even though there are earthquakes that are causing mountains to fall into the ocean. I don't know about you, but I can't imagine something much more catastrophic than that. Even in the midst of those things, we have no reason to fear.

And then we move on to verses four and five. There's 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. These verses are really key to understanding what was happening with this passage was written. This passage was a praise to the Lord for how He is protecting Zion. The city that they are talking about here is Zion, which was the home of the people of God. To them, Zion was where God's presence could be felt most potently. When you're in Zion, God is there. That's where the temple is. And it is there that you can experience his safety and his refuge. Most clearly. As I was reading those couple of verses, I was struck by how they've been transformed because of Jesus's act on the cross. You see, Israel was called to be the people of God. They were set apart. But in Jesus life and his sacrifice, that was changed. Now we as his children are the people of God. And there's no longer a city of Zion where a stream runs through. There's no longer a city of Zion where God is in the midst of it. Instead, we have become that city of Zion.

In our day today, this passage, we see how God can be our refuge and our strength, just as he once existed in that way for the city. And so, we continue on verses six and seven. Having just read about how there are earthquakes and mountains falling into the sea, it says: the nations rage, the kingdoms totter. He utters his voice and the earth melts. When I was thinking about the comparison of the chaos that happens in the world and the chaos that happens in nature, I immediately thought of another passage of Scripture just a little bit before from 1 King's. And in 1 Kings 19, Elijah is facing catastrophe within the people of God. There is fighting, wars are raging, and he does not know how to handle all of this.

He does not know how he is supposed to step forward into this as a prophet and proclaim God's truth to the nation of Israel. And so, he runs and hides in a cave. And at this time that he is hiding, he has a conversation with God. And this is how that conversation goes:

(1King 19:9-13) There he came to a cave and lodged in it, and behold the Word of the Lord came to Him and he said to him, What are you doing here, Elijah? He said, I've been very jealous for the Lord. The God of hosts, for the people of Israel, have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. And I even I only am left. And they seek my life to take it away. And He said, go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. And behold, the Lord passed by in a great and strong wind, tore the mountains and broke it in pieces, the rocks before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind and earthquake. But the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire. But the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the sound of a low whisper. And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold there came a voice to him and said, What are you doing here, Elijah?

Often, we when we are in the tumults of our lives, when we are experiencing the stress that comes with walking from day to day or the overwhelming nature of crises and pain that we experience all the time, we can tend to shout to God that we are afraid. And sometimes I think in our brains we make it so that we hear God shout back, What are you doing here? Why are you calling to me? And this passage reflects. But that's not how God responds to us in the midst of that pain and tumult. Instead, he says. What are you doing here? Why have you chosen to come to me now? And so, when we take this and we look at Psalm 46, we see that in the midst of all the chaos raging outside the city, raging outside of us. That God speaks to us in a still small voice. And in that still small voice, the earth melts. The chaos- it ceases. And it is at this point in the Psalm that the chorus is stated for the first time. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. Again. The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress.

Moving into verses eight and nine, the psalmist continues to reflect on what it means for God to bring this peace that He has so clearly stated. He says, Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the Earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the Earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear. He burns the chariots with fire. In all of the chaos and all of the pain, God comes, and he makes wars cease. When I think of this, I see an image of God like standing over a battlefield. And I think about Jesus on the boat when he came to the ocean, and he sees a battle raging before him. And Jesus stands up on the top of the hill, looking over at a raging war and says: Be still. And just as the ocean ceased raging in the storm, the battles can cease to. And that is the hope and the peace. That's the picture of peace that the Psalm wants to convey, that that is the amount of safety that we have in God, that when he reaches out his hand, even the most terrifying or painful or hopeless experiences cease because he is with us.

And it is then that we reach verse 10. He says, meaning God says, to His people. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

I don't know about you, but I often struggle to be still. Slowing down is not something I'm known for. In fact, when someone asks how I'm doing, I say, Oh, I'm doing pretty well. Just been pretty busy. And they go, Aliya, you're always busy. And I say, Yes. Slowing down is not something natural to me. But this past weekend, I took some intentional time to slow down. One thing that student leaders at my school are asked to do is to take a day or an afternoon during our summer, before the school year starts to do what we call a solo day with God, a time where you are able to spend it in retreat with just you and the Lord. And this past Friday, my dad and I went and did this together. We went to Longwood Gardens, which is a place that has a lot of meaning to my family. And I spent about three and a half hours in prayer and journaling and reading Scripture, focusing on what it means to rest and be still in the Lord. And while I was there, there was this particular moment where I walked into the conservatory, which is basically a really massive greenhouse with beautiful architecture. So, they call it a conservatory. And I sat down at these chairs that were facing all of this beautiful, luscious greenery. I'd been planning to head to another room but felt the need to sit there and just take a moment to breathe, to take in God's creation. And as I was sitting there, I saw this beautiful image, the area I was looking at there was a running stream surrounded by luscious greenery and then a back stone wall covered in what looked like ancient ivy. And I was just struck by the fact that there's this flowing water. And because of this water, there is all of this new life there. And I had this thought go through my head that God brings new life. But then I looked at that ivy in the background. And I saw this reminder that God hasn't changed since the beginning of time. And that in his steadiness, in his stillness, He brings forth that new life. And I was reminded of why it matters so much to take that time to be still. But not only was I reminded of that; this psalm tells us why we can be still. It is easy when the world feels like it's in chaos. When our lives feel like they are in chaos. To feel that we need to rush from activity to activity, from putting out this fire to putting out this fire to putting out this blazing fire over here. But God says that even in the midst of that, we have no need to fear. Yes, he can make the war cease, but he's present in the midst of them, too. And God here in his own words, from his own voice, as the psalmist reflects, says, Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. When the war is waging and when the war is stopped, we have a God who is present. And who is king over all of it. I'm going to read that again. When war is waging and when the war is stopped, we have a God who is present and king over all of it.

I started this message by looking at Revelation 7 Verses 9 and 10 where we look at the end of time, where all people from all nations, from all tribes and tongues are gathered together and praising the Lord. And I was thinking about how this Psalm reflects on Zion and Israel had a very specific calling that they messed up a couple of times. And that calling was to be a light to the other nations around Israel. The City of Zion wasn't meant to be a fortress. It was meant to be a place of truth and of love, where God's holy presence was so clear that the nations around them couldn't help but see that something was

different there. And Israel struggled with this. When you read about many of the later prophets and the minor prophets, you see that one of the main reasons that Israel fell was because they failed in their task to steward God's truth to the nations around them. But as we are reminded in Revelation, somehow or another, all of the nations end up there at the end of time. And as we are reminded in these verses, God says he will be exalted among the nations and exalted in the earth. This should mean something to us. If God is going to be exalted among the nations. And as we know, that happens, then what are we called to do in the midst of it? You see, this Psalm primarily functions as an encouragement. It is often I think that we look at Psalms, we see them as a reflection of our feelings, where we are in that moment, whether it's our pain or our joy. And we tend to stop there. We don't say, what is the truth here that changes the way that I need to be living now? And so, to take a moment to reflect on that, I want us to think what it might mean for us if God's name is to be exalted among the nations? What does it mean for you if God's name is meant to be exalted among the nations? He is our refuge. He is our strength. He runs through the midst of the city of our life, and he brings a stillness that we can find nowhere else. We have no excuse. He's given us all the strength and comfort that we need in order to make sure that every nation knows his name. And in this Psalm, we see that that's important. We see that that is part of what God wants for his people too. And so, the Psalm ends by reflecting or repeating the chorus once again. It says The Lord of hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our fortress. If the Lord of hosts is with us, if the God of Jacob protects us from not only day to day, but year to year and month to month and crisis to crisis, how might we live differently? How might the neighbor that moved in down the street be treated with a little bit more love? How might the neighborhood of immigrants that's down the road from you receive a little bit more support than they did before.

If the Lord of hosts is with us and the God of Jacob is our fortress, then this Psalm of encouragement isn't just there to keep us safe. It's there to give us the courage to step out and live for such a God as this. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth. I want to be a part of that. But not only do I want to be a part of it, I want to be a part of it with you. With God's people. Not the city that used to stand on a hill as a light. But the city that is within each one of us. Would you pray with me this morning?

God, I thank you that you were a refuge. I thank you that you were present. That you love us. That you care for us. That you see us. And that you tell us not only that we should be still, but that we can be still in you. God, I ask that that would mean something. I ask that we would see where you're sending us. We would see who you're sending us to. We would know that something is supposed to be different about us and that we need not fear because you are our refuge, and you will be with us the whole time. I thank you that you're present. I thank you that you're present here. I ask that we would continue to carry that presence with us. As we go into this day and this week and the rest of our lives. Amen.