

Sermon Title: “God is still our Mighty Fortress”

October 25th, 2020 – Reformation Sunday

Text: Psalm 46



Theme:

What's in it for me?

Sermon Text:

Grace and Peace to you from our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Happy 503rd Anniversary of the Reformation. For over 500 years we have been preaching “Scripture Alone, Faith Alone, Grace Alone,” and while this year’s celebration is more subdued due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, it still felt good to belt out “A Mighty Fortress,” didn’t it? I know it isn’t the most comfortable to sing in masks, but for Reformation Sunday, I think we can suck it up and sing four verses. You did rather well this morning. Today’s Hymns were both written by Martin Luther, himself.

In case you didn’t know, “A Mighty Fortress,” was based upon today’s Psalm, Psalm 46, one of Martin Luther’s favorites. What Psalm wasn’t his favorite? I do think he was onto something though with this Psalm. When you are going through a rough time, and Martin Luther had more than his fair share of those, as have all of us, turning to the Psalms can provide some much needed comfort, so let’s dive into Psalm 46 together.

Psalm 46 was written by the Sons of Korah and was sung. Who was Korah? Korah led an uprising against Moses, interestingly claiming direct access to God, instead of having to go through Moses as an intermediary. He was ahead of his time, since following Jesus’ sacrifice on the Cross, we now have direct access to the Father through Jesus, but Korah had a huge “false start,” and God was not pleased with his little rebellion. Korah and most of his followers were swallowed up by the earth whole when they rose up against Moses. The survivors were forced to carry even more heavy ceremonial objects for the Tabernacle as a punishment and reminder of their rebellion. It’s these guys that, through the Holy Spirit pen these words.

These sons of Korah tells us that God is their source of strength and He provides them refuge. When they are in trouble, God helps them. Verse two is a direct reference to what

happened to their ancestor. The earth swallowed him up, but they won't be afraid if the earth does it again because God will protect them. This is a tremendous statement of faith, considering the origin.

The sons of Korah also tell us about a river, although Jerusalem has no river flowing through it. It does have underground springs that provided drinking water, but this is a more figurative language comparing how God refreshes your soul like you feel refreshed when you are thirsty. Jesus uses similar language when he encounters the Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well. They go on to tell us that God can't be moved from His dwelling place and that He dwells with us. Despite nations rising and falling, God is still there. As ancient warfare was largely siege warfare, Judeans would often retreat to the Temple, which was the highest point in Jerusalem. God's house was literally their fortress, but our modern-day concept of Sanctuary is partially derived from this idea. (It also came from the Old Testament Sanctuary Cities, but that's a story for a different time.) Know this, if you need to confess your sins individually and receive God's forgiveness before you "face the music," that is still available today. Individual Confession and Absolution is something that is available, but I don't think we take advantage of it as much as we should.

The sons of Korah go on to tell us that God puts an end to wars. God used the *Pax Romana*, or "Peace of Rome" to spread the Gospel far and wide, during a time of relative peace. 58 years ago, I believe that God intervened again, preventing Nuclear War as we were all dealing with the Columbus Day Storm in 1962 during the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was another difficult time.

The sons of Korah close out this Psalm in verse 10 with a very important message from God, *"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.* – Psalm 46:10-11. In other words, relax and trust in Him. God is with you and He will protect you. Jesus uses these very words when He calms a storm on the Sea of Galilee, demonstrating that He is God.

Now that we've done our deep dive into the text, what does this mean for us? First of all, know that no matter what you are going through, God is with you every step of the way. He won't abandon you. He won't give up on you. He never stops loving you. Even if Mt. Rainier were to erupt today, that wouldn't change how God feels about you. There is nothing you can

do that will separate you from God's love, so much that He sent Jesus to pay the price for your sin.

Secondly, come to the Lord's House. Receive that forgiveness that Jesus offers you in the waters of Holy Baptism and in His own Body and Blood. Come to the Lord's House and receive God's Word of comfort. Martin Luther took a long time to realize how comforting God's Word is, due to the poor doctrine and beliefs of his day that he had to contend with, but he stuck with it and it spread like wildfire. The world has never been the same since. So, come to the Lord's House and receive that Living Water so that you never thirst again. Get recharged.

Third, know that God is more powerful than any of our conflicts, calamities, and troubles. God is greater than Islamic terrorism. God is greater than geo-political strife. God is greater than coronavirus. God is greater than the hardship in your life, so go to Him. You don't have to go far, because He is already here with you. Turn to Him.

Lastly, God tells us to be still, and know that He is God. Quite often when we are confronted with a problem, we immediately think we must do something to solve it, especially us guys. How many times have you heard something to the effect of, "Yeah, that's a problem, but what do you want me to do about it?" It usually doesn't go over too well. Instead, God wants us to be there, listen, and watch Him work. Remember we can only do our part, not God's part, not theirs', so trust that God will do His part. Just because someone comes to you with a problem in his or her life does not necessarily mean that they expect you to solve it for them. Listen to understand, instead of listening to respond. Let God handle the response. Trust me. He does a better job than we do.

Being still is not the same thing as being lazy. Yes, there are times when God wants us to act, to do something, but there are times when our actions make the situation worse. Offer to pray with that person, trusting that God will help him or her in an appropriate manner.

While this Psalm is a Psalm of comfort, one that particularly helped Martin Luther through some very dark times, it is also a lesson in trust. Korah desired a direct link to the Father. Even though he went about it in the wrong way, God has granted it to us through Jesus. Korah's surviving offspring learned to trust in God, no matter what kind of suffering they encountered. They knew that God was with them and that He was greater than their troubles. God will bring us a peace greater than any understanding. It is a huge leap of faith to trust Him,

but God has shown Himself to be reliable. He keeps His promises. He restores us. He refreshes us. He cleanses us. He comforts us, and He is with us every step of the way.

In Jesus name,

Amen.

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Quotations from Scripture come from:

Various Authors. *The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia Publishing House. Kindle Edition.