

Reformation 2021
Psalm 46 Introit

“BE STILL, AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD”

“There’s nothing new under the sun” (Ecc 1:9). Those are not my words. Those are the words of King Solomon speaking almost a thousand years before the birth of Jesus. And even then, he was lamenting how all the wretched sinfulness and terror and tumult he was facing was already “old news.” Christians have had to deal with the terrible consequences of sin ever since the fall in the Garden. Pandemics, wars, rumors of wars, violence, abortion, corruption, natural disasters, anxiety, fear of one’s own mortality, greed, perversion, idolatry, haves and have nots... that’s us in a nutshell, and history shows that it’s all been around for a LONG time. There really is nothing new under the sun.

And yet... here’s the GOOD NEWS for us as we feebly struggle: The fact that there is nothing new under the sun is also sweet Gospel balm to our tired and anxious souls. Consider the words of Psalm 46, our Introit for today, which joyously proclaims: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (v. 1). Martin Luther, like King David who wrote the words of our Psalm, certainly knew the joy and the peace of being safe and secure in God’s unconditional love and mercy. Luther was no stranger to fear and terror. He was a marked man precisely because he dared to call sin what it is -- sin. He dared to call a lie a lie, even when the lie was spoken by the leaders of the church. He dared to call people -- very powerful people -- to repentance. In short, he dared to speak the Truth of God’s Word. Not surprisingly, Luther lived most of his years as a man marked for death -- all because he feared **God** more than man.

And it's out of that fear and terror and death and chaos that Luther heard the sure and certain promise of God's presence and peace. "God is our refuge and strength, our very present help in trouble...The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" (vv. 1, 7). This is the Good News of the Gospel that filled Luther's heart with joy; joy that he expresses in the words of his hymn based on these words of Psalm 46, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

On this Reformation Day, I would like you to focus on the very thing that Luther focused on -- the unbreakable, unshakeable, unconquerable peace of Almighty God. There is nothing new under the sun. It's true of all the sinful terror and fear that have plagued us and beaten us down since that fateful day in the Garden of Eden. But, it's also true, My Dear Friends in Christ, of the Gospel promise and peace that puts to death all those fears and terrors and anxious doubts. There is nothing new under the sun.

In in the Psalm, God the Holy Spirit writes to give you a clear and terrifying image of a world that is absolutely crumbling and coming undone at the seams; a world that you are very familiar with and call "home." The earth, as we know it, is giving way, the mountains quaking and shaking, falling into the heart of the sea. The waters are foaming and raging. Nations are raging and warring and fighting; kingdoms are tottering. These are the words of Psalm 46, written a thousand years before the birth of Jesus; and yet, they could just as easily be the headlines in our news this morning. The more things change, the more they stay the same.

In the midst of all this terror and tumult and shaking and quaking, King David is telling us that God Himself is located **right** in the midst of it; He is God with us, to be our mighty and unshakeable fortress. In the very

midst of all this fear and sin and death and destruction, the voice of God pierces the darkness, commanding us: “Be still, and know that I am God. I’m right here. I’m with you always. I’ve got this. Be still.” Stop all the running around and acting like Chicken Little, throwing your hands up in the air and crying and wailing that the sky is falling. Be still, and know that I am God.

This is more than just a simple command, and certainly more than a mere suggestion or advice. This is God’s life-giving WORD; that same Word that Christ spoke to the raging waters that terrified His disciples when it threatened to swamp their little ark and send them to a watery grave. “Be still” ... and the wind and the waves obeyed Him. This is God’s life-giving Word that created all things out of nothingness; that shaped and formed dark chaos into His light-filled good creation. This is His Word that does what it says and accomplishes His purpose and will. As creation itself is tottering and teetering and crumbling and falling; as everything in our life it seems is coming undone; as all hell is breaking loose all around us, God’s Word of peace pierces through the dark and stormy clouds of chaos and brings peace; a peace that is only known in Christ Jesus.

This Word of peace does exactly what it says -- it gives you peace; peace to stand firm and be still and trust in the fact that God is in charge, and He is working all things for **your** good, and He has you in the palm of His hand. Nothing and no one, not even death, can snatch you from Him, in spite of how tough or difficult things may get in life.

You have that certainty because you heard it spoken from the dark agony of the cross. On the tree, the One of whom no sin was known became the curse of sin for all. On this tree of death, the sinless Lamb of God humbly and obediently suffered the full wrath of His Father’s anger

and punishment for sin -- your sin, my sin, and the sin of the whole world. The Father poured out all His wrath on His very Son, so that we can rejoice and be glad that it will not be poured out on us. Here is when the sky turned blacker than night. Here is when the earth quaked and mountains crumbled. Even the very house of God suffered “damage,” as that huge curtain that separated God from man was torn in two from top to bottom. And it’s out of the midst of all that tumult and terror and death and destruction that Christ Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me” (Mt 27:46)?

Martin Luther called these words of Christ the strongest confession of faith in all the Scriptures. In spite of all the terror, tumult, death, and destruction, Christ Jesus never lost His faith. In faith, Jesus cries out to His Father, because as He dies, He dies only because it is His Father’s will. God remained “His God”. And the Good NEWS for you, Dear Child of God, is because Jesus was abandoned by the Father as the punishment and wages of your sin, you will never be. God is with you, even as fear and trouble try to unsettle you.

He was with you when He reached down through the water and spoke His life-giving Word to you, [as He did for Clifford this morning](#), snatching you from the bonds of sin, death, and the devil, and marking you with the sign of the cross upon your forehead and your heart as one redeemed by Christ the crucified, sealing you in His peace and grace just as He sealed Noah in the ark to keep him safe from the flood waters.

Here, in just a couple of minutes, Christ your Lord will once again reach out and seal you -- in the very midst of this quaking and shaking veil of tears -- with His life-giving Word; to give the peace that passes all understanding in, with, and under the bread and wine. “Take and

eat. Take and drink. Be still. Be at peace. You are forgiven. You belong to Me, and I am with you always.” It’s that simple. It’s your reality, right here, right now.

May this ever-present and eternal peace of Christ be your rock, your fortress, and your peace all your days, no matter what life may throw at you. There is nothing new under the sun, and thanks be to God for it.

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.