

Psalm 46

I. INTRO

A. The term “safe space” has been quite inflammatory in recent years

1. One organization on the web that I found defined **safe space** as “*an environment where individuals feel emotionally and psychologically secure—free from judgment, harassment, or harm. It’s a place where people can express themselves openly without fear of ridicule or discrimination.*”
2. Of course, unless you have been living under a rock, you realize that that might sound nice on the surface, but it’s pretty problematic in reality
3. The world is not a safe space, and any safe space that we create (even with good intent) is fragile and frail, an illusion of an empty promise
 - a) We cannot truly be free from judgment b/c we cannot control what others think of us
 - b) We cannot be free from harassment b/c we can only control ourselves
 - c) We cannot guarantee safety from harm b/c harm is part of life
 - d) Although we believe in the right to free speech and express ourselves openly, others have the right to disagree and be mean
4. So, safe spaces might not be all that safe
 - a) Now this is not to say that we shouldn’t try and create environments that are free from discrimination and harm (that’s not what I am saying) → I am just pointing out the impossibility of it as a guarantee
 - b) In many ways, a ‘safe space’ is mankind’s attempt to create something only God can do
5. And that’s the **BIG IDEA** of Psalm 46 → **The only truly safe space is in the presence of God.**
 - a) At best, every other alternative is lacking
 - b) At worst, those escapes turn into soul-crushing idols
6. As we look at Psalm 46, I want to mention a few things:
 - a) Psalm 46 is a classic psalm. In other words, it’s worth memorizing the whole thing, a few verses, or at least the address
 - b) We are going to look at what the Psalm meant for Israel in the PAST, what it means for us in the PRESENT, and what it means for the FUTURE
 - c) I think this is important b/c often we misinterpret the Psalms, forgetting that our New Covenant reality in Jesus has given us NEW hope

II. PSALM 46

A. Introductory comments:

1. We don’t know when the Psalm was written
2. We don’t know why it was written (not a clear event)

- a) This is actually good for us b/c it shows it as a song that is for every season of difficulty (which you can relate to)
- 3. It is either broken into two stanzas (v1-7 & v9-11), as seen in the repeating line <or> at the *selah* markers.
 - a) Nobody actually knows what *selah* means and if they tell you they know they are lying or unaware
 - b) The best guess is that it's a musical interlude or marker (like decrescendo or crescendo)
 - c) I am choosing to look at this using the *selahs* as markers

B. [1] God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. [2] Therefore we will not fear though the earth give 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. Selah

- 1. Vv. 2-3 give a powerful picture of a tumultuous reality: earthquakes, landslides, raging waves, mountains falling apart
- 2. Contextually (nations raging and tottering, earth melting), this could refer to the nations around ancient Israel
- 3. This has led scholars to conjecture if the Psalm is in response to the Assyrian armies, for example, which conquered northern Israel but were unable to conquer the capital city in the south, Jerusalem, also poetically called Zion.
- 4. It's all just guesses. One thing is certain: **sometimes life and the ground you're standing on feel shaky**
 - a) Israel knew that as a little nation in a big old world (still know it)
 - b) Judah knew that as a small little part of the Israelite nation surrounded by tribes in rebellion
 - c) That reality is true for you too! I bet YOU have things this week that shook you up. What was it? **AND Where did you run?**
- 5. Everyone runs somewhere when things get shaky:
 - a) As a kid, I ran to my blanket → like it had a powerful ability to save
 - b) As I got older, maybe I ran to food or games or TV or friends
 - (1) The problem is that none of these things can stop the shaking. They can't stop the mountains from tumbling.
 - (2) And if you keep running to them and EXPECT THEM to do be that safe haven, you will eventually create an idol
 - (3) Blankets might be nice to keep warm, but they are lousy saviors (same is true for your spouse or a bottle of wine)
- 6. But there's good news: **God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**
 - a) Who is your help? God. Not XYZ
 - b) He is a refuge → safe place of defense
 - c) He is your strength → that tower has some nuclear warheads
 - d) He is a very present help...
 - (1) I feel safe as an American

- (2) If I call 911 someone will show up
- (3) I believe our military can and will protect my family
- (4) They are present... but not like God is

(5) God is simultaneously transcendent and intimate

- (a) A breath's prayer away
- (b) Closer than my skin (indwelt by HS deposit)
- (c) "Do not fear; I am with you"

7. The hope in the storm is not for the storm to cease, but the safe place in the midst of it → God, an unbreakable rock, is my safe place

C. [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. Selah

1. When life is tottering, the last thing I feel is glad. I bet you're the same...
2. Luckily for us, we can buy a plane ticket to Israel, go through the Sheep Gate of Jerusalem, hang a right at the market and take a swig. Right?
3. That's obviously not what the Psalmist is talking about.
 - a) The city of God, Zion, Jerusalem, is called the habitation of God b/c that's where the temple was
 - b) After the temple was inaugurated in 1 Kings, God's glory filled it → he let his presence dwell there
 - c) The Jews thought that b/c the presence was there, they would be untouchable
 - d) In the prophets, as God is telling the Jews that he is gonna let their city fall, they are arguing that it won't happen b/c of God's presence in the temple
 - e) So Ezekiel has a vision of the glory leaving the temple → essentially making way for destruction
 - f) Here, we see that sentiment: Since God dwells in the temple, we will be secure. → Forrest Frank, "God's got my back"
4. Check out the comparison between the tumultuous world and Zion
 - a) Storms raging **VS.** peaceful stream
 - b) Tumult **VS.** Gladness
 - c) Kingdoms totter **VS.** Jerusalem never moved
 - d) Earth melting **VS.** Beautiful sunrise for God's people
 - e) What's the difference between the world and Zion? God's presence: **The only truly safe space is in the presence of God.**
 - f) The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
 - (1) YHWH... who commands angelic armies... is our safe space
5. So, while YHWH defends our cause, we will be over here, chilling and sipping from the river that brings gladness. What's the river?
 - a) Psalm 23... quiet waters that restore my soul

- b) Ezekiel 47... a river flowing from the temple that brings life
 - c) John 4... living water that bursts forth from me
 - d) Revelation 22... living water w/ the tree of life
- 6. The river, IMHO, represents both the Word of God and the Spirit of God working in unison to bring gladness, refreshment, healing, and new life
- 7. While the world is falling apart, God, the Good Shepherd, lovingly walks his people over to the brook, makes them lie down, and take a rest
 - a) How do you find gladness in the midst of a tottering reality? With the Lord. Time spent at his river, sitting in the grass being with him
 - b) After all, the only truly safe space is in the presence of God.**
- D. *[8] Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. [9] He makes wars cease to the end 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. Selah*
 - 1. If you're anything like me, as you sit at that river for a moment or two, and you see God mounting his warhorse and rallying the angelic troops to wage war, you start to think it's time to get up and GO
 - a) After all the battle is raging! Kingdoms are clamoring. Now is the time for action. You have problems to solve, issues to consider!
 - b) You took a quick sip from the brook, but now let's roll
 - 2. But the **Lord speaks** for the first time in this Psalm, and it's like he's calming the storm in your heart **"BE STILL..." // lit: stop striving**
 - a) Stop striving & know that "I AM GOD" → You sit at the brook
 - b) The nations WILL be defeated → you drink some 'glad water'
 - c) I WILL be exalted → you place your confidence in me, not self
 - 3. Everything in us wants to swing by the "Soul Gas Station" and just grab \$5 or \$10 of 87 octane 'gladness gasoline' b/c we gotta go help God out
 - a) Be still. Stop striving. This is his fight. Will you let him fight it, or do you give the burden just to take it right back?**
 - 4. The Lord of hosts is with us, he is our refuge, our strength, our shield, our sword, our fortress, our gladness... He is our safe space.
 - 5. **The only truly safe space is in the presence of God, so stay there.**

III. CONCLUSION

- A. OT: God reminded Israel time and time again that as long as he was with them, they were safe
- B. NT: In the New Covenant, God doesn't live in a temple building, but in his people.
 - 1. We don't have to run to the temple, a religious building, or Jerusalem to draw close to God.
 - 2. He is a very present help in trouble b/c he lives within those reborn
 - a) We are called Living stones, temple, household & dwelling of God
 - b) When we read the Psalms and David (Ps. 84) says, "Oh I can't wait to go to the dwelling place of God" → You don't have to pray that anymore! You can say, "Thank GOD You are with me RIGHT

NOW b/c of Jesus! We are the dwelling place, and you HAVE TAKEN your rest in me!" It is finished folks!

- c) You don't have to wonder if God is gonna show up for you → he already did. He proved his love.
- d) He doesn't owe you anything, but he's please to give you more.
- e) You have a source of gladness, access to the river of life, a keycard with VIP access to the throneroom of God
- f) There is a river that flows from his throne. It makes your heart glad. It is safe. It is secure. He wants to talk to you. He wants to hear your prayers. He wants to shoulder your burdens. He wants to fight your battles.
- g) You can approach him ANYTIME with boldness, find rest, find refuge, find strength, find gladness, find security, find refreshment, find stillness, find answers, find peace... **will you go and sit?**

C. Practical Steps

1. **The solution for every season of tumult in your life is to run to Jesus.**

- a) The Psalms are a gift to know how to pray and think during every season of life.
- b) God is your ever-present help in times of trouble
- c) **Sitting at the river of life, Bible in hand, and prayers on your lips, isn't your last resort → it's your only resort.**
- d) **STOP STRIVING and let HIM fight the battles**
- e) I know that you want to solve the problem, but **BE STILL**
- f) And when he wants you to have clear direction, he will provide it through his Spirit, confirmed by the truth of the Word
- g) Ex: Oswald Chambers

D. Future Hopes

- 1. One day the Earth will totter. The mountains will fall into the sea. The stars will crash down.
- 2. Kingdoms will rage against God and his anointed. Christians will be persecuted.
- 3. There will be darkness and great affliction
- 4. The armies of the earth will rally around to fight against the returning Christ as if their nuclear weapons and drones could do anything
- 5. But with a Word he will undo it all → Shield, sword, spear will break; Fighting will cease; He will roll this world up as one rolls up a scroll; And he will make all things new
- 6. And we will be with him, at his side, as his bride, drinking deeply from the river of gladness and life → no more tears
- 7. The Lord is and WILL BE with us → now and forevermore

E. The only truly safe place is in the presence of God, and b/c of what Jesus has accomplished on the cross, that's actually possible. What good news. Let's share it!