

Overcoming Through Trust

Reflections on the 20th Anniversary of 9/11

September 12, 2021

Overarching Theme: In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

Instructions:

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.

Core Point:

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1st Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

Reflect on this Scripture: Psalm 46 NRSV

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*
² *Therefore we will not fear,
though the earth should change,
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;
³ though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.*

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 the city; it shall not be moved;
God will help it when the morning dawns.*
⁶ *The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.*
⁷ *The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

⁸ *Come, behold the works of the LORD;
see what desolations he has brought 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 shields with fire.*
¹⁰ *"Be still, and know that I am God!"*

*I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."*

¹¹ *The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*

This Week: Psalm 46

"God is our refuge and strength." Whether in this traditional translation or in Martin Luther's paraphrase, "A mighty fortress is our God," the opening line of Psalm 46 is one of the most memorable and powerful in all the book of Psalms. After the opening affirmation of faith (vv. 1-3), vv. 4-6 shift the focus to the city of God and to God's activity on behalf of it. Following the first occurrence of the refrain (v. 7), the final section begins with an invitation to consider God's "work's" (v. 8a), which are then described in vv. 8b-9. Another invitation is issued in v. 10, but this time it is in the divine first person. "*Be still, and know that I am God*" effectively summarizes the message of the entire psalm in preparation for the final refrain (v.11). Because of the focus on the city of God in vv. 4-6, Psalm 46 is usually classified as a song of Zion or Jerusalem; however, its significance is much broader than the focus on Zion. It is fundamentally an affirmation of faith – not in Zion, but in God. Thus it is often classified as a song of confidence or trust.

The affirmation in Psalm 46 of God's sovereignty and God's will for peace among nations and in the cosmos is eschatological (with an ongoing focus on ultimate hope). As with Jesus' proclamation of the reign of God, it does not appear that God reigns or that peace currently prevails. But it is precisely this eschatological orientation that calls us to decision: Shall we see the world as the sphere of God's rule? In our day, as much as in the days of the psalmist and Jesus, the decision to recognize God's sovereignty is crucial. We are tempted more than ever to conclude that our security finally depends on ourselves or our possessions or our technology or our weapons, rather than on God.

-Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol 4, pp. 864, 867

Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:

1. The affirmation of verse 1- *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble* - gives a reason why believers don't have to succumb to unbridled fear. That said, in the midst of a troubling situation, it is easy to initially overreact in a fear response. Is there a difference between *feeling* afraid and overreacting in fear? What do you do to try to stay calm in a fearful situation?

2. In the midst of the complete cosmic chaos described in verses 2b-3, we are reminded of a river that refreshes the city of God (apparently the 'city of God' is Jerusalem). Since there is no physical river in Jerusalem, what do you think this metaphorical river represents?
3. Verses 8-9 describe the limitations of human warfare to achieve security and God's ultimate work of prevailing peace. Why do you think that this Psalm maintains a pessimistic view of human armaments in terms of achieving enduring peace and security?
4. Psalm 46:10 has been a go-to for many through the ages. Has this verse been helpful for you personally? Feel free to share with your group. Could this verse have wider implications for the church at large? For a nation?

Activity for the Life of a Disciple:

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC and/or to journal in the "*Morning by Morning*" gratitude resource.
2. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week (Psalm 46:10-11):
*¹⁰ "Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth."
¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge.*