

Devotion: Tuesday, March 24, 2020

From the wisdom of Mr. Rogers (the Rev. Fred Rogers): “When I was a boy I used to think that strong meant having big muscles, great physical power; but the longer I live, the more I realize that real strength has much more to do with what is not seen. Real strength has to do with helping others.”

Psalm 46

- ¹ *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.**

So here, then, is the question: In such a troubled world, at these troubled times, can we really believe that “*The LORD of hosts is with us*” (v. 7), a very present help in trouble?

Any Christian today must be able to deal with this question. And the answer must be more than “God is good all the time.” If God is not more than a fuzzy feeling, or the tear in your eye after singing “God Bless America,” God is no God at all, and we might as well pack it in and be done with it. This is not the theology of Scripture, or the answer the people outside our doors are looking for.

The God of the psalmist is more than a convenient miracle worker. He is, instead, the one and only creator and ruler of the universe. Look at the language of the text. God is a “*refuge and*

strength, a very present help in trouble” (v. 1). The God of Jacob, we’re told, is a “*fortress*” (v. 7). He breaks bows, shatters spears and burns shields. If the earth implodes, God is God (v. 2), if the Himalayas are tossed into the depths of the Atlantic, God is God (v. 2); come typhoons, hurricanes and earthquakes, and Covid, God is God.

In short, God is in control. No individuals or governments or movements or nations can overwhelm the agenda of the one true God, the one who is “a great king over all the earth” (Psalm 47:2).

Back to our question: In such a troubled world, can we really believe that “*The LORD of hosts is with us*” (v. 7), a very present help in trouble?

Yes. God’s presence is not simply a neutral power used only for those who believe. Instead, God’s power is directed “for us,” for our good and for our benefit. The original Hebrew of verse 1 actually reads, “*God is for us a refuge and strength.*”

God is for us. Not that God is “for us” and not for anyone else. No need to wave the American flag here. In our darkest hour, God comes to us as refuge, strength, fortress, a God who is “for us” all that we need.

It is God’s very nature to be for us a tower of strength, a rock of Gibraltar, a fortress of protection. This is who God is; this is what God does.

Back to our question: In such a troubled world, can we really believe that “*The LORD of hosts is with us*” (v. 7), a very present help in trouble?

Yes. That’s the psalmist’s advice: Shut up and listen. If you do, you will know that I am God (v. 10)

God rocks. God rules. God is God.

Go to God, our rock and our refuge, in this time of need.

Let us pray:

Faithful God, you promise to be our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble. Grant us the grace to live in these difficult days as if we truly believe this, that we may build wisely on Jesus Christ, the solid rock on whom your church is founded. Amen.

Stay well!

Pastor Jack