

Title: When Things Go Wrong**[Slide 1]****Text: Psalm 46****Two Stories****[Slide 2]****Psalm 46:**

The Psalm that we are going to look at this morning is Psalm 46. Let’s stand and read it together:

[Slide 2]

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

*Though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.*

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*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

*God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*

*Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

*The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

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*Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shield with fire.*

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*He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

*The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

A not-so-funny thing happened on our way to the future!

It was not so very long ago that our culture walked away from the story that had created and sustained it, choosing instead a darker narrative. Our culture was built upon the Creator God making a good world, and choosing to restore and redeem that world when it became infected with evil. It's a story with a happy beginning and a happy ending. It's a story about God joining us in the middle of the mess that our world has become to repair His creation. We can think of this story line as taking the path of the letter "U."

But our culture has largely abandoned this U-shaped story and chosen another narrative: one that turns the U on its head. Our culture's story is now one that begins with *nothing* and ends with *nothing*. There is no Creator. The Universe somehow spins out atoms, molecules, suns and galaxies, planets and people. But one day what the Universe gave, the Universe will take away. Meanwhile, humans struggle against the forces of chaos and darkness to create a temporary illusion of order and goodness. This is our world's Upside Down U-Shaped story.

The Other Story:

Of course, the Upside Down U-Shaped story that begins and ends in dark and empty chaos, is as old as recorded history. Most humans, most of the time, have felt alone and vulnerable in a dangerous and unpredictable world. No wonder they came up with so many different strategies for psyching out the unseen Forces that they assumed were controlling their lives: gods and goddess of everything from weather to reproduction, war and peace, love and death.

It was against this backdrop that the writer of Psalm 46 proclaims God's Story. His song does not shy away from the dangers and chaos we encounter in this world. But he challenges us to walk away from the world's dark story and dare to believe that the God who created us cares for us still, and will repair His world.

Refuge and Strength

Tsunami:

The song begins with a bold declaration:

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Psalm 46:1 NIV

*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

Trouble is going to come in our lives. But the psalm declares that God is both greater than the trouble *and* is right here to protect us and see us through.

The chaos from which God created our world can never unseat Him or destroy His people. To make this point, the writer paints a vivid picture of what must be the most terrifying natural calamity even to this day: the double punch of a massive earthquake, followed by the wall of water we call a tsunami.

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Psalm 46:2-3 NIV

*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

*Though its waters roar and foam
and the mountains quake with their surging.*

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On July 9, 1958 the largest tsunami ever recorded raged through Lituya Bay in southern Alaska. At 10:15 p.m. an 8.3 earthquake triggered a massive landslide, sending 30 million cubic meters of rock and ice thousands of feet down a mountainside and into the bay. The landslide created a wave that rose to a maximum height of 1720 feet, obliterating everything in its path.

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The “earth gave way,” and a mountain fell “into the heart of the sea.”

God’s Stream:

So where to go in such a chaotic world? The psalm writer responds that while the world we live in is at times chaotic and threatening, God is here for us:

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Psalm 46:4-7 NIV

*There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

*God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*

*Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

*The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

God makes a safe place – a place of refuge and strength. He tames the raging torrents, turning them into a life-giving stream. His city is our city; His fortress is our fortress. It cannot fail.

Refuge and Strength:

We all experience the chaos and evil of this world. It may come from the natural realm, or like the “uproar of the nations” that the writer speaks of, it may come from the people in our lives. It often erupts from right inside our own hearts and minds. We all too often find ourselves seemingly stuck at the bottom of the U. But the song writer assures us that God is there – in that very place – offering to shelter us in His impregnable fortress.

The key is knowing how to come into that place of safety. Our world will be shaken to its very core. Things we thought were certain will be turned on their heads. The waters will come up to our necks and we’ll wonder how we can ever go on. That is when we most need to remember that the LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress!

When Things Go Wrong...

“Come and see what the LORD has done!”

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I recently watched a documentary on World War II. It told the story of how the Nazis attempted to build an impregnable line of fortification from Norway to Spain in order to keep Allied forces from invading Europe. The documentary brought back memories of my daughter and me climbing to the top of a cliff in Normandy and snooping around in an old German bunker – party of that line of Atlantic defenses.

On June 6, 1944 Allied forces stormed the beaches of Normandy and the Germans Atlantic Wall was put to the test. It failed within a few hours. Now all that remains are crumbling concrete ruins, many covered with graffiti. What seemed so formidable – an endless line of enemy fortresses – is now regularly invaded by tourists and picnickers.

The song writer says that this is what God does to the forces that would destroy His world:

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Psalm 46:8-9 NIV

*Come and see what the LORD has done,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*He makes wars cease
to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the shield with fire.*

This is *what God does*. He destroys the Destroyer. He breaks down the weapons and brings peace.

"Be Still and Know that I am God"

At the end of the song God Himself speaks:

[Slide 13]

Psalm 46:10 NIV

*He says, "Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."*

Think of it: right in the middle of earthquakes and hurricanes, politics and warfare, God is *present*. He is not far off in a distant heaven, leaving us to figure things out. He is *here*. He talks to us. He draws us into Himself.

"Be still" can be translated, "Let go," "Relax." Our first instinct when things go wrong is to tense up, go into fight or flight mode. But God Himself says, "Relax and remember Who I am. I have this under control. I will be exalted in the realm of people and the realm of nature. Stick with Me."

When things go wrong:

So when things go wrong, and they certainly will, find the fortress. When the waters rage, find God's stream. Choose the right story. Don't be fooled into thinking that this world's story of nothing to nothing with an illusion of

human greatness in between will see you through. Choose God's story. It is the story of a good world that has been corrupted by evil and death. But is also the story of the good God who comes to stand in the middle of the mess and say "Be still, and know that I am God..." He is right here to protect us and to help us turn the corner from chaos to His New Creation.