

**Pause**  
**Psalm 46**  
**Mercy Hill Church | December 29, 2024**

### **Introduction**

- Story about the boys & listening to the Wiggles

### **Transition**

- Even for us older folks, often we should and need to hit “pause” for ourselves. Sometimes circumstances force us to pause (re: getting sick, a physical injury or ailment), other times it’s certain times of the years (re: holidays, birthdays) or even times of transition like graduating, moving or leaving a job, etc.
- With the year 2024 wrapping up in just a couple of days and the new year of 2025 just around the corner, I thought it be helpful for us – even before we go back to work or school – to hit the “pause” button of life...and spend some time looking into Psalm 46
- It’s a beautiful Psalm which reminds us, encourages us, perhaps even challenges us to “pause.”

### **Background of Psalm 46**

- Poetry vs. narrative (like the Gospels or the book of Acts) vs. epistles (letters with a very logical flow like 1 Peter)
- The beauty of God’s Word, the Bible, is that it includes different genres, different types of literary forms which speak not only to the logical but the creative/imaginative.
- Psalms are often more descriptive vs. prescriptive
- Context: Often times can be unclear the exact context in which a particular psalm was written
  - Psalm 46: Possibly 2 Kings 18-19 (cf. Isaiah 36-37) when the Assyrians (under King Sennacherib) invaded the southern kingdom Judah while King Hezekiah was king – and the Assyrians laid siege against King Jerusalem, the capitol city, where King Hezekiah was.
- Structurally, the Psalm is written like a song with 2 (or possibly 3?) verses and a chorus (refrain)
  - Verse 1 (vv.1-3 or vv.1-6)
  - Verse 2 (vv.8-10)
  - Chorus/Refrain (vv.7 and 11)

### **1. The Perils We Face In This Life & World (vv.2b-3, 6a)**

- In this world and life, we’re constantly reminded that we face many different perils, dangers, circumstances as we live in a fallen and broken world.

### **The Perils of Nature (vv.2b-3)**

- V.2b-3 “...though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though the waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.”
- Nature, mountains, oceans/seas in the Ancient Near East culture were not considered peaceful, serene, tranquil or orderly but rather chaotic, powerful, dangerous and uncontrollable.
  - For people in the Bible times, being out “in nature” was considered dangerous – whereas as cities were considered safe, secure and peaceful.

### **The Perils of People (v.6a)**

- V.6a “The nations rage, the kingdoms totter” - sway, unsteady

- Implying the instability of kings, kingdoms and nations; geopolitical situations were constantly changing. No peaceful transfer of power.
  - Roman Empire (one of the most powerful kingdoms) lasted only about 500 years || US is about 250 years old.
- The perils of nature and the perils of people – both can be sources and causes of much fear and anxiety. Why? Beyond our control and power...

### Reflection Questions

- What are some things in your life (this past year or as you look ahead to the new year) which are sources of anxiety, fear or worry?
- What or who do you typically turn to in moments of anxiety or fear?

### 2. The Peace We Find in God Alone (vv.1, 4-9, 11)

- The Bible doesn't shy away from the realities and difficulties of life.
- Jesus Himself said in John 16:33 "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."
- In the midst of the perils we face in this life and this world, we can find peace in God alone
- V.4 - possibly Gihon spring which brought fresh water to Jerusalem while under they were under siege...but more likely river => streams refers to the Garden of Eden (cf. Genesis 2:10, Ezekiel 47:1-12, John 7:37-39) – picture or allusion to paradise.
  - River as a source for life -- provides water for drinking but also for crops – life, joy, peace.

### The Protection of God (vv1, 7b, 11b)

- (cf. Psalm 121, 2 Thessalonians 3:3, John 10:28-29)
- God is our "refuge" (v.1b), our "fortress" (vv.7b, 11b)
  - Psalm 144:2: "Rock, fortress, stronghold, shield..."
  - Kids illustration: Being safe(ety) if standing on a base in tag or baseball.

### The Power of God (vv.6b, 8-9)

- (cf. Genesis 1:3, Mark 3:5, 4:35-41, Job 42:2)
- V.6b "He utters his voice, the earth melts" – the power of God, just speaks!
  - Genesis 1:3 – "God *said* let there be light, and there was light"
  - Healing of the man with a withered hand in Mark 3:5 – "[Jesus] *said* to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored."
  - Disciples get into a boat with Jesus to cross the sea (Mark 4:35-41)
    - <sup>37</sup> And a great windstorm arose, and the waves were breaking into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. <sup>38</sup> But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion. And they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" <sup>39</sup> And he awoke and *rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!"* And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.
- The power of God and the sovereignty of God
  - Job 42:2 - "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted."
- The transcendence of God

### The Presence of God (vv.1b, 5, 7a, 11a)

- V.7a & 11a – "The Lord of hosts is with us"
  - Lord of hosts = Lord of armies = God's power and might

- LORD = Yahweh – the personal, covenantal name of God
- Both the transcendence of God and the immanence of God
- V.1b – “a very present” (or “well proved” – reliable, real) help
- V.5 – “God is in the midst of her...”
- Matthew 28:20b – “...And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
- Jesus – Christmas & Easter
- Gospel

#### **Reflection:**

- In what areas of your life do you need to know (or remember) that God is both sovereign and He is with you?

### **3. The Importance of Pausing (v.10)**

- Only command or call to action in this entire passage is in v.10 – to pause
  - “Desist, give in, let be, shut up, stop it, yield, let go...”
- “Selah” – pause, reflect when reading the psalm
  - Not every psalm has a selah. Psalm 46 one has 3 selahs
- “Be still” – this notion of stopping, pausing, resting we find back in the 10 commandments and God’s command to honor the sabbath (cf. Exodus 20:8) – cease, pause from work – why?
- **Pausing to Remember God (v.10a)**
- It is very easy for us to forget about God! Whether for the Israelites while travelling through the desert or for us today travelling on the 85, 87 or 280. And it’s especially true when we are faced with anxieties, fears and worries...
  - Be Still and Know that I am God
  - Be Still and know that God is our protector
  - Be still and know that God is powerful & sovereign
  - Be still and know that God is present
  - Be still and know that God is God – and I am not
    - Be Still...and know my work (career) is NOT God
    - Be Still...and know my savings/retirement account is NOT God
    - Be Still...and know my grades are NOT God
    - Be Still...and know my parents are NOT God
    - Be Still...and know my child(ren) is NOT God
    - Be Still...and know my friends are NOT God
- Kids Illustration: Don’t think of a pink elephant w/ purple spots vs. think about a slice of pizza w/ your favorite toppings. Which is easier to do?
- In Matthew 6:25-34, the famous “do not worry/be anxious” passage
  - V.25 – “Do not be anxious...”
    - V.26 – “Look at the birds of the air...”
    - V.28 – “Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow...”
  - V.31 – “Do not be anxious...”
    - V.33 – “But seek first the kingdom of God...”
- **Pausing to Glorify God (v.10b)**
  - v.10b – “I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”
  - Pausing not just for our good and well-being but also for God’s glory
  - As we pause and know and trust God in the midst of our busyness, our anxieties and fears, who gets the glory? God does! God is honored, glorified, worshipped and exalted!

- King Hezekiah and the city of Jerusalem sought God in the midst of being sieged by the Assyrians, God was worshiped and glorified!

**Reflection:**

- As you look back on this past year, in what ways have you seen God's grace, mercy and goodness to you (and our church) -- even through difficulties and challenges? Who can you share this with as a way to glorify God?
- As you look ahead to the new year, what are some ways you can practically pause, remember and know God (more) -- to grow in faith, community and mission?