

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Psalm 46:1-11

Over the past two weeks Nancy and I have taken a few days away each week to get some quiet and rest away from all the activity of ministry and the busyness of life. And both of us, after both weeks, noticed the stark contrast between the restful, quiet spirit of peace we experienced while we were away and the restless, aggressive spirit of struggle we experienced after we came back home. Now of course, to varying degrees, one could say that contrast was due to the fact that while we were away, we didn’t watch much of the news regarding is going on in the world, but when we came back - it didn’t take more than a few minutes of catching up on the news, to begin thinking about when we could go again.

The truth is, regardless of whatever news media source we look at or listen to, the world is a mess. This should not be of a surprise for any of us. The world and everything and everyone have been a mess ever since Adam and Eve rebelled against God and rejected God in the Garden of Eden. Over that one single act of sin God pronounced His judgment of death on everything and everyone – and in the same breath God also mercifully and graciously and lovingly promised to send a Savior into the world to take God’s judgment of death for our sin upon himself, so we might be forgiven and restored back into the joyful, intimate relationship with God, by God and for God, that we were created for. Jesus came into the world to die on a cross to clean up the mess of sin that we created in the beginning. But while God sent Jesus into the world and fulfilled His promise, we will still experience the mess of sin on earth in the flesh, constantly and continually, on a regular basis, That will not change for us on earth until Jesus takes us back home to God either by our physical death or by Jesus’ return to earth.

Job 5:7 says that *“man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.”* Job 14:1 tell us that life is but *“few of days and full of trouble.”* We see this *“trouble”* that comes from our mess of sin at work in our world and in our lives today. Nations continue to war against one another. Terrorists remain a be a constant threat across the globe. Governments struggle to maintain political and economic stability. Donald Trump and his heartless immigration policy, as well his nationalistic, world-wide, tariff war. Justin Trudeau’s strange fixation on sexual orientation/gender identity and the legalization of marijuana. The ratification and promotion of murdering unborn children and self-murdering of those who are weak, ill or old. The opioid epidemic and overdose crises. The growth and conflict of tent cities for the homeless. Thugs breaking into our homes, assaulting and robbing us. Car accidents that claim or maim of our loved ones. Cancer. Heart Disease. Divorce. Racism. Entitlement. Pride. Church conflict.

These things are nothing more than just an abbreviated list of the mess of sin on earth that is but *“few of days and full of trouble”* because *‘man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.’* In the midst the *“trouble”* we have been in or that we are in or that we will be in – it was exciting to read that Ali Hasan, a B.C. teacher from New Westminster, won over \$69,000 US in the three days he played Jeopardy. It was also good to see that he lost his championship position to another Canadian. The article I read next to this one was about the Canadian Supreme court denying accreditation to Trinity Western University because of their opposition to homosexuality and biblical position on marriage.

“Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward.” So much of what we see and hear about our world today is reflective of the trouble of struggle, affliction, loss, conflict, violence, tragedy, pain, suffering and death - and most often than not these are our personal experiences. It is at such times we can take heart, in that God’s Word tells us that anything and everything that happens in life is all under the control of our most sovereignty God and for the sovereign purpose of God – and so it is at such times we can always trust in the providence of God, whether it be a world catastrophe or a personal tragedy.

The providence of God is that characteristic or attribute of God of His personal and continual and sovereign involvement in all that He has created. God providentially keeps all things He created existing and maintaining the properties with which He created them - drawing all things together to cooperate together within their distinctive properties, according to and for the fulfillment of His created purpose. Whether it be a natural cataclysmic event such as a hurricane, tsunami or earthquake - or whether it be of personal suffering, affliction or pain - God sovereignly rules over all that happens in life. Romans 8:28 says *“we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.”* The providence of God also means God sovereignly rules over each decision we make and every action we take. Proverbs 16:33: *“The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.”* Proverbs 16:9: *“The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.”* Proverbs 21:1: *“The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will.”* Ephesians 1:11: *“In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.”*

The providence God allows us to embrace the truth that we are never in the grip of blind forces such as chance, luck, or fate. All decisions of humanity are under the sovereign purpose of God; and that all that happens to us fits perfectly into God’s plan - which means *every event in life is a new opportunity to trust, obey, and rejoice in God, knowing that it’s all is for our good and for God’s glory.* Our text today tells us that God even has great purposes in the tragedies and disasters of this world. Psalm 46 was written in the context of difficulties and uncertainties - and as the writer’s world crumbled down all around him, he wrote: *“God is our refuge and strength!”* These words reflect the intimate relationship that we can have with God, as well as receiving God’s protection, position and power - when we make God is our greatest treasure. When God is our greatest treasure Deuteronomy 31:6 tells us: *“It is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.”* Today we read that in times of trouble, struggle, tragedy and catastrophe we can trust in the providence of God’s sovereign presence.

1) In times of trouble we can trust in the providence of God’s sovereign presence - because of His sovereign protection. *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling”* (Psalm 46:1-3). No matter whatever *“trouble”* we might find ourselves in - God is our *refuge*, our *strength*, our *help* in times of *“trouble.”* God is our *refuge* of protection when the world seems to be crashing down all around us. There is no other refuge like God. King David’s writes: *“My rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold”* (Psalm 18:2).

The word *“strength”* reminds us that our true protection comes from God: *“God is our strength!”* The phrase *“very present help”* tells us that God is with us and always ready and available to be our refuge and strength. In context, the word *“trouble”* here speaks of *“struggle, affliction, tribulation.”* God is telling us today to not live in fear when an earthquake and tsunami does hit Vancouver Island because God is providentially in control over every hurricane and earthquake - and *He offers the presence of Himself to be our refuge and strength and help in the trouble of our situations and circumstances.* In Psalm 5:11 we read of someone who did take refuge in God during a time of trouble: *“Let all who take refuge in you rejoice; let them ever sing for joy, and spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may exult in you.”*

The psalmist in Psalm 46 imagines the worst disaster that could possibly hit God's people as he describes hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms and floods. This is a reality for us as we live in the Pacific Rim; Vancouver Island was hit with more than 250 tiny tremors June 19-20. In ancient times mountains provided refuge in times of war and were considered to be the most secure part of nature. They were the most fixed and firm things on earth. But nothing on earth is eternally fixed or firm. Someday even Mount Arrowsmith will be no more. Someday all that be will left is God – as He will always be providentially and sovereignly in control of all things. Even though the *“earth gives way”* - if the landscape changes, and our houses and businesses and everything we have and own gets blown or swept away - we need not be afraid. If God is our refuge and strength we need not fear *“though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea.”* In all times of trouble - *“though waters may roar and foam, though mountains tremble”* we can trust in God's providence because of His sovereign protection.

2) In times of trouble we can trust in the providence of God's sovereign presence because of His sovereign position. *“There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns. The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress”* (Psalm 46:4-7). God's position as the Creator, who reigns and rules as the Almighty King of the universe is reflected in that God has chosen *“the city of God”* (Jerusalem) to be his *“holy habitation of the Most High”* where his people are to come and joyfully worship Him. What is interesting here is that Jerusalem and was built on top of Mount Moriah and the psalmist speaks of a *“river”* and *“streams”* but Jerusalem doesn't have any *“river”* or *“streams”* running through it. But while Jerusalem did not have any rivers or streams running through it - it did have the providential presence of God's sovereign rule and reign flowing like a river through the hearts of God's people.

This Psalmist tells us that while the ocean rage and the waters roar; the reign of our most glorious God gently flows like a quiet stream. While it may seem like the world is falling apart, the presence of the Ultimate Ruler brings peace. The presence of God *“in the midst”* of His people is one of the great truths and most comforting promises in Scripture. The power of the presence the sovereign King of the universe is reflected in the words: *“She shall not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.”* No matter how bad things get, God's is always providentially in control. We see this more clearly in taking a closer look at the connection between verses 2–3 and verse six here: *“Though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam.”* The words for *“move”* and *“roar”* in verses 2-3 are the same Hebrew words used for *“rage”* and *“totter”* in verse 6: *“The nations rage (roar) and the kingdoms totter (move).”* The psalmist used the same Hebrew words to make the point that whether our troubles in life come from nature (hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, storms and floods) or from political upheaval and wars (nations raging and kingdoms tottering) – God is still our refuge because He is presently in the position of ultimate authority over everything/everyone in the universe.

We also see God's position is our *“strength”* too. His sovereign authority is an active counter force and a source of peace and refreshment when nations rage and kingdoms totter: *“He utters his voice, the earth melts”* just as His position causes waters that roar and foam to become a *“river whose streams make glad the city of God.”* The psalmist affirms the peace and power of God's presence and position here: *“The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”* God is present and reigning with His people even when *“the nations rage, the kingdoms totter.”* The presence of God as King in our lives is our refuge; the raging world melts and dissolves before Him: *“He utters his voice, the earth melts.”* God providentially protects us with the presence of His position in Christ. Jesus came as *“Immanuel”* which means *“God with us”* and after his resurrection Jesus said, *“I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Matthew 28:20). This is why the apostle Paul, who knew a lot of *“trouble”* could write: *“We are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:37-39).

3) In times of trouble we can trust in the providence of God's sovereign presence because of His sovereign power. *"Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress"* (Psalm 46:8-11). The phrase *"Come, behold the works of the Lord, how he has brought desolations on the earth"* brings to mind the power of the destruction caused by the Japanese earthquake and tsunami that killed over 16,000 people in 2011 and the Indonesian tsunami that killed over 230,000 people in fourteen countries in 2004. The phrase *"Come behold"* here in the Hebrew means "to run or pursue in order to gaze and perceive." The psalmist is telling us that when we stop and focus on the vast sovereign providential immensity of how God exercises His protection, position and power in the natural world - we will clearly see God's immeasurable power in the universe as being absolutely preeminent over and above all things. When the world calls hurricanes, earthquakes and tsunamis an act of God, they are absolutely right.

God's power as the Creator, as the Almighty God of the universe is also reflected in the reality that *"He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire."* At the time this was written, the Assyrian empire had assembled the mightiest army on earth, and was bent on conquering the entire world. But Almighty God providentially had other plans and purposes. An army with broken bows and shattered spears and burning chariots cannot win a war. In His position as sovereign king, God did not allow Assyria to conquer the world. He was in charge. He is the ultimate power in all of the universe. God will decide who wins and who loses.

In verse ten God calls us to bow and surrender before Him in His omnipotent position as the preeminent, sovereign ruler the universe: *"Be still and know that I am God."* To *"be still"* means to "cast down or let fall." It's the sense and idea of *not putting forth exertion*; it's a picture of letting our hands fall to our sides, surrendering to God and leaving matters with Him. This is not about a moment of silence or just being quiet. This is a call for all people to stop focusing on ourselves and on each other and on circumstances and to situations – and start focusing their hearts and lives on God. The word *"know"* here means to "acknowledge and comprehend." This is a command and rebuke from God that we cease striving on our own agendas, stop reacting in our own strength - and start striving towards humbly submitting and surrendering ourselves to *knowing* God and *obeying* God.

God Himself proclaims: *"I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* As we stop trying to control our lives and living in our own strength; as we empty ourselves of ourselves so we might be filled up with God; as we quiet our souls and reflect upon the power and providence of God over and above everything - we will recognize His sovereignty, His supremacy His pre-eminence, His providential and inevitable triumph over all things. Until we are *"still"* in our hearts and quiet our souls before His throne, the awesome reality of the return of our Lord Jesus will not change us. God will be exalted in all the earth because the glory of God will be revealed in Jesus Christ. *"He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross"* (Col 1:15-20).

"The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" (Psalm 46:11). In times of trouble we can trust in the providence of God's sovereign presence (*"with us"*) because of His position (*"The Lord of hosts"*) and His power (*"the God of Jacob"*) and His protection (*"is our fortress"*). In Psalm 124:8 King David wrote: *"Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth"* because he found his security in a sovereign God who was providentially in control over all situations and circumstances.

Our security is to be *in God*, not in the things of this world. Proverbs 9:10: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."* Psalm 20:7-8: *"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand upright."* 1 Peter 1:3-4: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you."*

Our security is to be *in our faith in God*, not in our safety in this world. Psalm 16:8: *"I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken."* Psalm 91:4-6: *"He will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday."* 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."* Hebrews 12:28-29: *"Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire."*

Our security is to be *in our eternity with God*, not in our circumstances in this world. 2 Corinthians 5:1: *"For we know that if the tent, which is our earthly home, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* 1 Peter 4:12-13: *"Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed."* Romans 8:18: *"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us."*

Our security is to be in the reality that even though life on earth is a mess of sin - Jesus Christ is our Savior, Lord, God and King. Romans 8:35-39: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

In Mark 12:29-31 Jesus told us that the greatest commandment is *"Hear, O Israel: (Listen up, Arrowsmith Baptist Church) "The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."* And in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus told us that the Great Commission is to, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* And on this day, the mission statement of Arrowsmith Baptist Church is: *"We seek to passionately proclaim the Glory of God in Christ for the joy of all people."*

Today, Psalm 46 asks us the questions: How are we doing with the Greatest Commandment? How are we doing with the Great Commission? How are we doing with our own mission statement? Truthfully, we have ways to go – and there are differing opinions as to what is holding us back. But the psalmist gives us some deeper insight into the real reason why God's people are slow to go and make disciples of all nations – as God Himself tell us right before He said: *"I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"* Missions, outreach, reaching the lost, sharing Jesus Christ with others is hindered, we read, when we refuse to obey God and *"be still, and know that" He is "God."* One of the greatest reasons the greatest commandment to love God and great commission to go and make disciples is so hard to fulfill – is because those in the church often do not give God the real priority He deserves. We saw this last week when Jesus said: *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

We see this in our text for today. Right before God said: *“I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth”* He said: *“Be still, and know that I am God.”* Remember that the context of these words is the psalmist proclaiming the glory of God’s the providence of God’s sovereign presence in the midst of moving mountains, roaring waters, raging nations, falling kingdoms and the violence and death of war – and God declares: *“Be still”* (cease your selfish striving, quit being so busy doing your own thing) *“and know that I am God”* (I am the sovereign Creator of the universe who providentially rules and reign over all – love me, trust me, surrender to me, serve me) - and *“I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!”* (the name of Jesus Christ will be treasured and shared and bear fruit throughout all the earth). And then psalmist cries out: *“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress!”* We will never fulfill the Greatest Commandment, the Great Commission and the mission statement of Arrowsmith Baptist Church until - we become *“still”* enough in our hearts and lives to let realities *of who God truly is* sink into our souls. And so *“be still”* and listen to the apostle Paul tell us to how God providentially saves us and empowers us to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:3-16

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:1-10

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:14-21

May Jesus be the greatest treasure of our hearts as we trust in the providence of God’s sovereign presence as we live out and share the gospel of Jesus Christ in good time and in times of trouble. Amen!

