

Sermon: Peace in the Midst of the Mess

Text: Psalm 46

Discussion Questions:

Storms are an inevitable part of life. There is absolutely no way to predict when they will come—but once they're upon you, there is no way to ignore them!

I think of a time when my wife and I were visiting our oldest son (Jay) and his wife (Morgan) in Charlotte, NC. Our second son (Jesse) and his wife (Carissa) made the trip over from Greenville, SC to spend time with us as well. It was about 10pm, and we were laughing it up in the family room. Carissa had never seen an episode of the TV game show Jeopardy! Can you believe that? (I'm sure many of you can!) She knew the idea of the show, but had never actually watched a show. So there we were, doing our best to answer the questions (or better said, shouting out questions to the answers given)—when Morgan came down from upstairs to announce that we were under a “Tornado Warning.” Wow—we had NO IDEA. It wasn't even raining outside, but apparently a nasty storm was bearing down on us complete with funnel clouds and hail.

I can assure you that the mood in the room changed instantly! At one moment we're having fun playing Jeopardy—and then the next moment we're very serious and obviously concerned about the storm that was on the way. The good news is—the most intense part of the storm veered south of us, and no funnel clouds ever actually touched down. All we experienced was some wind and a little rain. But this scenario vividly illustrates the unexpected and all-consuming nature of severe storms.

- How about you? What is a “storm story” that you think of from your own experience?
- What is the worst storm you've ever been in?
- Have you ever actually seen a tornado? Have you been in a hurricane?

The storms we experience are not just found in nature (wind, rain, etc.). We also experience other kinds of storms. These storms are typically far more “severe” and difficult.

- Take some time to talk about this. What other kinds of storms come upon us?
- I'm guessing there were several things that came up in your conversations—things such as cancer, or accidents, or tragedies, or divorce, or watching someone you love go through a difficult time. What is it about these storms that can make them much more difficult than an actual storm that we experience in nature?
- Looking back over your life, what would you say is the worst storm of this kind (emotional or spiritual) that you have experienced?
- What did you do to cope with this storm? What actions did you take to find relief or Shelter? Was there anyone in your life that helped you endure this storm? What difference did their being there make to you?

This morning, we are taking a deeper look at one of the most encouraging Psalms in the entire Bible. It's a Psalm that talks about storms. But it also describes how to endure these storms!

Examination:

- Read **Psalm 46:1-3**

- What are the first two words of this Psalm?
 - How many different ways can you think of to finish the sentence: “God is...”
 - What does it mean for God to be our “refuge”? What, actually, is a refuge? How is it that God is a refuge for us? In what ways can we experience this personally?
 - What is the difference between God being our “refuge”—and God being our “strength”? How have you experienced God as your strength—in what ways did He strengthen you?
 - Not only is God our help when we’re in trouble—He’s our “ever-present” help! What does this mean? Why is this such an important thing to understand about God?
 - “Therefore”...what? (v. 2) There is a big difference between saying “I will not fear”—and really and actually not fearing! Have you ever observed this lack of fear in another person? It’s quite something when you find someone who, in the face of cancer for example, say’s “I’m not afraid.” How do the promises in verse 1 enable us to ace troubles unafraid?
 - The list of disasters in verses 2 and 3 go way beyond some of the “small stuff” we often sweat. They remind us of the flood in Genesis 7, or the apocalypse in the Book of Revelation. Do you think it is possible to not be afraid when facing these kinds overwhelming storms?
 - According to the footnote, what word appears at the end of verses 3, 7, and 11? What does this word mean (look it up)? Why is it an important word?
- Read **Psalm 46:4-7**
 - In contrast to the foaming waters of verse 3, we find calm and relaxing water in verse 4. Where is this water? How does this verse connect with the same river we read about in **Genesis 2:10** and **Revelation 22:1-2**?
 - Talk about verse 6. How is this verse true today? Do you truly believe that if God lifted His voice—that the earth would/could actually melt? And if you truly believe this—why don’t you trust God more than you already do?
 - Read **Psalm 46:8-11**
 - Verse 8 is an invitation—to what? What are other places in the Bible where we see this very same invitation?
 - In the Lower Story, we tend to place a lot of our trust in world rulers and political leaders. According to v. 9, where should our trust actually be? Who is really in charge? Do you truly believe that in your heart of hearts?
 - For some people I know, verse 10 is their very favorite verse in the Bible. What is it about this verse that makes it so special? How does it speak to you?

Application:

The last verse in the Psalm (v. 11) brings us right back to where we started in verse 1—God is WITH us! The Lord Almighty is with us! The God of Jacob is our ever-present help in trouble. He is our fortress, our refuge, and our strength! Make a commitment to read this Psalm every day for the next week. Memorize it if you’re able. I can guarantee you’ll be blessed!