



Week 4: Refuge

Week 4, Day 1: "A Very Present Help"

Psalm 46

*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...*

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.*

Understanding the Passage:

Opening with an identification of God as our "refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble", the Psalmist immediately goes on to explain why God's refuge is so needed. The statement, "Therefore we will not fear" (v. 2) may feel impossible to some of us, particularly as the Psalmist very honestly acknowledges the events or circumstances in this life that shake us to our core. Aren't our anxieties legitimate, especially in the midst of chaos of our world today? How, then, can the Psalmist so confidently declare, "we will not fear"?

The Psalmist's ability and strength to choose to not be afraid comes from his recognition of God's constant presence. "God is in the midst of the city;" (v. 5) "the Lord of hosts is with us" (v. 7, 11), the Psalmist declares. The psalm ends with God himself breaking in to directly emphasize this point:

“Be still, and know that I am God!” (v. 10) “I am.” When Moses asked God who he should say he was speaking for, God identified God’s self by saying a phrase that was transliterated into *Yahweh* (Exodus 3:14). In essence, *Yahweh* means, “I am. I always was and I always will be. I am eternal. My presence is with all people, in all places, at all times. I alone am God.” God offers this grounding amid chaos in the form of an imperative, knowing that we need that challenge to get us out of the chaos and be still enough to recognize that God is here. God is with us. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What practices help you become still before our ever-present God?
2. When have you experienced God’s “very present help in trouble”?

Week 4, Day 2: “For God alone”

Psalm 62

*... For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him.*

*⁶ He alone is my rock and my salvation,
my fortress; I shall not be shaken.*

*⁷ On God rests my deliverance and my honor;
my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.*

*⁸ Trust in him at all times, O people;
pour out your heart before him;
God is a refuge for us...*

Understanding the Passage:

The Psalmist is clear—God alone is his refuge, his salvation, his rock, his fortress, his refuge. Confident in God’s trustworthy character and actions, as well as the efficacy of God’s power, the Psalmist implores us, “Trust in [God] at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” (v. 8)

The Psalmist has given us two challenges here: one, trust God; two: trust God at *all* times. Why should we trust God? The Psalmist suggests that we should trust God because God is the one who saves, steadies, protects, delivers, and honors. The Psalmist suggests that we can trust God because both power and steadfast love belong to God. That both belong to God is entirely unique and vitally needed. In grateful acknowledgement of God’s ability to keep power and steadfast love together, we recognize, like the Psalmist, “my hope is from him” (v. 5).

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What is it about God that makes him trustworthy for you?
2. Are there times or situations in which you find it difficult to trust God? Why do you think that is?

Week 4, Day 3: “The Lord sustains”

Psalm 3

O LORD, how many are my foes!

Many are rising against me;

² *many are saying to me,*

“There is no help for you in God.”

³ *But you, O LORD, are a shield around me,*

my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.

⁴ *I cry aloud to the LORD,*

and he answers me from his holy hill.

⁵ *I lie down and sleep;*

I wake again, for the LORD sustains me...

Understanding the Passage:

In this psalm, God’s refuge is experienced in the midst of an overwhelming situation. The Psalmist describes God’s refuge as “a shield around me, my glory, and the one who lifts up my head.” (v. 3) He credits God for the ability to sleep and to wake up each morning to start another day. (v. 5) With confidence, he asserts that he no longer feels afraid of his overwhelming circumstances. (v. 6)

The psalmist juxtaposes the “many” who are against him and the one God who is all-powerful and yet very personally present with him. The psalmist wants to no longer spiral about his overwhelming circumstances and to focus instead on the calming, protecting, loving presence of God. What makes a situation overwhelming may be outside of our control, but we can choose how we respond to it with the help of the God who sustains us throughout our journey of life and faith.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What do you do to ground yourself when you are feeling overwhelmed?
2. What might you incorporate or take out from your nighttime routine to help raise your awareness of God’s spirit sustaining you every morning and night?

Week 4, Day 4: “Shelter of the Most High”

Psalm 91

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,

who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,

² *will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my fortress;*

my God, in whom I trust.”

³ *For he will deliver you from the snare of the hunter*

and from the deadly pestilence;

⁴ *he will cover you with his pinions,*

and under his wings you will find refuge;

his faithfulness is a shield and defense.

⁵ *You will not fear the terror of the night*

or the arrow that flies by day

⁶ *or the pestilence that stalks in darkness*

or the destruction that wastes at noonday...

Understanding the Passage:

The Psalmist speaks to those who are at a place of significant depth in their relationship with God: they “live in the shelter of the Most High” and “abide in the shadow of the Almighty”. (v. 1) The immediate sense is that the psalmist’s audience here is for those whose relationship with God is integral to their daily lives. Whether he writes what follows as a reminder they are aware of or as an encouragement for those listening in to the psalm who aren’t as deep in relationship with God yet to make investing in relationship with God a top priority, we don’t know.

We do know that the psalmist confidently shares what God will do—delivering, covering, providing refuge, commanding angels to guard (vv. 3, 4, 11). The psalmist then shares what we will experience: no fear, yes to protection, no to evil (vv. 5-7, 10). Finally, God breaks into the psalm to share directly how he will deliver those who love him, protect those who know God’s name, answer those who call to him, be present with them in trouble, rescuing and honoring them, satisfying them with long life and salvation.

The psalmist is clear in verse 9, all of this is “Because you have made the Lord your refuge, the Most High your dwelling place.” It is not easy to build in daily rhythms of intentionally connecting with God, but the psalmist convinces us there is no more worthy pursuit in spending some of the time God has blessed us with today and every day, finding new depths of relationship with the Most High God.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. What does it mean to you to “live in the shelter of the Most High”?
2. What’s one daily practice you’ve tried or would like to try incorporating into your rhythm this week to grow closer to God?

Week 3, Day 5: “Because”

Psalm 18

I love you, O LORD, my strength.

² *The LORD is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer,
my God, my rock in whom I take refuge,
my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold...*

⁶ *In my distress I called upon the LORD;
to my God I cried for help.*

*From his temple he heard my voice,
and my cry to him reached his ears...*

*He reached down from on high; he took me;
he drew me out of mighty waters...*

¹⁹ *He brought me out into a broad place;
he delivered me because he delighted in me...*

Understanding the Passage:

In this psalm, the writer looks back, recounting pivotal moments in the history of his people as well as in his own personal experience where God’s refuge and strength was so powerful, clear, and compelling. The Psalmist offers this witness of the God who hears, rescues, steadies, protects, saves, equips, and supports. He shares it so that those who have found refuge in God will find themselves nodding their heads or verbally affirming, “Yes, this is our experience with the God who is our refuge too.” He also shares it so that those who are still unsure if they can trust God enough to make

him their ultimate safe space can find the clarity, courage, and willingness to try trust God and to lean on him as a daily refuge.

We may be wondering, “Why would God do all this for me?” Perhaps the Psalmist anticipated that question and that’s what prompted him to write verse 19: “[God] brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me because he delighted in me.” The fundamental motivation of all God’s work in the world and in our individual lives is his delight in us. God delights in us! God does not seek to save us because he feels bad for us or because he feels obligated to help us. God is our refuge because God delights in us! Let that sink in: God delights in *you*.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection:

1. Why do you think a testimony or witness of personal experience so impactful?
2. What does God’s delight in you feel like? If you don’t feel anything, what might be blocking you?

Video Discussion Questions:

1. What is your safe place? Who are your safe people?
2. When do you find it most helpful to seek out your safe place or people?
3. How do you reconcile God being your “refuge” in instances where it seemed that God didn’t protect as you thought God should or believe God could have?
4. Do you find it easy or difficult to be still? Can we try it together right now for two minutes?
5. How do you experience God’s delight in you? If God’s delight in you is a brand-new idea to consider, what is a time in your life when you felt particularly seen, valued, appreciated, and personally loved?
6. Are there any barriers keeping you from seeing God as your ultimate safe space and person? What could you do to let God help you work on breaking down one of those barriers?

Prayer requests and other notes: