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Reformation

Psalm 46
Why are you afraid?

As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the LORD surrounds his people both now and forevermore. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Why are you afraid? Let me ask you again: **Why are you afraid?**

Notice I didn't ask you if you were afraid. I know that you are. It may not show on your face and it may not be at the forefront of your thoughts right now. You may not want to admit it, certainly not to your classmates or your peers, maybe not even to those closest to you. But deep down on some level we all have our fears, those things that make us anxious and weigh us down.

God, of course, knows this, as He knows all things. And this is why in the Bible, His Word, He so often says things like this: **Do not be afraid... Fear not... Do not worry... Be strong and very courageous... Do not let your heart be troubled.**

But God does so much more than just say ‘quit being afraid.’ He gives us the message that sets fear aside, the antidote to fear we so desperately need as we consider the question:

Why are you afraid?

Why are you afraid? In a way, this is a ridiculous question! *Why are you afraid? Have you seen the news lately!* Shootings, the opioid epidemic, the stock market bouncing up and down. Politics become louder and ruder and our nation seems more and more divided. War, terror, abuse, assault and so many other sad words fill our ears and can make you feel numb. In the words of the Psalm: **Nations are in turmoil.**

Why are you afraid? Just look at the world! Floods here, droughts there, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, extinction, pollution, disease, cancer... The

Psalm says: **Its waters roar and foam.**

Why are you afraid? What about all the personal **times of trouble** that tear our hearts apart: strained relationships, work woes, health trouble, financial struggle, fear of failure and loneliness, the haunting guilt of the wrongs we've done, the good we left undone, the death of a loved one, the sobering reality that death will come for each one of us too.... the things that make it feel like your "whole world is falling apart"... as though **mountain tumble into the heart of the sea.**

Why are you afraid? Because there's not a single thing we can do to stop **times of trouble!** No amount of money, health care or underground bunkers; no amount of distraction from entertainment, career and pleasure, none of these things can undo the steady march of time, old age and death.

Both the Psalm and history tell us: **Kingdoms fall.** Since mighty empires, rich and powerful kings and queens all eventually fall and turn to dust, since even people at the very "top of their game" experience

accident and death, then nothing we can do can bring us lasting safety and security.

But there's a far greater **trouble** and reason to **be afraid**: the most serious problem that that all the troubles and fears in this world ought to help us see. The whole reason why this world is so obviously broken is because something else is broken: our relationship with this world's Creator.

God the One and Only-Father, Son and Holy Spirit, He is perfect and pure in every way. But ever since the first two human beings turned against Him, we are all imperfect and impure.

This imperfect, broken condition, this *sin* we are infected with is why we don't have to teach our children to lie, or selfishly grab that toy away from someone else shouting mine!

Sin is why we can come to the most amazing thing in this world—to God speaking to us in His Word as in worship, Bible reading and Sunday School—God speaking and... *we're bored*, and our sinful hearts come up with a hundred other things we'd rather be doing.

Sin is why deep down in our hearts **we are afraid**. If we drop our natural reaction that wants to blame anyone except for ourselves or make excuses for our wrongs, if we drop all that and listen we'll hear that nagging voice of the conscience that says I'm not right with God, I'm in big trouble.

And that voice is right! If we could really grasp how big, how awesome, how holy and just is God who made all things, who as the Psalm tells us just has to **raise his voice and the earth melts...** if we could see just how horrible our every sinful thought is in His sight, how great His fiery anger is, then we would crumple to the ground in terror.

Why are you afraid? Yes we have reason to fear. We have earned God's eternal judgment... death and living death in hell.

Which makes these words so unexpected, so *stunning*: **we will not fear when the earth dissolves**. Even if today were the last day, when God brings this world to an end, yet His Word tells us we have no

reason to fear in the slightest. Wait! *How does that work?*

Like this: If the Almighty **LORD** of all, the one who made the earth, the one who at the end of the world will **tumble the mountains into the heart of the sea...** If this Mighty God who **makes wars cease**, who **shatters the bow and cuts up the spear** like that time he smashed the bows of the spears of the Pharaoh's army in the sea... If this unimaginably powerful God is on your side to take care of you, then what would there be to fear? *Absolutely Nothing.*

But will God be on our side? Our Psalm tells us not just once, but twice: **The LORD of Armies is with us.** Yes God is with us on our side to save us. You can be sure of that because He literally came to be **with us** and **help** us from our greatest **trouble.**

The LORD... is with us. That is exactly what the angel said about the birth of Jesus Christ: "**The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel**"--which means, "**God with us.**"

Jesus Christ, born of Mary is true and eternal God, the Son of God and yet through His birth is our true human brother born in our place, born to live with us and in our place, born to be the only **helper** who can remove our sin and restore our relationship with God.

Jesus' was born with a sinless, pure heart. His life was free from imperfection. His obedience was unbroken. Christ alone delighted in every Word of God. As the sinless God-man, Jesus heart was at perfect peace. Jesus and Jesus alone deserved life and eternal life.

Instead, Jesus died the most horrible, cursed death there was. Not just because He died nailed to a Roman cross, but because as He hung on that cross His innocent soul shouldered God's judgment our sin deserved, the punishment our imperfection had earned. Christ was forsaken by His heavenly Father in the dark hours of the cross, so that we will never have to know what it would be like to have God against us!

Remember the fiery anger of God that should leave us crumpled to our knees? Jesus loves you so much, He

let every last bit of God's wrath over sin fall upon Himself instead of you.

And in its place He gives you His own peace: peace of every sin forgiven, peace of endless life with God, peace to calm our fears with the promises we hear in His Word, peace that overrides the fearful message of conscience because God says you are right with Him through the saving work of Jesus Christ, peace in the truth that God is on our side.

Remember the death and eternal death our imperfection earns? Jesus chose to die our death. But on the third day He returned to life. His heart beat again, His lungs filled with air> He threw down the power of death so that it cannot hold those who trust in Christ! Jesus rose from the grave and promises you: **because I live, you also will live.** For all who trust in Jesus, death becomes the doorway to heavenly mansions!

Yes right now we still face troubles, attacks and pains that work to shake us and frighten us, but we never face them on our own. Risen from death, Jesus lives and stands by your side to help you, strengthen

you, help you to bear up under it, to even turn evil out for your eternal good as He has done for His people in every age: **God is our refuge and strength, a helper who can always be found.**

Yes, this world is broken with sin and trouble, wearing out like old clothes, but God has promised you a new and perfect world where you will live with Him with your body raised up from death to endless life and joy.

You will be reunited with all God's believing people in that beautiful peaceful joyful city pictured in the Psalm, the place where with risen ears you will hear Jesus Himself speak these words from Revelation: **There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain... I am making everything new!**

Dear friends, look to Jesus, *only* and *always* to Jesus. Because of Him, with risen and glorified eyes you will get to see the glorious **daybreak** of the resurrection, where no one will ever again ask you: **Why are you afraid?** Amen.

The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory forever and ever. Amen.