

The God of Crisis

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Returning to the Old Testament Scriptures, to the 46th Psalm, a psalm that we sang together at the beginning of the worship. It becomes now our meditation, Psalm 46.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.
God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.
The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.
Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.¹

Martin Luther the great reformer said, "This is my psalm."

His battle hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is our God* that we have sung together this morning, took its opening lines from this psalm.

The robust, the defiant tone of the psalm suggests that it was written in a time of crisis. Some have suggested that it was written during the time of Hezekiah when the city of

¹ Psalm 46:1-11.

Jerusalem was under at least potential siege by Sennacherib. And Hezekiah celebrated that great deliverance from the hand of that Assyrian king. Some have so speculated, but the particular crisis and the exact time of the psalm is not directly specified for us. And that's ok because crisis is a component of life.

And Luther found in this psalm relevance for him and he claimed it for his own. And its relevance remains and it is for us, each one of us, to claim this psalm for ourselves as well. We need help in our crisis hours, our critical times. And even those of you that suffer from optimism, it is a malady for it is not reality. But I say even those of you that suffer from optimism must admit reality, that we live in critical times.

There are world crises. There are national crises, religious crises, economic crises and the personal crises that seem to trump all of those others around us.

In so many ways this world in which we live is on a razor's edge.

I just returned from where I grew up and it was a different world. Religiously things are in a mess. It seemed like on every corner there was either a Hindu temple or a Moslem mosque that was already there or being erected. It seemed as though the heathen were just taking control. Heathen seem to be prospering not just there, but wherever we look. Religiously, I say, this world is on a razor's edge. Economically this world is on a razor's edge. We see the fluctuations in the stock market. Some of you understand what is going on there. Others of us have no clue. But it appears to be a crisis.

We see environmentally we are in a time of crisis. We have drought here. We have flooding there. We have what the Scripture makes clear is the providential operations of God for his own purposes, for his own glory being blamed and accounted for by the greenhouse effect and global warming. But our environment is in a time of crisis.

Politically we are in a time of crisis. Nationally we have just to look around us and wonder what in the world is going on. These are critical days.

But this psalm directs us to face whatever the crisis may be. Indeed, this psalm directs us to face whatever unafraid because our true security is to be found in God and nothing else and nowhere else. It may be that everything around us is falling apart. And I don't want to alarm you, but I do want you to understand that everything around us is eternally determined to fall apart. So we are to see the crises as evidence of God's providence accomplishing his purpose and to learn to rest in him. Everything is going to be ok, so says this pessimist.

But the fact is that is the reality. Everything is going to be ok because God is in control, because God is on his throne and everything, even the crises that we face day by day in this world and in our homes is the evidence of God's presence.

Today I want us to think about the God of crisis and to learn like Luther did those years ago to claim him to live in the reality of God through all the stuff of life.

This psalm that we have sung together, this psalm that we have now read together progresses in three thoughts. You note the “Selahs” that occur: one after verse three, one at the end of verse seven and one, again, at the end of the psalm. The three “Selahs” that mark the progression of thought. There are three things that the psalmist wants us to think about, three things that the psalmist wants us to reflect on as we draw our attention away from all of the instability and all of the issues and all of the stuff of this life to find in whatever the crisis is our confidence and our security in the unchangeable God.

So three thoughts suggested from the text before us this morning. I want us to see, first of all, that God is our stability in crisis. God’s people can be secure under his protection and, therefore, we can fear him and not fear anything else, regardless. And the psalmist wants us to think about that, that God is our stability in the times of crisis.

We have before us described those unstable things. In verses two and three our attention is drawn to various images from this world that appear to be falling apart. There is the earth and the mountains, those two most immutable things that we believe we can see, those things that appear to be stable, but yet they are going to be moved. They are going to be carried into the midst of the sea which is that which is, perhaps, the most unstable thing, the most moving thing that we can see day by day. But these things speak to us of the instability of every earthly hiding place. All of these natural fortresses that might have some degree of safety, but yet have these terrible limitations, things that appear, I say, to be immovable, things that appear to be so static, but yet so unstable.

I would suggest here that they represent for us in the thought of the psalm more than just the earth and the water, but they represent all of those things that in life we think we can count on that ultimately are going to fail. There is absolutely nothing in this world that we can ultimately and finally find our confidence and our safety and our security in.

We can plan for the future and well we must. I remember the word of the preacher in Ecclesiastes that tells us that we are not to be righteous over much, nor are we to be overly wicked. Not there discussing those issues of morality. That is not in focus, but not to be so inflexible in the issues of life and not to be so flexible in the issue of life that we can’t deal with those things that we can’t plan for.

Oh, there are those that approach life with that over righteousness, with all of their plans and all of their organization and all of those things which become so structured in life that they count on those things. And you have others that, as it were, live by the proverbial seat of their pants.

There is not going to be safety. There can’t be confidence in anything in this life because ultimately everything in this life is going to fail.

We want to plan for the future financially and other ways, but we can’t count on the financial market.

As many of you know, Sandra has changed her employment and one of the things that we have recently done is talk to my brother-in-law who is our financial guru for whatever little bit of money I have to plan for in the future and looking at that. And he is warning us. The market is in danger.

Well, I don't know what the means. I don't know what all those little things mean. But I trust him to put that money where it belongs in the safest place. And if it doesn't I know where I can look and live off him I suppose in my golden years.

But he is explaining to us how fragile the economy is. And I am sure it is. Many of us life, as it were, check to check and we know how fragile that is let alone the world markets.

Where are we going to find our safety? Where are we going to find our confidence? We can trust in these things, we can plan for these things, but, I say, the world is on a razor's edge. We cannot find our stability in all of these things of life that sooner or later, in one way or another are going to totter and they are going to fall.

But, in contrast, we have a God of stability. And what a contrast the psalmist makes for us. And here is the focus, what must be the focus of our faith.

I have different word pictures here to describe, the underscore the reality of God. Everything around us can be collapsing. Everything around us can be falling apart, but here is something we can absolutely be certain of. "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."²

And I love the literal expression here of the psalmist. Literally, "God is for us." God is for us. That is why I read at the beginning of the worship this morning that great text from Romans chapter eight, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"³

And Paul then considers all of those things, high things, low things, things we see, things we don't see, none of which can ultimately separate us or remove us from the love of God in Christ for us. "If God be for us, [then] who can be against us?"⁴

Let that sink in. What a wonderful expression. What a wonderful declaration of truth that is. God is for his people. He is for us.

And the psalmist begins with that very simple declaration—God is for us—and then delineates some of the benefits and some of the specifics of what it is that God is for us. And do pay attention as I have suggested every time we open up the Old Testament Scriptures particularly, to note the names of God, the titles, the expressions of God that are used. They are never haphazard. They are never by accident. But they are always there as part of the revelation to intensify the message the Lord expects us to see.

² Psalm 46:1.

³ Romans 8:31.

⁴ Ibid.

God is for us. This is that word for God that we have at the very beginning of the Word of God, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This is God who is the creator. This is God who is that transcendent one, that majestic one, that glorious one, that one that is full of all power and might, that one that is capable of doing whatever his will might be.

Who is it that is for us? I can say I am for you and that may make you happy, but it won't do you much good. I have no real power. I have no real influence. The fact that I am for you may mean, very ultimately and simply that I am in the same trouble that you are in. But God is for us. Here is a God that is full of omnipotence whose nature is absolutely transcendent, majestic, no weakness, no frailty. He is the God who creates and therefore as he creates what is it, then, that he cannot do?

His power, here is that powerful God that is for us.

He is for us as a refuge, a place of safety, a shelter, the security. And, again, we sang that well known hymn just before I came to the pulpit that he is a shelter in the time of storm. That is the imagery of the word that is here translated as refuge. This is our defense. This is that external aspect of God's salvation of his people, of his deliverance of his people. Here is this unchanging God in whom we can find the shelter in the times of storm.

Crisis? Yes. I know my crises. You know your crises. We live in crises. It is the stuff of life. But there is a place, there is a shelter that I can have, a shelter that I can find and a shelter that you can find in those times of storm. The place of safety, a place of escape from all danger, a solace. And all of the stuff of life can be happening around us on the outside, but in this refuge we are hidden with him. We are hidden in him. He is the refuge. He is that place of safety and as his people we find our solace, we find our security in him. And the stuff out there can buffet against that shelter, can blow against that shelter to no effect because God who has all power, this God who is for us, is—as we thought of in the Sunday school hour—unaffected by anything outside of himself. He is unaffected. And we can be found in him and we can find our safety and our confidence in him. There is where the stability is, a never failing refuge, his faithfulness, his power, his wisdom, his promises. They are all operating for us.

God is for us a refuge. God is for us a strength. Here is the dynamic aspect of God's presence. Here is the active part of God's presence with his people. God within is the power to sustain, an active force. He is our defense, yes. He is the refuge. But he is also the strength. He is that active energy, that active power that operates in behalf of his people. God's presence is never a passive presence. He enables us to face the crisis that may be around us. He is our strength. He is for us a help, a very present help in trouble.

And, again, the literal translation of this is terse, perhaps, but so very pointed. Can I translate it this way? God is for us, a help in trouble. He is found abundantly. A help in trouble. He is found to be abundant.

Here is his readiness, his readiness to be found, his sufficiency for every situation. God has proven himself reliable in the past, so here is our hope for now, our hope for the future. He is this help. The help in trouble that we can find because he makes himself findable. And that is the force of that word. He is found abundantly, but actually he allows himself, he permits himself to be found in that abundant way. God makes himself findable to his people.

If we seek him we will find him. That is the promise we have in the Word over and over again that he gives to us. “If you seek me with all of your heart you will find me.” God is never playing games of hide and seek with his people. He doesn’t tell his people, “Come and seek me,” and then he hides them where they can’t find him.

The promise is always that if you seek me you will find me. He is findable. A shelter he is in the time of storm. We seek that shelter and we will find that shelter. If we seek him diligently, if we seek him with all of our hearts, if we seek him with that sincerity, his promise is—and he can’t break his promise—his promise is that he is findable. He will be found of us in the most abundant of ways. He is always found of those who seek him.

His help is available to those who want it, to those who seek it.

Finding, therefore, in God our stability in this world of crisis, finding God to be our stability in our personal crisis as we face the stuff of the newspapers, as we look at the stuff of life. Finding God ought not to be our last resort, ought not to be where we go to find safety when everything else around us seems to be failing. But it ought to be our first response in every crisis.

It makes sense, doesn’t it? Doesn’t it make sense that if God is the only stability that there is in this unstable world, if God is the only source of real security and safety for his people as they face all of the troubles and the trials and the difficulties and the crises of life, does it not make sense that that ought to be the first place we go at the first sign of crisis. It ought to be. It ought to be.

But we seem to share at least, I am well aware personally, of that spiritual malady, the spiritual stupidity that never runs there as quickly as I ought to run. Ought not to be our last resort. Ought to be the impulse. It ought to be that impulse of our heart to know that no matter what we have in our God who is always for us, who is always for us, our refuge, our strength and our help.

And the resolution, then, to this crisis is no fear. What a statement of verse two.

“Therefore,” because of this, because of what? Because God is for us, our refuge, our strength, our help. Because of this, “We will not fear.”⁵ We will not fear.

⁵ Psalm 46:2.

Though all this other stuff is happening, though everything that we would humanly be trusting in is not working. Though everything around us is falling apart, we will not fear. Almost sounds like whistling in the dark.

There is trouble there. There is difficulties there. There is scary stuff there. But the psalmist says, "I am not going to fear it." We will not be afraid.

That is an unnatural response. Not fearing in the kind of circumstance that the psalmist describes in verses two and three, not fearing, that is not a natural response. The normal response, the natural response is to be afraid. What is fear? Fear is that emotion, that anxiety—I don't know that's the definition that you will find the dictionary—but fear is that emotion of anxiety that is called by scary stuff. It is caused by scary stuff.

And we look at this world out there and there is scary stuff out there. And it is natural, then, for that to produce anxiety, for that to produce emotion that ends to paralyze.

So not fearing in the midst of all of that scary stuff is unnatural and that is the very secret. Not to fear is one of the responses of faith. Here is faith.

What we fear tends to determine our behavior. Being afraid of something out there tends to paralyze that natural fear. There are things that scare me.

I was coming in one evening, walking in from the woods. It was dark. I had a little flash light about that long and it cast a beam only about two feet in front of me and I am walking in and on the path in front of me was a copperhead, a copperhead snake, eight times or so longer than the communion table, at least that long. And it stopped me in my tracks.

It was dark. I had a little flashlight that had a beam of about two feet and so that is how close I was to this copperhead that was straddling my path.

I think I had a bow with me, but I wasn't about to try to shoot that copperhead, putting a flashlight in my mouth and trying to...

I was paralyzed and I stood there. I didn't move forward. I didn't move backwards. I was scared. I didn't know what to do. Fear tends to cripple us.

And when we look at the scary stuff of this life, when all the copperheads of life get in our paths as it were, we allow them to stop us in our tracks. And no movement is made in the cause, in the work that is before us.

Now I say that is a natural response. But the only way, I say what we fear will determine our behavior. And the only way the psalmist can so boldly testify here that he does not fear even though everything scary is happening around him is that he was more aware of something than what he saw. Not to fear this stuff means that he was fearing God. To fear the Lord is to be aware of God, to allow the awareness of the reality of God to

overwhelm us. That is living in the fear of God. Really, that is what the fear of God is, to live in the awareness of God.

And if we can learn what it is to fear God, to live in the awareness of God, to be more convinced of the reality of God than we are of the stuff around us, the stuff before us, then we can look at that stuff and not be afraid. And God is the ultimate reality. God is more real than anything we can see.

And we believe it. Every one of us here would confess, "I believe that God is real." Every one of us, I dare say, if I were to ask that question: How many here believe that God is real? Every hand would go up. We believe in the reality of God.

Now, let me ask this question. Do we believe in the reality of God? Do we in our heart of hearts, are we convinced, oh yes, creedily, I add, but is there a connection between our creed in our head and the creed in our hearts? Do we live in the reality of God? To factor God in to every circumstance, to every situation, to everything in life? That is the requirement of true religion, you know, to fear the Lord. That is the only way. It is only by fearing him. It is only by fearing him and recognizing that he is for us, that he is the ultimate refuge and strength and help that we are not going to be afraid of all the other stuff that is surrounding us.

May God convince us, may God convince us that he is real and to get past just the empty professions and the creedal jargon that we have among ourselves and in our heart of hearts live as though God is really and truly real, to factor him in?

I think there are so many believers today that live as though God is not real. The reality of God. He is our stability for the time of crisis. The psalmist wants us to think about that.

We come to the second statement. Not only is God our stability in crisis, God is our comfort during crisis. This is the next thing that we are to think about. God is our comfort during the crisis. The presence of God is the joy and the security of God's people. The emphasis in this section is on God's presence with his people, a presence that we learn in verse four makes glad the city of God. That word "making glad" has the idea of bringing contentment to the city of God, of bringing satisfaction to the city of God. That is real joy.

Biblical joy is not happiness. Let's get that straight. Biblical joy is not an emotion of happiness. If you have that, enjoy it, but that is not biblical joy. Biblical joy is contentment. And biblical joy is satisfaction that whatever is, whether it is happy or sad that whatever is, is the work of God, is the will of God, is the best that God has for us. And there is that contentment and there is that satisfaction and that happens when we are convinced of the reality of the presence of God.

What greater comfort is there, what greater comfort can there be, what greater contentment can there be than to be convinced of the presence of God?

God's presence with his people is real. It is stated figuratively at verse four.

“There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.”⁶

Here is the figure of a river. There is no such river that runs through Jerusalem. So Zion here, I would suggest, is more than simply a reference to a locality on earth, but the spiritual community of God's people. Here is the joy and the contentment that God's people can have regardless of their locale, a river that is the source of refreshment, a river that is the source of all of life's provisions.

Verse five interprets this for us, really, that it is not talking about literal water. It is talking about God in the midst of us. It is the presence of God that is real. It is the presence of God that makes glad the people of God.

You may parallel that with Isaiah chapter 33 where the prophet uses much the same imagery at verse 21. “But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams.”⁷

It is the Lord that is the river. It is the Lord that is this which provides the sustenance that gives the joy, that gives the needs for life.

And there is the irony of grace in this presence, that God's people, God's people that feel themselves so often to be so low, God's people that so often feel themselves to be in the depths of that despair or frustration, God's people become the dwelling place—and here is the irony of the gracious statement—of the most high, that God that is exalted, that God that is so transcendent, that God that is so majestic, that God that is so high is here taking his dwelling place among those of us that feel to be so low. He is exalted, but yet he condescends to dwell with those of that broken, that contrite, that lowly heart. The presence of God is real and as the river he supplies whatever it is that must be supplied for the enjoyment of life.

His presence is stated explicitly at verse seven. “The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”⁸

Here is the Emmanuel concept. God with us. God is with us, a promise that we have all the way through the Scriptures, a promise that God gave to his people in times of crisis, in times of difficulty, in times when they needed encouragement and comfort and assurance. God says, “I am with you. I am with you.” A presence that met its climactic manifestation at the incarnation when Jesus was born, our Emmanuel. God is with his people.

⁶ Psalm 46:4.

⁷ Isaiah 33:21.

⁸ Psalm 46:7.

But I am impressed as I read this statement of what it reveals to us in terms of God's power, in terms of God's grace. A presence that reveals his power, a presence that reveals his grace.

We have two statements and you see the logic of the psalmist.

“The Lord of hosts is with us.”⁹

In that statement we have an expression of God's grace. We have an expression of God's power. Notice the order. It is grace and it is power. There is the Lord. That is Jehovah. That is the covenant God. That is the God that has revealed himself to his people as their Savior. When you see Lord in all caps this is that covenant name of God that has revealed himself directly and specifically and uniquely to his people as their Savior, as their Redeemer. There is the statement of grace.

But he is the Lord of hosts. Here is the statement of power. For hosts is the word for army. He is the commander in chief, this gracious God, this God that reveals himself to us as our Redeemer is also the commander of all the forces, all the armies of creation that are at his disposal to accomplish his purpose of grace for his people.

There is grace and there is power.

Notice the second line. We have the same truths, but now in reverse order. It is the God of Jacob. Here God, that is our Creator God. Here is the term of power, the term of might. And he is the God of Jacob.

Ah, you know Jacob. You know Jacob the supplanter. You know Jacob that one that was so undeserving, but God graciously entered relationship with Jacob. He is the God of Jacob. There is power and there is grace and this God is our refuge. A different word than what occurred back in verse one. Verse one speaks of the refuge as that shelter from storm. This particular word for refuge magnifies the height of this place. The Lord is our high place. He is our high place. It is the most high that dwells with us. And as we dwell with the most high, our refuge is in that most high place.

His power, his grace, his presence with us is real and his presence has been our comfort. His presence is active. As I have said, God is never passive. He can't be passive. And the evidence of his presence is that he works in our behalf.

Verse one told us that God is our help. In verse five we learn that God will help. He does help. His help is not just theory. His help for us is not just a matter of doctrine. His help us real. He will help her and that right early. Literally, he will help at the break of day. He will help at the break of day.

He wastes no time in helping us, but yet the imagery itself is graphic because the break of

⁹⁹ Psalm 46:7.

day marks the end of the darkness. We find ourselves in darkness, yes, but God helps us at the break of day and when he comes all that darkness is dispelled by his light.

But he comes at the appropriate time. God's helping us is not like the help of some hero of a melodrama that rescues the damsel in distress just in the nick of time at the last moment. No, God helps us at the appropriate time, at the time that he deems appropriate. And as he comes at the break of day, as he comes as that morning light, ah, we find the comfort. We find the comfort again.

The heathen may roar against us.

“The heathen raged,”¹⁰ that literally is, “The heathen roared.”

Oh, they may be agitated and they may try to intimidate. But notwithstanding all that is happening on the outside, not to worry, not to fret because God is with us and if we, again, can be certain, if by faith we can be confident that God is with us as a reality, not just as something that we are temporarily blessed by when we read a verse in the Scriptures, or sing a song together on the sabbath day, but to live with this consciousness that God is for us and God is with us is that not comfort? Is that not consolation? Is that not reason, then, that we as a citizen of the city of God ought to be glad?

The psalmist wants us to think about that.

And the last statement is this. We learn that God is not only our stability in crisis and comfort during crisis, but God is our deliverance from crisis in the closing stanza.

God's people are to reflect upon the marvelous deliverances of God and to learn. Troubles and trials, times of crisis as I have emphasized, are part of his providence and so is deliverance. It is the purpose of his glory to exercise his providence as he does and as God is glorified then our good, as well, will be achieved. There is peace that is here described for us. Wars cease, all of the weapons of warfare against us will be destroyed. There is deliverance.

And on the basis of that deliverance the psalmist suggests two things and with these this morning I close. He wants us to consider something.

Verse eight, “Come, behold the works of the LORD.”¹¹

Come and behold. The word “behold” here is not just a word to look at something, but, rather, is a word that demands that we look in faith. This is a word that almost always in the Old Testament refers to prophetic visions. The prophet would behold the Word of the Lord. The prophet with that prophetic eye would see the will of the Lord.

¹⁰ Psalm 46:6.

¹¹ Psalm 46:8.

Here is the prophet's word, then, that we are to exercise. Come. And with this look of faith, with this inward eye of faith, look to the works of God. His faith that gives us that x-ray vision to look through what appears to be to see what really is.

It is faith that enables us to look at all of the operations of this world and all of the movements of what appear to be our enemies around us, to see the evidence of God's purpose, of God's control, of God's operation. Faith is able to see the invisible. Are you with me? And understand this.

Faith is able to see the invisible, but faith does not see the non-existent, a big difference. What faith sees is real. We don't make things up. We don't believe things into existence. Faith sees the invisible and with that eye of faith what is invisible becomes the overwhelming reality before us.

We have God's Word that we look into that by that faith. And we learn that there is no trouble, there is no crisis beyond our ability to endure. This is a hard one to take sometimes. But if God's Word is true—and God's Word is true—then there is no trouble and there is no difficulty, there is no trial that he puts in our way beyond our ability to endure and beyond his ability to deliver.

Some have greater measures. Some have greater measures of trouble and trial than others appear to have. And as the old song goes, nobody knows the trouble I have seen. And you feel the same. But the Word of God is certain that whatever it is that we are experiencing is within our ability to experience. Whatever it is that God puts within our path, whatever it is that God puts within our life is well within the sphere of what God deems our ability to endure, else he would not give it.

Or would he give it, then, the Word is not true. But how can we doubt his Word? His Word is true.

Consider this. Look with faith to the works of God and find in there deliverance for your soul. God's ability to reverse the troubles, peace will ultimately be achieved, but there is that which we experience now of God's delivering and his grace.

And the last thing the psalmist recommends is that we calm down. We just calm down.

“Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.”¹²

Just calm down. On the one hand this becomes a rebuke to the wicked, to the restless world to shut up and desist, to leave off your foolishness and seek the Lord. But on the other hand it is God's Word of encouragement to us to relax, to calm down. Everything is on course. I will be high. I will be exalted. The day will come when all will acknowledge that. But everybody will what we now know to be the truth, that God is high, that God is exalted. The day is going to come when it doesn't take faith to see that.

¹² Psalm 46:10.

But we know it now. We believe it now. And so, therefore, as we find ourselves in the troubles and the crises, as we are living in this world on that razor's edge, calm down. Calm down. It very well may be that this world is on a razor's edge, but God is on the throne and God is present with his people.

And that throne is not just some distant throne that is high and secluded in the heavens beyond sight. That throne is a throne that is present with his people.

I was thinking this morning and meditating upon this word of that great vision that Ezekiel saw by the River Chebar recorded for us in the first chapter of his prophecy as he sees that throne of the majestic God, but in what terms? He sees that heavenly throne in terms of this chariot throne with wheels going in every direction, going everywhere it wants. Here is the omnipresence of the rule of God in the realm of his kingdom. There is no place untouched by his throne. There is no place unaffected by his rule.

Ah, we have faith. We have faith in this God who is on his throne, a throne that is most present in its operations with his people. And it is not without significance that the psalmist ends, again, with that hope of Emmanuel.

“The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob...”¹³

The powerful God, the gracious God, the God of grace, the God of power, he is present with us and we are present with him in the high place, in the high place.

I can well understand looking at Luther's day the religious crisis that Luther faced, the personal danger that Luther lived in because of his faith, that he would see such relevance in this psalm to him.

“This,” he said, “is my psalm. It is my psalm.”

But Luther did not have unique claim to this word. It is a promise. It is a reality that we all can claim, that we all can enjoy, that God is our refuge, is our help. God is for us.

Let's pray that God would cause that to sink in to our hearts and our souls that he is for us. My guess is we can stick the stuff of life when we are convinced that God is for us.

Let's pray.

Our gracious heavenly Father, we do give our thanks for this beautiful word that you have revealed to us. We would ask, oh Lord, that you would, by your presence, make us glad. We pray, Lord, that you would give us that kind of faith, increase our faith, help our unbelief, to enable us to look away from all that surrounds us that we see with the physical eye and become more and more convinced of what is truly real.

Lord, let us live in the reality of our faith. We pray that for us all. Pray for me. Pray for

¹³ Psalm 46:11.

each of these people. Let us go on and live in the confidence that our faith in the one true and living God is not a vain thing. To rest in your faithfulness, to depend upon your goodness, to rely upon your faith and your grace, Lord, let that be our life. Let that be our life day after day. Speak to us we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.