

**Sermon Text:** Psalm 46:1 – 7; 10 – 11  
**Sermon Theme:** A Mighty Fortress is Our God

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.**
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,**
- 3 though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.**
- 4 There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.**
- 5 God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.**
- 6 Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.**
- 7 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**
- 10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."**
- 11 The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.**

As I read through these verses from Psalm 46 that are before us this morning, I found myself remembering the time that my family and I visited Fort Snelling, which is an old Army fort in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. It was interesting to walk around, imagining what day-to-day life must have been like inside that fort. The purpose of a fort, of course, is to keep those inside the walls of the fort safe from those who would like to do them harm. But even the strongest, man-made fort may not be able to keep everyone inside safe. Cannons may be fired that would send a cannon ball over the walls and into the grounds of the fort. Walls can be destroyed. Gates can be smashed in. So those inside the walls of the fort aren't able to say that they are 100% safe. You and I have powerful spiritual enemies. The devil, the sinful world around us and even our own sinful nature would like nothing more than to destroy you and me. So the Almighty Lord has placed a wall around us. However, it is a wall that will never be destroyed. It is a wall that will stand forever. That wall is our Almighty God and his Word. This weekend in the Lutheran Church we are celebrating Reformation Sunday. This is a time when we give thanks to the Lord of the Church for blessing the efforts of Dr. Martin Luther and others who fought off the enemies of God's Word. We offer our praise to the Lord that he blessed their efforts to get the Church back to the truth of God's Word. For it is only in the Word of God that we read the Good News that we have One who is able to fight off all our spiritual enemies. There is no need to worry that our enemies might be able to overtake us and win the victory. For today from Psalm 46, we rejoice in the Good News that "A Mighty Fortress is our God."

As he carried out his work, Dr. Martin Luther had many enemies both inside and outside of the Church. Some wanted to see Luther kicked out of the Church. Others wanted to see him dead. With all the opposition that he faced, you might think that Luther would lose his strength. If Luther had to rely on his own strength to fight against his enemies, the battle would have been lost. In his hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God", Luther himself wrote, "With might of ours can naught be done; soon were our loss effected." But Luther did not rely on his own strength. Rather he based his confidence on the Lord's powerful presence. As we read in Psalm 46 before us, "God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; He lifts his voice the earth melts. The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."

In his Word, the almighty Lord promises to be present and active through His Word. So Luther proclaimed God's Word and let that holy Word do the work. Whether he stood before an emperor on his throne or children in their classroom, whether he debated his opponents face to face or with his pen, Luther was confident that, as the writer of the Hebrews says, "The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword . . ." Luther's well-known hymn is based on Psalm 46 and reflects his confidence in God's powerful presence:

“A mighty fortress is our God, A trusty shield and weapon;  
He helps us free from every need That has us now o’ertaken.”

Today our confidence is the same as that of the writer of Psalm 46. 492 years after he nailed the 95 Thesis to the door of the Castle Church, our confidence is the same as that of Dr. Martin Luther. Even when troubles, sickness or disasters seem closer and more real for us, we too are able to have confidence, we too are able to put aside our fears, because we know that “The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” The Good News is that this Almighty Lord is watching over us day after day. And that no matter what happens in our life, as Luther writes in his hymn:

“And do what they will - Hate, steal, hurt or kill -  
Let these all be gone, Our victory is won;  
The kingdom’s ours forever!”

Martin Luther was not a rebel and he never intended to be a rebel. He simply lived at a time when the organized church was not holding on to the truth of God’s Word. As Luther spent more and more time reading and studying the Bible, he learned the truths that God’s Word teaches about the one and only true God. From the time he was a young child, Luther was taught that the holy and perfect Lord is absolutely just and fair in condemning any and every sinner for any and every sin they commit. Later in his life, as he read and studied God’s Word, Luther discovered the wonderful Good News of the Gospel; the Good News that the Lord is absolutely loving and forgives all sinners through Jesus Christ. Forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven are free gifts, not earned by anything a human being is able to do or buy, but rather won through the perfect life and innocent death of Jesus. On Easter Sunday Jesus rose as the victorious champion. It is this victory of Jesus Christ over sin and Satan that led Martin Luther to write:

“Tho’ devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us,  
We tremble not, we fear no ill; they shall not overpow’r us.  
This world’s prince may still Scowl fierce as he will,  
He can harm us none. He’s judged; the deed is done.  
One little word can fell him.”

And that one little word is Jesus. You and I are not able to fight the battle against our spiritual enemies of the devil and sin on our own. Your efforts and my efforts are never enough. So Jesus Christ went to battle for you and me. Jesus Christ won a great victory over the devil. Jesus won forgiveness for your sins and mine. Because of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we are able to hear the promise of the one and only true God, “‘Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.’ The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” This is why you and I are able to have confidence each day. Because in his Word, the one and only true God makes you and me the promise that through Jesus Christ all of our sins are forgiven. In his Word, the Lord Almighty comforts us with the Good News that he is with us day after day. In his Word, the Lord Almighty makes you and me the promise that his will is always done. No matter how many people call you crazy for what you believe about Jesus, no matter how many people make fun of you for believing that the Bible is true in all it says, always remember that the LORD is God. He is your mighty fortress. He is the One who gives you the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Reformation Sunday is just one day out of the year. But you and I know that one day is not enough. One day is not enough time to praise God for his loving presence and for the great victory he freely gives to us through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. So today, next week, the week after that and every day of his grace that the Lord gives to you, sing with Martin Luther, sing with the writer of Psalmist 46, “The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.” Amen.