

## Leaving It In God's Hands

1. Warm-up: On Sunday we talked about how we, as people of faith, should respond when we become engulfed in circumstances beyond our control. In a moment, we'll talk about some serious stuff. But for now, tell us about a time when you've found yourself in a silly little situation that was beyond your control and you just had to let it be and go through it – maybe while driving or at work or at home.
2. Read Psalm 46, as printed on p. 3. As you read this passage, think about what phrase or statement most resonates with you. At the end of the reading, share which statement most resonates with you and why.
3. Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." Elsewhere, II Timothy 1:7 says, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind." But it can be hard to live into those verses. Fear often gets the best of us. On Sunday, Pastor Robert reminded us that "every now and then we run up on situations that will scare us beyond belief. I don't care if it's a medical diagnosis, a financial situation, a relationship issue, or something going on with your children – there is some stuff that will break you down!" Robert shared the example of his fear for his sons as they grow up Black and face potential hostile encounters with police.
  - a. Tell us about something that has happened, or is happening, in your life that is out of your control and scares you to death.
  - b. Where does fear come from, and why is it so hard to rise above?
4. Since Sunday was our Black History Month Celebration Service, Robert drew many examples from Black history and how the battle against racism often feels completely overwhelming. As a church that stands for justice and radical inclusion, it's important that all of us wrestle with the scourge of racism.
  - a. Autumn McDonald says, "When the thing that strikes fear into a potential police officer or anyone is your blackness, how do you lay down your weapon when your 'WEAPON' is your identity?" What do you think she means, and what insight does this offer about the experience of being Black in America?
  - b. If you were raising a Black son, would you have "the talk" with them? What would you say? How would you feel when your teenage son was out of the house driving alone or with friends?
  - c. James Baldwin said, "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all of the time." What do you think he meant, and what insight does this offer about the experience of being Black in America?

- d. Michele Obama says, “History has shown us that courage can be contagious and hope can take on a life of its own.” What do you think she means?
5. Throughout Psalm 46, the psalmist (i.e., worship leader) offers several reasons why we shouldn’t be afraid, but then at the end of the psalm God “interrupts” the worship leader and speaks directly to us, saying, “Be still and know that I am God, and I will be exalted.” Psalm 46:10. This is God’s way of saying **RELAX**, I’ve got this. Robert said, “I love this text because it reminds us that God knows how to show up just in the nick of time and speak a word into your situation.” To illustrate, Robert shared a story about Howard Thurman, as a young Black man trying to get to Jacksonville to attend a high school that would accept him. The ticket agent refused to check Thurman’s beat up old trunk because it had no handle. Thurman sat down and cried in despair. God sent along a stranger, an older Black man, who asked Thurman why he was crying, then paid to have his trunk sent express. The man then walked on down the tracks and disappeared. Robert said, “We will never know who that man was.” All we know is that God sent him at just the right time.
- Tell us about a time when God has shown up at just the right time and delivered you from a difficult situation in your life.
  - The Hebrew word translated “be still” is *rapha*. *Rapha* means to relax, to withdraw. When we face tough situations, how do we know whether God wants us: (a) to step back and relax, or (b) to step up and fight?
6. Psalm 46 doesn’t just call us to relax, it also calls us to **REMEMBER** that God is our “refuge” (vs. 1), i.e., hiding place. Verse 7 reiterates that “the God of Jacob is our refuge.” Proverbs 30:26 says, “The conies are a feeble lot, yet they make their homes in the rocks.” Like the coney (i.e., rock badger) finds refuge in the rocks, we are told to find our refuge in God. So let’s think about what that means. What does it mean to take refuge in God? If an unbeliever were to ask you, “What does it mean to take refuge in God? What does that look like and feel like?” What would you say?
7. Verse 10 states that God “will be exalted among the heathen [and] exalted in the earth.” Verse 6 says, “The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved; God uttered his voice [and] the earth melted.” These verses are calling us to **RECOGNIZE** that God is sovereign and reigns over creation.
- The Bible reminds us again and again that God has the power to determine outcomes. And sometimes God does intervene to dramatically determine outcomes. But other times God seems to hold back. Why? What might determine when God does (and doesn’t) dramatically intervene?
  - Where in your life right now are you facing a situation where it feels like God is calling you to **RELAX**, **REMEMBER** that God is your refuge, and **RECOGNIZE** that God is in control? Are you ready to put that situation into God’s hands?

## **Psalm 46:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

<sup>3</sup> Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

<sup>4</sup> There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

<sup>6</sup> The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen; I will be exalted in the earth.

<sup>11</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

***Which statement in this psalm most resonates with you and why?***