



## The Nourishing Vocation Project Engaging the Living Word Psalm 46

### What is this particular text?

- A song about how God will protect and nurture God's people in the midst of chaos and destruction
- Paradox
  - Part reassurance, part lament – chaos and destruction are present, and God remains steadfast
- A piece of poetry originally meant to be sung

### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- It is a song about God's faithfulness
  - God's faithfulness is an overarching theme in the Bible
- Water imagery and connection to Genesis flood

### How can this text function in the church today?

- Changes in the earth directly affect us – invitation to explore the links between climate justice and the call to care for one another
- The world is rapidly changing, yet in many ways the church has been set on remaining the same
  - The church has been resistant to change

### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Simultaneously comforting and anxiety-inducing
- Reminds me to trust in God
- Makes me wonder how much chaos and change I can take
- Helps me explore the relationship between external and internal chaos and change

### What do you have to say to the text?

- God remains present in the midst of chaos, and I am still overwhelmed
- God will help me
- The Lord of Hosts is with me

### What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Paradox – comfort and lament go hand-in-hand
- All that God creates moves and changes in some way

### What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)

- The church's resistance to dealing with change has severely hindered it
- While paradox is inherent to our theology, we are not very good at living with paradox within the life of the church
- We confuse paradox with either binary thinking or a zero-sum game



- Crises of today:
  - The earth is rapidly changing because of climate change
  - We ignore climate change because think it is just part of the natural cycle
  - Lots of things can cause us to fear
    - Gun violence
    - Wildfires
    - International conflict
    - Gun violence

#### **What do you see within yourself?**

- The effects of destruction – anxiety, fear, trauma responses, scars
- Times when I have been overwhelmed by the loss that comes with change
  - Times when God has brought me through this and helped me become a more authentic version of myself
- As an openly transgender person, I value the ways in which I have shifted and changed as part of God’s creation

#### **What is the context – textual and historical?**

- Sandwiched between a wedding psalm and a psalm celebrating God’s rule over the nations

#### **What questions does this text raise for you?**

- Music and art are often reflections of the world around us. What would it look like to write a modern-day version of this psalm?
- What does it mean to “be still” when I often need to fidget or stim in order to function?
- If everything God creates shifts and changes, what does this say about God’s presence and the way God works in the world?

#### **What words/themes seem of particular import?**

- Water
- Change
- Learning and relearning to rely on God in the midst of chaos
- Be still
- Tremble
- Uproar

#### **What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- The destruction we witness will not scare God away
- We and everything around us, every piece of God’s creation, are moving and changing. This often causes grief, conflict, and confusion. In the midst of all of this, God is our ever-present refuge

#### **What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- Trusting God will remain with us is difficult in the midst of chaos
- The chaos and destruction we experience in this world is real, and so is God’s presence



- Change is constant, and so is God
- The changes and chaos we experience can shake our trust in God

**Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- God is the one we can turn to when there is nowhere else left to turn
- God has the power to stop wars and destroy weapons – something we as humans might find impossible
- God brings about radical change
- God destroys what needs to be destroyed
- God is our refuge
- God is exalted among the nations and in the earth

**What have others said about this text?**

- [“The last time barbarians appeared at the gates](#) of Jerusalem, they were miraculously turned back. Not even the historical record can explain why the mighty Assyrian Empire could not capture Jerusalem in 704 BCE. The Judeans had a theological answer; Jerusalem was the home of the living God and inviolable. That’s why Ps 46 proclaims and promises:  
*God is in the midst of the city; she shall not be moved;  
God will help her when the morning dawns.”* Wil Gafney
- [Psalm 46 for Reign of Christ Sunday](#) – Michelle R. Torigian
- [“Strength here is very much tied to help.](#) . . . It’s a task of partnership. . . . Particularly in this ecological crisis you might argue that we really do need help, and some Christians will look to help from God; and then you’ll obviously hear plenty from outside the church saying ‘well help’ is not coming from anywhere, it’s all on us.’ For the Christian that’s inadequate but. . . . I think it’s also inadequate to expect God to lift us out of the problem that we ourselves have created in a very simple and straightforward fashion. It’s just not that simple.” Mick Pope

**What will I teach or proclaim?**

- God will remain, even when everything is falling apart around us
- Change involves grief and loss – even good change (be specific about changes in your community). It is easy to be overwhelmed by all that is lost when change happens. It’s ok to be overwhelmed; this is a natural human reaction, and we should pay attention to our feelings. And – it’s also important to know how to regulate and re-center ourselves. God is the one who consistently comes to us amidst all the change we experience, the one who holds us fast, the one who keeps us centered
- Everything God has created shifts and changes at some point, including us
- God calls us to pay attention to the ways in which the earth is shifting