

SCRIPTURE STUDY SHEET FOR AUGUST 29, 2021 @ CAPC OAKLAND

Psalm 46

THE MESSAGE TRANSLATION VERSION

*To the leader. Of the Korahites.
According to Alamo. A Song.*

¹⁻³ God is a safe place to hide,
ready to help when we need him.
We stand fearless at the cliff-edge of doom,
courageous in seastorm and earthquake,
Before the rush and roar of oceans,
the tremors that shift mountains.

Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.

⁴⁻⁶ River fountains splash joy,
cooling God's city,
this sacred haunt of the Most High.
God lives here, the streets are safe,
God at your service from crack of dawn.
Godless nations rant and rave, kings and
kingdoms threaten,
but Earth does anything he says.

⁷ Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.

⁸⁻¹⁰ Attention, all! See the marvels of God!
He plants flowers and trees all over the
earth,
Bans war from pole to pole,
breaks all the weapons across his knee.
"Step out of the traffic! Take a long,
loving look at me, your High God,
above politics, above everything."

¹¹ Jacob-wrestling God fights for us,
God-of-Angel-Armies protects us.

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

"The imagery of Psalm 46 is violent. In contrast to the pervasive violence that constitutes the atmosphere in which we pray, the city of God is set down as a simple matter of fact. A city is a *civilized* place, a place of courtesy and trust. It isn't exclusively a place like that, but it is characteristically such a place. This city of God isn't a blueprint for the future that might become reality with the right legislations. It's *here. Now.* And God dwells in that place. There *is* a city of God. And God lives there. Present tense. Its' in the same world where the violence is, which means that we need not go off looking for God in a quiet, secluded glen.

The city of God is safe not because it's a sphere of innocence, protected by unscalable walls and sophisticated security systems. It's safe because it's the sphere where God's help is available. There's a history to this helping, with centuries of documentation. God isn't a desperately conceived new remedy but a tried-and-true help. The verb for "help" is used in verse 5, where I translate it "God as your service." God knows the kind of world we live in, and God knows how vulnerable we are in that world. God anticipates our needs and plans ahead. God's there right on time to help, there at the "crack of dawn."

In verse 8, the psalmist says, "Attention, all! See the marvels of GOD!" In other words, "Quit rushing through the streets long enough to become aware that there is more to life than your little self-help enterprises."

In a world that's falling apart all around us, it's easy to become frantic and lose touch with God. But if God is the living center of redemption, it's essential that we be in touch with God and responsive to God. If God has a will for this world and we want to be in on it, we must be still long enough to find out what it is.

It is then, and *only* then, that we'll be able to see the marvels of God that are going on around us and inside us."

(This text is the citation of a note on Psalm 46 written by Rev. Dr. Eugene Peterson from The Message)

Acts 2:37-42
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

³⁷ Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" ³⁸ Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." ⁴⁰ And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." ⁴¹ So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged you, enraged you, or surprised you in these texts?
- Psalm 46 seems to be written to people in great chaos, fear and uncertainty. What hope does it offer? How does the poet invite us to reorient our lives and actions in recognition that the Jacob-wrestling God fights for us; the God-of-Angel-Armies protects us?
- In Acts 2 the people who've heard Peter's testimony to how Jesus changed his life and the life of Israel respond by changing their lives. They then help to create a new vibrant counter-cultural community. How is it different than the corrupt generation Paul speaks of? How is baptism involved in all of that?
- How is the Spirit of God inviting you – or us as a church – to recognize who we are called to be together and individually in our chaotic world today? How are you (we) being called to act, speak, be or change through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Acts Written by Luke, this alone of the four gospel tellings of the story of Jesus of Nazareth continues to tell the story as the apostles and disciples live into the next generation, in the absence of Jesus. What's remarkable is that it continues to be essentially the same story of life, liberation, truth-telling, mercy-showing, societal transformation, even if Jesus isn't physically present. Luke seems to be telling us that the story of Jesus doesn't end with Jesus. It continues in the lives of those who believe in Jesus. Those who follow Jesus are not mere spectators. They are in on the action of God, Do acting in them, God living in them. Which also means, of course, in use. (adapted from The Message)

they:: This refers to the "devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each." Acts 2:5. Peter gives a sermon to explain what this racially diverse multi-cultural crowd is seeing (recorded in Acts 2:14-36). Our text immediately follows this, telling the response of the gathered crowd to Peter's word.

Repent:: The word in Greek (*metanoia*) means more to change one's life (mind or purpose) than to apologize for a wrong-doing. The word evokes the action of making a U-turn: recognizing you're going in the wrong direction from your intent, stopping and then changing course. It encompasses a re-orienting of all and every aspect of life.

be baptized :: The word in Greek (*baptizo*) means to submerge or immerse. It can mean to submerge something to clean it, (like a bowl or cup); it also can mean to ceremonially dip an object or person in a ritual. It also means to submerge entirely, as in "to drown." All of those connotations are present within our use of the word to baptize as the sacrament (visible action of an invisible truth or promise) of joining or belonging to the family of God in Christ: the Church.