

Sermon- A World Was Stopped In a Day

Scripture: Ps 46

March 22, 2020

In an average year, the United States of America is a buzzing beehive of activity. On average Americans drive 3.5 trillion miles a year, take more than 16 million flights, spend \$330 billion on big meetings, almost a \$ 1 trillion on sports, make 45.5 billion trips to restaurants and over 20 million visits just to Magic Kingdom in Disney world. That is a lot of activity, burning a lot of fuel and it costs about \$22 trillion in total to make all that happen. If that does not make your head spin, I don't know what does. But here is the deal. When there is so much happening, so much activity, so much running from this task to that, it is super hard for us to hear anything but the noise of our own activity.

But there are also times in history when God wants to be heard, especially when He wants to do something big and He needs His people to listen. So He decides to shut the whole world down. Yes you heard that right. God can shut the whole world down when He wants to get our attention. Ps 65:7 says this, ***“You quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations”***.

God has certainly quieted us. Here are some observations about this shutting down that God has effected. The ***first*** observation is that it has happened in a flash. In the sermon title, I described it as a “day” but what I mean is a “flash”. Let me put that in context. Over the last 10 years the US economy has been growing at a steady rate of about 2%. That is a very good rate of growth when you are talking about a \$20 trillion economy. But with the coronavirus lockdowns economists are saying we are most likely in a recession. Can you imagine such a huge economy humming along for almost 10 years and suddenly, everybody is forced indoors. In a matter of a week the economy is shrinking instead of growing! When God moves things happen in a flash. He quiets the raging oceans and silences the shouting of the nations. And He does it in a flash.

But the **second** observation I want to make is that being silenced is not a bad thing. You see it opens up our capacity to think about what we are doing in a way we just cannot in the midst of the hum drum of our regular routine. When our routine is silenced it gives us time to pause and reflect. Before this people were busy doing a lot of things.

Busyness is a one of the most valued attributes in the US, because busyness equates to how valued people think you are. Now, I am not dissing all busyness. There is something very admirable about people who rise to the occasion and do what it takes in a crisis, putting long hours and sacrificing many things to help those in need. Like medical professionals or first responders in an emergency. But there is a great danger in being busy all the time. And some people have to do multiple jobs just to make ends meet. And the danger is that you can do a lot of things, but in the process you can get disconnected from God and the spiritual mentors who God has put in your life to guide you. So you might be busy running the rat race but you really don't know what you are running towards or even why you are running. When we are busy, we only hear the urgent voices calling us. And when we are busy we also tend to add escape mechanisms into our schedule to help us let off steam. Things like browsing social media or some click bait on the internet. When you add the urgent tasks at work, our escape mechanisms and click bait, we have just a lot of activity going on, much of it may not be leading us anywhere in particular and nowhere near where God wants us to go. To put it another way, our lives are filled with noise. Now imagine this problem scaled to the whole country and then scale that even more to the whole wide world. Imagine the noise level in the whole world. Now this is tragic, because God made a beautiful world, and he made creatures called human beings who even carry attributes of God in their being. Then he put them in charge of the world he created and set Himself as both their Lord and Helper who would enable them to accomplish the goals he had set for them.

But what have we done in turn with the responsibilities and opportunities we have been given by God? We have filled the world, our nations, our institutions and our families with the noise of activity that is meaningless to God and makes it impossible to hear the God's voice. Prophet Isaiah says this in Isaiah 17:12,13, he says, ***“Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters! Listen! The armies of many nations roar like the roaring of the sea. Hear the thunder of the mighty forces as they rush forward like thundering waves.***

¹³ But though they thunder like breakers on a beach, God will silence them, and they will run away.”

Be quiet God is telling the world, God has something to say for anybody who cares to listen! Be quiet for once.

If you have quietened yourself enough, I want to draw your attention today to the powerful words of Ps 46. In Ps 46 God has a lot to say to us for such a time as this. Verse 1 and 2 says this, ***“God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.***

² So we will not fear when earthquakes come and the mountains crumble into the sea.”

So the first thing that God wants to tell us is “do not fear”. Why should we not fear? Well because God is assuring us that He is our refuge and strength. What is a refuge? It is the place we go to when things are difficult. When things are difficult, God is saying, you can go to Him. How do you go to Him? One way you go to Him is by going to His promises. Right in verse 1 He is promising us that He will be our strength. So when big things happen, when we are in times of trouble, when you might feel that you are being sapped of your strength, your knees are wobbly and you are drained, go to the promises that God has made. One of His promises is that He will be your refuge and your

strength! So let the oceans roar and the mountains crumble, you do not have to fear if God Himself is your refuge and strength.

But you might ask, if God is going to be our refuge and strength, where is God when all hell is breaking loose? Let me address this by reading verse 4 to 7.

***A river brings joy to the city of our God,
the sacred home of the Most High.***

***⁵ God dwells in that city; it cannot be destroyed.
From the very break of day, God will protect it.***

***⁶ The nations are in chaos,
and their kingdoms crumble!***

***God's voice thunders,
and the earth melts!***

***⁷ The Lord of Heaven's Armies is here among us;
the God of Israel^[b] is our fortress.***

So vs 4-7 is saying, God lives in an indestructible city. And yet, God who is also called the Lord of Heaven's armies is right here among us! How amazing is that! So do not fear, because God is with you no matter how bad the situation around you looks.

But it gets even more interesting because the next two verses say ***"Come, see the glorious works of the Lord: See how he brings destruction upon the world.***

***⁹ He causes wars to end throughout the earth.
He breaks the bow and snaps the spear;
he burns the shields with fire."***

“Be still, and know that I am God!

I will be honored by every nation.

I will be honored throughout the world

What does all this mean? What God is saying is that when these terrible things are happening around the world, there is something that He is up to. What is He up to? He is breaking the bow and snapping the spear and causing wars to cease throughout the earth. This is yet another place right in the middle of the Old Testament where God is expressing His dislike for war, but He is also saying that He is actively working in history to move things along to come to that end goal of God's which is to create a brand new recreated world in which there will be no more wars and God will be being honored in every nation of the world.

In other words what God is saying is that when you see terrible things happen all around you, when the earth shakes and the mountains crumble into the sea, even when events are terrifying on a global scale, do not fear. Why? Because God is your refuge and strength. He is very much with you. And not only that. God is the one who is allowing things like this to happen. Why would He? Because somehow in ways beyond our comprehension, it is serving a divine purpose, in moving history forward to that point where there will be a new world. A world where there will not be wars anymore and a world in which God is honored and glorified.

So what should you and I be doing in the midst of a global pandemic. Three things. Firstly, do not be afraid of the future. If you are in Christ, the best part of your life lies in the future 😊 Secondly, do not be confused. Whatever is happening is somehow part of God's big plan to move things towards the completely new world he has in mind.

So what should you do? Simply quieten yourself, your mind and heart. And in that quietness, you will be able to sense God and hear His still small voice. When you get to that still place where you can begin to sense God's presence, you will be able to ask God

about His plans for you. You will also be able to give Him the steering wheel of your life. You will even be able to lean on His strength to get you through the challenges of the moment.

So let the seas roar and the mountains fall into the sea, my friends! But you be still and connected to God who has a plan for History as well as a plan for you. Let us pray.