

Fruit That Is Always In Season: Peace Psalms 46:1-11

There are some fruit that one day are not ripe, but by the next day it is bordering on too ripe and needs to be discarded. I am told that Avocados are like that. I am not a Avocado eater, but I am told that they ripe very fast. Sometimes so quickly you miss the day to eat them.

And you might feel that way about the fruit of the Spirit as they come and go at times so quickly.

Peace is like that. You want it and yet when it is available, you could say it slips through your fingers. Just think of your week. **How often did you enjoy peace?**

Perhaps when you finally sat down to have a nice calming cup of tea, the phone rang shattering the silence and bringing you news that was upsetting.

Or even though you were able to take a nice long walk to enjoy the beauty of your surroundings, peace was still elusive because your mind kept filling with the challenges you're facing right now.

So how can we say that peace is a fruit that is always in season? Because like all the other fruit that we are studying, **peace is not produced by circumstance, but by the constant calming presence of God.** Our text this morning makes that clear even though it never uses the word peace.

Listen again to the opening words of Psalm 46. **"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"** (Psalm 46:1-3).

What I like about Psalm 46 is how contemporary it feels. What I mean is that it doesn't describe some fairy-tale sort of world where everything is perfect and nice. **It describes a world that is not just turning but churning! Earthquakes. Tsunamis. Tornados. Hurricanes. Famine. These natural disasters continually shake our planet and often our lives. So where is God when those things are happening? Well, according to Psalm 46, he's right there. He's an ever-present help in trouble. Your God is not a God who is far off. He is a God who is in your midst. The psalmist went on to write:** "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" (Psalm 46:4, 5).

The city of God that the psalmist speaks about is not Jerusalem. There is no river that runs through that city. What he's talking about is the Church, the gathering of God's people. God is in our midst. He will help us at break of day. Think of what that means. It means that he is with you through the darkest parts of the night. And he's also there right from the beginning.

But how do we know that God is really here with us? As far as I know, Christians face the same financial challenges that non-Christians do. They get sick as non-Christians do. They even die at the same rate: one death per person. How then can we say that God is in our midst? **Well our psalmist never said that God would keep away the natural disasters. It says that we do not have to fear those disasters.** Here's why, says the prophet Isaiah, **"The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil. 2 Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death"** (Isaiah 57:1, 2).

This is a living example of what the psalmist meant when he said: **"There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God"** (Psalm 46:4). That Isaiah passage is a stream from that river. It just flowed into your hearts bringing you peace by assuring that even in death God is there and has a purpose. His purpose is to give you rest. His purpose is to snap you out of this world and to bring you to heaven where everything is perfectly peaceful all of the time and will be forever.

That truth is illustrated in the book of Revelation where the Apostle John records for us a vision of heaven's throne room. He describes seeing God. Now most of us would stop there with our description. God must have looked awesome! But John was struck by something else—something under God's feet—a **sea of glass, clear as crystal (Revelation 4:6).** Have you ever been on a lake when there is no wind? Have you ever seen the water so calm that there wasn't even a ripple? It's pretty amazing. It's calming. It's peaceful.

Well in heaven not even a ripple of trouble will ever disturb the peace there. That's why I can have peace even when (not if) the mountains give way and fall into the heart of the sea. I know that this world as we know it will be destroyed, but I also know that there is a better world that awaits me. It's the kind of confidence you can have when you're watching a game you already know the outcome to. You wouldn't panic if the Oilers went down by 4 goals in the first period of the game tonight, if you already knew that they were going to outscore their opponent in the rest of the game. You would be at peace.

But how do you know that you will make it to heaven to enjoy that perfect peace? I mean why would God want a troublemaker and complainer like you there? Let's go back to Psalm 46. In a repeating refrain the psalmist wrote: **"The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" (Psalm 46:7). I've always wondered why the psalmist refers to God as the "God of Jacob." Why not refer to him as the God of Abraham, or the God of Moses? Or why not at least use Jacob's God-given name: "Israel"?**

Why Jacob? Do you remember what that name means? **"Trickster."** That was a good description of Jacob, for he didn't always make God his refuge and strength. Instead, he relied on his own cunning to get what he wanted, like when he took advantage of his brother's hunger and sold him a bowl of soup to gain the birthright. Or later when he dressed up as his brother to trick his father into giving him the blessing. In spite of these weaknesses, God was still Jacob's God. He continued to forgive and sustain him. So I'm glad to hear that the God of Jacob, the trickster, is our refuge and strength for I too like Jacob often first take refuge in my plans and in my cunning. I don't run to God as a refuge, and for that God should treat me like refuse that he tosses from his fortress.

But God doesn't do that because in his Son we have a refuge from our sins. **Jesus' blood is a strong bulwark against God's anger over sin. And his forgiveness doesn't just protect, it also propels. Isn't that truth expressed in the fact that God is not just our refuge, but also our strength?**

Don't just picture yourself cowering behind your God when bad things happen, see yourself stepping out with confidence to face the challenges—like extending the peace of forgiveness to those who have hurt you. And your God has the strength to supply such peace, for the psalmist wrote: **"He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire"** (Psalm 46:9). If God can make whole wars stop, he certainly can put an end to the turmoil in your life.

Therefore take to heart the closing words of the psalm. **"Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"** (Psalm 46:10). There is no need for us to panic no matter what is going on around us. God is bigger than any terrorist network. He is also exalted above this congregation and knows what it needs for the future. So we can be still. We can be at peace just as Noah's family must have been inside the ark even though the world's greatest storm was raging all around them. For inside the ark, their God-given refuge, they were safe. They were at peace even though they didn't know exactly where they would land or what their world would look like after the flood. One thing they could be certain of is that God would be a part of that world, for God would be in their midst, and that same God is still with his people today.

Peace is a fruit that is always in season, I pray you can see it, then you can be a source of peace for others. You can calm troubled hearts with encouragement from God's Word. You can help restore ruined relationships by speaking words of peace and forgiveness. **Remember, peace is based on God's declaration: I am with you and I love you. It's no wonder the Apostle Paul once said that peace will guard our hearts (Philippians 4:7). It's like a backstage pass which gives you the confidence to roam where you normally wouldn't get to roam. Should someone challenge your presence where normally only stage staff and the musicians roam, you won't panic, you'll just show them the pass.**

Your passport to peace is God's Word centered in Jesus. Keep a firm hold on him and keep a firm hold on peace. Amen.