**Westgate Chapel**

**Psalm 46 – “You can trust in the Lord”**

**Introduction**

**Opening gambit: What a week**

It’s been quite a week.

* If I was to ask you at the start of the year what you thought the biggest news story of the year might be, you might have said, “Brexit” or the “Prime Minister’s plan to level up the country” or something else.
* I don’t think any of us would have said that the biggest news story this year would be a global pandemic.

And this week alone, we’ve seen:

* Churches closed
* Schools closed
* Pubs, and leisure centres, and cafes – all closed
* Daily press conferences
* Worrying reports, and whispers
* Supermarket queues and shortages
* Stockpiling

**Link to Passage**

And this morning, I want to give you a message of reassurance from God’s Word. From Psalm 46. That the Lord God is in control. And in the face of whatever uncertain future there might be ahead for us: **we can have absolute trust in the Lord our God**.

The Lord God is the all-powerful, all-mighty, good, pure, creator of the universe – who if we’re His children, He is at work for our good.

The Lord is trustworthy.

Let’s read Psalm 46 together.

**Bible Reading**

*1God is our refuge and strength,*

*an ever-present help in trouble.*

*2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way*

*and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*

*3though its waters roar and foam*

*and the mountains quake with their surging.*

*4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,*

*the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

*5God is within her, she will not fall;*

*God will help her at break of day.*

*6Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;*

*he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

*7The Lord Almighty is with us;*

*the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

*8Come and see what the Lord has done,*

*the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*9He makes wars cease*

*to the ends of the earth.*

*He breaks the bow and shatters the spear;*

*he burns the shields with fire.*

*10He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;*

*I will be exalted among the nations,*

*I will be exalted in the earth.”*

*11The Lord Almighty is with us;*

*the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

**1. You can trust the Lord, even if the world falls apart (v.1-3)**

Firstly then, **you can trust the Lord, even if the world falls apart**. This is in verses 1-3.

**Define the theological ideas**

v.1 is the key to this whole Psalm:

*God is our refuge and strength,*

*an ever-present help in trouble.*

In fact the whole Psalm keep going back to this verse again and again and again.

God can be trusted – because of his greatness, because he exists outside of the universe, and is all-powerful, all-knowing, sovereign over everything that has ever happened in history, over everything that every will happen… God is the ultimate castle, the ultimate safe space.

Note as well that key word … God is **OUR** refuge and strength.

You can trust the Lord because – if you’re a Christian, if you’ve sought forgiveness of your sins in Jesus – then he is your God and Father. And he is YOUR refuge and strength.

The one who created the universe. The one who knows the ends of all things, from the beginning. The one who knows ever planet and every star. The one who knows you better than you ever could.

That God. That Lord. Is your refuge and strength. He sent his only Son into the world, to live for you, to die for you, to bear the punishment that your sins deserve, so that you could be adopted into his family. And if he gave up his only Son for you… how much more, will he be (v.1) an ever-present help in trouble.

The Lord is the gold-standard by which all other things we trust in must be measured. There is no-one, no institution, no being as trustworthy as the Lord.

**Link to Jesus’ teaching in Mt. 6**

And the Psalmist tells us all this because he wants us to not be anxious. Like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 6 – the Psalmist doesn’t want us to be anxious about anything, when we remember the Lord, know what he is like and know that he cares for his children. We don’t have to be anxious – we can trust the Lord, even if the world falls apart.

**Application/Illustration – It can feel like the world is falling apart**

* Supermarket shelves empty
* Having to stay at home
* Unable to see your mother on this Mother’s Day
* Cafés closed, the government talking about our country being at war against… a virus.

**Back to the passage**

In v.2-3 – there’s an even greater picture of disaster. The Psalmist wants us to picture in our minds eye –the greatest possible physical disaster… all the land in the world getting sucked into the ocean.

The worst possible scenario.

*“Though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”*

The world in v.2-3 – is quite literally falling apart. Creation is breaking. Where God called land out of the water in Genesis 1 – things are going backwards. The earth is being destroyed. The seas foam, and froth, storms rage, and the land is disappearing in the greatest disaster.

But even in the midst of such destruction and disorder. Even if the earth was to give way… the Psalmist tells us that we can trust God; you can trust the Lord, even if the world is falling apart.

**Motivation**

Why? Because – back to v.1 again – if you belong to God, if you’re a Christian, then the eternal creator of Heaven and Earth is your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.

God is bigger and greater than anything in creation. Everything is under his control – and we can trust him in the midst of it all.

**Objection**

This of course – raises the question – why doesn’t God always act? Why when God’s people are suffering, doesn’t he act to stop it all. And the answer to that isn’t straight forward. We know that God is capable to stop any suffering – he is our refuge and strength; we know the character of God, that he is Good and faithful; what we don’t have is all the facts. We can’t see what God does, we don’t know what he knows, instead we have to take him at his word.

And know that he really is – at work – even if we can’t yet make it out… to be our ever-present help in trouble.

You can trust the Lord, even if the world falls apart.

**2. You can trust the Lord, even when attacked (v.4-7)**

Secondly then, **you can trust the Lord, even when attacked** this is in verses four to seven of the Psalm.

Let’s read those together again:

*4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,*

*the holy place where the Most High dwells.*

*5God is within her, she will not fall;*

*God will help her at break of day.*

*6Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;*

*he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*

*7The Lord Almighty is with us;*

*the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

**Jerusalem**

The Psalmist wants us to imagine the Ancient city of Jerusalem. The capital of Israel, where in the Old Testament, the Lord dwelt on Earth in the midst of his people in the temple.

In Ancient times, Jerusalem was rather vulnerable to attack. It sat at the crossroads of the Middle East and armies from East and West often trampled up to its gates to lay siege – whether they be from Egypt, or Babylon.

Jerusalem was fortified of course. Like a castle. There was a big wall that surrounded the city that soldiers could man, and defend it from attackers. And in the days of King Hezekiah a tunnel was dug, to bring fresh water into the city. So that when an attacking army turned up on the door step… the city would be able to depend itself, and wouldn’t run out of water.

**Most Importantly**

Most importantly for the Psalmist though – is that in the midst of Jerusalem, within the ramparts, and past the river, is God’s temple. Where the Lord himself lives. It is the Lord himself who provides the strength of the city. He is the fortress. He is the castle. The ramparts and turrets of the city might look impressive, but the ultimate strength comes v. 5 from God himself.

Though foreign armies might attack. Though raiding mobs might try and have a go. Nations in uproar. God is in the city providing her ultimate security. The same God who brought them out of exile in Egypt, the same God who has delivered them time and time again, is in the city.

**New Testament**

Today, Jerusalem is not the capital of God’s people.

But in the New Testament we’re given the picture of the people of God, as forming a New Jerusalem. A people – made of Christians from every nation on earth – who will one day, as Revelation describes it, live together in the New Jerusalem. A place of safety and peace for all God’s people, for all of eternity. And there in the midst of it all will be the Lord.

**Jesus Trusted**

The Lord can be trusted, even if you’re attacked.

Nowhere was this seen more than in the life of Jesus: who suffered great abuse, and was ultimately persecuted to death by wicked men. Peter writes this in 1 Peter 2:23

*When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

When Jesus was attacked. He trusted the one who provides the security to Jerusalem. He trusted the one who promises not to let the city fall… Why? Because though Christ died, in the power of God, he was brought back to life again. Though Jesus appeared to have been defeated, the Lord proved his trustworthiness by raising Jesus from the dead to life again. As we rejoice over today on Easter Sunday.

And now Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father in Heaven interceding for us. Jesus – the one who made the stars – is in the heavens right now, working all things for our good. He controls the rising of the sun. He has planned the future. And one day he will return to judge the Earth.

But today, he is at work to see his Kingdom grow and to support his people.

**Application – The Church under attack**

It’s not to feel as though the church is under attack today.

After all, this morning, I’m speaking to you from an empty church building. I’m recording this on Saturday morning. And tomorrow – this building will be empty.

* We won’t be gathering together in person
* We won’t be meeting together physically for quite some time
* Some of us will be feeling isolated, some of us will be feeling afraid, some of us will be feeling worried, some of us will wonder if things will ever go back to normal again.

We know the devil is active in the world. And today it can feel as if the devil is winning, because of the way in which he’s taken advantage of this coronavirus – to split us all up.

But actually. The truth is. The Lord is providing the security of Jerusalem. The Lord is at work in this situation to build his church.

The New Jerusalem isn’t a city that can be attacked with catapults and armies. It’s the eternal people of God. Who will never be defeated, because Christ wasn’t defeated. He rose again from the dead and reigns supreme over all creation.

No matter the attack.

No matter what ingenious scheme the devil might use to try and thwart God’s plans.

No matter what. The Lord can be trusted. His words are true.

**3. You must trust the Lord (v.8-11)**

There’s a bit of an unexpected twist at the end of the psalm. Instead of telling us when we can trust the Lord, the Psalmist, tells us that **we must trust the Lord in v.8-11.**

So, far we’ve seen that God is our refuge against a physical world – where the mountains are thrown in the sea; and God is a refuge against all those who would attack us. But in v.8-11 – we see something even more astonishing. It’s not just that God can protect us from harm, it’s that God controls the very people who seek to harm us.

In v.8 we get a preview into the future – into the time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns at the end of the history. Listen to v. 8 and following:

*8Come and see what the LORD has done,*

*the desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*9He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;*

*he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,*

*he burns the shields with fire.*

*10He says, “Be still, and know that I am God;*

*I will be exalted among the nations,*

*I will be exalted in the earth.”*

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**The War Within**

Humans are warlike. We only have to look around our world and see the destruction that wars cause from Libya to Syria to Iraq to Afghanistan, filling out TV screens, our newspapers, the internet on a daily basis.

There is so much misery.

We often talk about the progress that the human race has made: advances in medical care, the increase in education, the spread of democracy and human rights in the world. But still, the 20th century saw more than 160 million people killed in wars.

There is a day coming though – when the Lord Jesus will put an end to all this. He has the power to stop people from doing what their sinful instincts drive them to. He can break the bows and shatter the spears.

Jesus in that final day, won’t just protect his people – he will put an end to all war. No longer will there be any death or destruction or pain.

The Lord will crush anyone who opposes his plan to bring peace to the earth.

There is no army. No airforce. No navy that will be able to resist him. No country will be able a match to the Lord – the US, Russia, China, NATO – will have their weapons broken by him.

**Most Out of Context Verse**

And then we reach v.10.

This is possibly one of the most misused verses in the entire Bible. You’ll see it printed on tea-towels and on posters: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

This is not a verse about having a quiet time. It’s not a verse about being quiet before a church service or going on a retreat.

This verse is a demand of surrender. It’s an ultimatum: surrender yourself to the Lord or be crushed. “Be still” or perhaps as it might be better put, “Put down your arms.” “Hands Up!” “Don’t make any moves, or I’ll shoot.”

The Lord Jesus Christ is coming to end all war.

But war starts in our hearts. Out of our hearts, Jesus said, “evil thoughts come – sexual immortality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

War starts in our hearts. In your hearts. It says that what, is yours is mine – and I want it. And from there it spirals out of control.

Jesus is coming to stop that war.

And before he does, the Lord says to you: “Be still and know that I am God!” Surrender yourself. Seek his forgiveness. Because, v.10 – God will be seen to the mightiest in all the universe, the Lord will be seen to be bigger than any human power. And who can possibly fight him?

Surrender yourself to him. Accept that he is victorious over every human heart.

**Conclusion**

We can trust the Lord – when everything seems to fall apart, when we’re attacked. But trusting the Lord isn’t a nice optional extra to help you through life. Because, as part of his protection, the Lord is going to end every single piece of evil in this world.

And the bad news, is that that evil starts in your heart. That evil starts in my heart.

You must trust the Lord. We need to trust the Lord, and say that he is the Lord of everything, even of me. This morning, you must come to the Lord and ask him to be your Lord. Ask him to help you to trust that he is Lord the everything.

And as you come to him – seek his forgiveness, you’ll find as the Psalmist did – that he is the one who can be relied on in all areas of life. He can be trusted when life is good, he can be trusted when your world is upside down and you’re under attack.

But you must trust the Lord. Before Jesus returns to destroy the evil of the earth.

Let’s pray.