

Amy Sexauer:

Welcome to the Appleton Chapel here in Memorial Church for our daily service of Morning Prayers. I invite all who are able to please rise and join me in reading a responsive psalm found in your black Psalter, Psalm 46.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Congregation:

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea.

Amy Sexauer:

Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.

Congregation:

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

Amy Sexauer:

God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

Congregation:

The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

Amy Sexauer:

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Congregation:

Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

Amy Sexauer:

He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder, he burneth the chariot in the fire.

Congregation:

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Amy Sexauer:

The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

You may be seated.

(singing)

This morning, I would like to reflect with you on Psalm 46, the Psalm that we just read together. Although the translation I've used previously did not use the word heathen, so please pardon me for

that. This has always been one of my favorite scriptures. Primarily, because I'm an anxious person, and be still and know that I'm God is a mantra I have used often. Also, because I'm a veteran, and much of my family are veterans, I cherish the dream that God would make all wars cease.

Today, these words feel not like a metaphor in an ancient poem, but real, personal, and relevant. This Psalm is a comfort in crisis, a testament of an all-powerful God. In this Psalm, we are told that God is our refuge, our help in trouble. That through God all wars will cease. And the Psalm ends with a command to be still. To be still and know that God is God.

Unlike other Psalms, after extolling these attributes of the Divine, we are not told to rejoice. We are not told to glorify God. We are not told to keep fighting. We are assured of the sovereignty of God and told to be still. But why? Is this a call to inaction? To slow your roll? To chill out? Is this charging us to have more faith and let God take care of the world's big problems? Doing nothing is not the same thing as being still, right? What happens to us when we are still? Perhaps this is a charge to sit with ourselves and find out.

When my daughter was born, in many ways, she woke up my heart. A heart I did not know very well. It is my love for her that taught me how to see the world of love, and that includes loving myself better. I had the epiphany, when she was quite young, that she's going to learn more from how I live, than what I say. If I wanted her to grow up loving herself and taking care of herself, I couldn't just tell her to, I had to show her. I had to work on myself. I had to sit with myself.

That was the beginning of a long process that led me here to being a 37-year-old graduate student. Even though it was hard to start over, and change careers, and uproot my daughter, by coming here, I was listening to my heart and following what I thought was a long lost dream. Carl Jung has this quote that I both love and hate, which is that, "The greatest burden a child must bear is the un-lived life of its parents."

My daughter may not remember all of my great parenting advice, but when she is older and struggling to make big decisions, I hope she can look at my life and know that it is never too late to change her mind, change her career, follow a dream, listen to her heart. Like most of us, I am a work in progress, but in my experience, listening to your heart requires stillness. I have told my daughter that I don't just believe God cares for the desires of your heart, I think he put them there. Whether it is the still small voice of God or the voice of your own heart, I think stillness is one way we listen.

So when was the last time you were really still? What feeling does that bring up for you? In our culture, we are told that busyness and productivity are measures of success. We have an aversion to stillness, and I think that is because when we are still, we cannot avoid ourselves. Avoid the parts of us that are neglected, that are hurting, and that are lonely. The great James Baldwin says that, "One of the reasons people cling to their hate so stubbornly is because they sense once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain." I think that is true of the busyness in our culture too. We are too busy to sit and feel.

So in a Psalm where we are promised at the end of war, we are also commanded to be still. And I cannot help but wonder if there is a connection between our personal inner work and the suffering around the world? Hurt people, hurt people. And if we are not addressing our wounds, who are we hurting?

One of the unfathomable mysteries of the Divine is how God can hold the whole world with the same tenderness that He holds a single human heart. Stillness and all that it may reveal is daunting. It is the place many of us do not want to go, which is why we will not go there alone. "Be still and know that I am God." And there is nowhere you can go that the love and sovereignty of God will not be with you.

If you are able, I invite you to please rise and pray with me.

May the God of love surround you. May the God of joy delight you. May the God of mystery surprise you. May the God of hope sustain you. May the God of wisdom direct you, and may the God of freedom release you. Amen.

Let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us, saying...

Congregation:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Amy Sexauer:

Please join in singing our concluding hymn, number 306, There Is a Balm in Gilead.

(singing)

Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you always. Amen.

Congregation:

Amen.

Amy Sexauer:

Let us bless the Lord.

Congregation:

Thanks be to God.