

Well, hey, good morning, everybody. Thank you for joining us online. This is not how we plan to gather this morning, but here we are. And so we're glad that you are with us. And Quinton mentioned.

Yeah, we've got a handful of staff members here, but I want to shout out one special volunteer named Amber who showed up to run our, our lyrics and propresenter. She also happens to be my wife. And so thank you, Amber, for coming, even though you didn't have to. So it just takes a team to pull all of this together on.

On days like today. So today, this morning, uh, we had a crew of people that were out plowing our lot. Uh, they were putting down salt. We were trying to get ready for worship gathering this morning. But again, I mean, we just.

We want to use wisdom and discernment. And so when we looked at the road conditions, when we saw that Monroe county was still underneath a travel advisory, the bitter cold weather, we just thought, you know what, maybe we should just do an online gathering instead. So thanks for pivoting with us. I also find that it's interesting. I checked it just a little bit ago.

Um, Monroe County, Bloomington, is colder than Antarctica right now. And so that's just another good reason to stay at home today. So some people would say that the only thing better than plans are canceled plans. And so hopefully today you are able to enjoy that second or third cup of coffee. Maybe you are still in your pajamas, wherever you are, whatever you are doing right now.

Yeah. Again, thanks for joining us today. Scripture reminds us again and again that God does, I think, some of his best work. When things don't go our way, when things don't go as we wanted them to, when they didn't go the way that we planned them to go. And I think that one of the reasons why God does His best work in those moments is because changed plans or life uncertainties make us lean in and trust him more than what we feel like we have to.

When things feel like they are in our control, when life gets a little bit chaotic, it causes us to look and evaluate what we truly can put our trust in, who we can truly put our trust in. And we realize, man, it's not what we think that we can control. The only one that we can truly put our trust in is the one who is in control of all things. It is the Lord. And we can run from that truth, or we can run to that truth.

We can run into his arms. And so times of uncertainty, man, they change us, they grow us, because they make us trust God more. Times of uncertainty are also good because they force us to slow down a little bit, to quiet our hearts, to be still. And oftentimes we run around and we rush through life. And man, times of uncertainty just kind of

ground us a little bit and make us slow down and find rest in our souls.

Psalm 46:1 3. It's this Psalm that I've been kind of chewing on over really, the last couple of weeks. Just some things. I find myself going back to this psalm over and over, especially when. When there's some uncertainty and maybe some pain in life.

And so I've been drawn to Psalm 46 over these last couple of weeks. And so I just wanted to. I'm even pivoting today. This is a little devotion that I put together this morning when I knew that this is what we were going to be doing. Psalm.

I just wanted to focus our hearts on this morning. And I hope that it's a blessing to you wherever you are and whatever stage of life you're in right now. So this is what the psalmist writes. He says, God is our refuge and strength, and ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear 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.

And one of the things that I love about scripture is that it does not shy away from the things that go on in our life. Like scripture does not pretend, like everything is just hunky dory and perfect and exactly how we want them to go. The psalm paints a picture of chaos. This psalm paints a picture of a world that is unstable, a place where we would not want to be. I mean, this is a world that is.

That is giving away. He says the earth is giving away. The mountains are falling into the heart of the sea. The waters are roaring and foaming. This is not an idyllic place that we would want to be.

This is poetic language for when life feels like it is absolutely falling apart, when life feels like the firm foundation that we thought that we were standing on starts to crumble, when things feel shaky, when circumstances feel out of our control. This is the poetic language that the psalmist is using. And I think that days like today, which is just a. I mean, on the inconvenience scale of 1 to 10, a day like today barely is even a blip on that radar. But days like today remind us just how out of control we actually are. We are typically able to live day by day, blissfully unaware of our inability to.

To control anything. But there are days like today and there are moments that maybe you are even going through right now that are reminders, oh, we're not as in control as what we like to think that we are. We can have our plans, we have our calendars all laid out. We can have best of intentions, our health, our finances, our relationships. Like, none of this is in control as much our control, as much as we like to think that it is.

But don't miss the beauty of this psalm. And I think it's one of the reasons why followers of Jesus have been drawn to this psalm for centuries. Because this psalm, yeah, it gets pretty quickly to chaos, but it's not where it starts. Like, the psalmist doesn't start with chaos. He starts with the confidence that we can have in the Lord.

The confidence that we can have in the Lord as we walk through this chaos. He starts this psalm by saying, God is our refuge and strength. He is an ever present help, trouble. God is not a distant help. He's not far away.

It is not a future help. The psalmist says, no, God is our ever present help in trouble. He's not. And ever present. He is our ever present help in trouble.

In other words, instead of giving us control, which I think, I think we think that we want control, but instead of giving us control, God gives us something even better. He gives us himself. He gives us his presence. He gives us peace in the midst of those times that feel out of our control and chaotic. Which is why I think Psalm 46 ends with, to me, some of the most beloved words in scripture and just a good reminder for us as we walk through life.

He says, be still and know that I am God. Be still and know that I am God. And being still, it doesn't mean that we don't do anything. Being still doesn't mean that we do nothing. Being still means that we stop striving and we trust God.

We stop striving and we trust God. We stop trying to manage everything on our own. We stop trying to control everyone. We stop trying to fix all of our problems. Instead, we be still from all of that striving and we trust the Lord who is in control.

Our souls are able to find rest in him because he is good. He is ever present. He is our refuge and strength when everything around us feels tumultuous and like it's falling apart. Somebody said one time that the most spiritual thing that we can do is take a nap. And I to that I say Amen.

I totally agree with that. And I think, though, that the rest that we can experience when we trust in Christ is, yeah, we're able to rest physically, but we're also able to rest emotionally. Emotionally, we're able to rest spiritually. We are able to rest in the One who is in control. Instead of our illusion that we're in control, we are able to rest that God is good and he is at work in ways that we can't even imagine.

And so maybe today God is allowing us to slow down. Today, God is allowing us to stay in our pajamas and have another cup or two of coffee. Maybe today God is allowing us to collectively all take our

breath, to rest, to realize we're not in control, and to trust that he is. And today, if you are carrying anxiety, if you are walking through grief, if you're having to make decisions that you never thought that you would make, if you are feeling worn down by a season that just won't let up, if you know today more than ever that we are just one phone call, one text away from our world crashing down around us. Psalm 46 isn't telling you to deny the reality of your pain.

Psalm 46 is an invitation to run to the Father who is our refuge and strength and ever present help in trouble, to be still in our souls, to be still and to know that he is God. So as we wrap up today, I just want to invite you to get comfortable, to breathe wherever you are. Take a couple of deep breaths and hear these words from the psalmist once more.

God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear. 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, be still and know that I am God. You don't have to solve anything right now. You don't have to have the clarity that I know we all want when we go through uncertain seasons.

You don't even need to feel strong today. You just need to remember that you have an ever present refuge and strength who invites you to run to Him.

Christmas is such a great reminder of this that God came near. God became human. He took on flesh. He entered into this world. And because he experienced those times where it feels like the earth is giving way and the mountains are falling into the heart of the sea.

Because Jesus experienced everything that we experience in this life, he's able to empathize with us. And the author of Hebrews says in Hebrews chapter four, verse 15, and following that now we can approach the throne of grace with confidence because we have a Savior who is able to empathize with us when things feel out of control in our lives. He knows what it's like and he meets us with grace and mercy and tenderness in those moments.

We always close times of teaching with response time and might look a little bit different for you this morning. This morning in these next few moments, you might just want to take time to just sit and reflect to maybe open up your Bible and read Psalm 46 again. Thank God for his presence in your life. Maybe you came prepared already and you've got some elements in front of you to remember Jesus body that was given on the cross and his blood that was shed. Take these moments right now just of silence, to reflect, to pray and to trust that God is right now in this moment your ever present help your refuge and strength be still and know that he is God.

Jesus, thank you for coming into our world, experiencing all of the uncertainty, all of the fear, all of the pain, for empathizing with us now when we walk through those same things and God as we are going to talk about in these next couple of weeks and Christmas Eve, that Jesus, you became human not just to empathize with us, although that is remarkable. You became human to transform us, to give us a hope that we cannot find anywhere else in this world. And so Jesus, whatever we are walking through today, may we cling to you because you are good and loving and kind. And while you may not immediately remove us from those times of chaos in our life, you promise to be near and so may we trust you in that promise and may we experience your presence in these moments now. In Jesus name, amen.