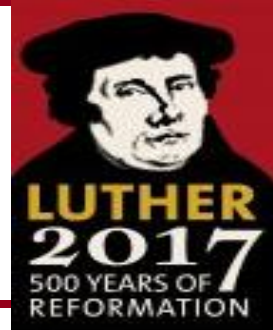


A Mighty Fortress is our God

Psalm 46 Hebrews 2:14-18 Matthew 16:13-19

October 29, 2017

Pastor Dave Bolte



“A Mighty Fortress is our God” is Martin Luther’s most familiar hymn. It has been translated in scores of languages, it is used throughout Christianity, and it is frequently referred to as the *Battle Hymn Of The Reformation*. Luther’s hymn “A Mighty Fortress is our God” is based on Psalm 46 – a Psalm of comfort with verses that say *God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble (46:1); and the LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (46:7).*

Psalm 46 describes God as a **refuge** and **fortress**; He is like a castle and a stronghold! He is with us, and He uses His mighty power to defend and help us. Psalm 46 makes it easy to sing “A Mighty Fortress is our God”! **The idea is that you are safe and sound in God’s presence as His power is at work in your life no matter what might be happening!** Here is how the hymn reflects the Psalm:

1. A **mighty Fortress is our God**, A trusty Shield and Weapon;
He helps us free from every need, That hath us now o’ertaken.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

We need God as our Mighty Fortress because of the dangers and trials that we face. We live in a broken, sinful world that is full of evil. Temptations abound; troubles and hardships are plentiful; stress and anxiety can be overwhelming; our health can change in a heartbeat; relationships can crumble; financial issues are troublesome; grief and sorrow are heavy burdens, and so many other things can bring pain into our lives. On top of all this, we are persecuted, excluded, and ridiculed just because we trust in Christ. The danger that we face is real and life is full of trouble! In Psalm 46, the danger is portrayed in catastrophic creation images:

Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.

PSALM 46:2-3

Creation is unraveling and falling apart in Psalm 46. There were times when Martin Luther thought his life was unraveling. He was a wanted outlaw, both church and state wanted him dead, both Pope and Emperor had condemned him, death had taken two of his daughters, his friends were burned at the stake, the plague was in

the land, and Luther's own health was constantly an issue. The danger was real for Martin Luther and his life was full of trouble.

In the hymn, Luther blames it all on Satan.

1. The **old evil Foe** Now means deadly woe; Deep guile and great might
Are his dread arms in fight; On Earth is not his equal.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

3. Though **devils** all the world should fill, All eager to devour us.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

Luther knew that the devil was real and he brings trouble into our life. Satan is dangerous --- just as the New Testament teaches:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 1 Peter 5:8

Satan and his demons sought to devour Luther --- and Satan is after you as well! We need God as our Mighty Fortress because of the dangers that we face. When your life seems to be unraveling and falling apart; when Satan's attacks seem fierce; when your "**earth gives way**" or your "**mountains are moved**" or your "**waters roar and foam**" -- you have a Mighty Fortress and a safe place: The Lord God Almighty is your Mighty Fortress and safe place! God is with you, and He promises to use His almighty power to help you! That is the main point of the Psalm and the main emphasis of the hymn!

God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble! The refrain in Psalm 46 teaches us who this God is: **the LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress (46:7,11)**. The **LORD Almighty** is a title given to Jesus in the New Testament; Jesus is the **LORD Almighty**; He is the **God of Jacob** Who uses His mighty power to defend and protect you like a Mighty Fortress!

In the hymn, Jesus is the Valiant One who fights Satan on our behalf.

2. But for us fights **the Valiant One**, Whom God Himself elected.

Ask ye, Who is this? **Jesus Christ it is**. Of **Sabaoth Lord**, ("ALMIGHTY LORD")

And there's none other **God**; He holds the field forever.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

Jesus is this Valiant One who fought Satan decisively on the cross. The very first promise of the Savior in the Bible is about Satan's defeat.

[The Lord is speaking to Satan] I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall crush your head, and you shall bruise His heel." GENESIS 3:15

This very first promise of a Savior was that one of Eve's descendants would crush Satan's head. The way He would crush Satan's head was by being struck "**in the heel**" – a figurative way to describe Jesus' death on the cross. **When Jesus died, He undid all the damage that Satan brought into the world.** Jesus crushed Satan's head on the cross! Sin is forgiven. Our relationship with God is restored. Death is overcome by life when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Jesus is the **LORD Almighty – the Valiant One** -- who used His mighty power to rescue you from Satan, his demons, and their evil ways. *The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work* ^{1 John 3:8}

And we see this in the Gospels. Every time Jesus cast out a demon He was exercising power and control over Satan and his demons. The **LORD Almighty** overcame Satan in the temptations in the wilderness and in Gethsemane. Every miracle and every exorcism Jesus did was a foreshadow of the cross of Christ. **On the cross, the LORD Almighty's heel was struck -- but in that very same blow, Satan's head was crushed!** Christ has defeated Satan and reconciles all people to God the Father. The **LORD Almighty** has defeated Satan, and on the Last Day, Satan and all his wicked demons will be forever cast into the *Lake Of Fire*.

With the Psalm, we confess that Jesus is *the LORD Almighty [Who] is with us; [Jesus is] the God of Jacob [Who is] is our mighty fortress!* With the hymn, we sing

**But for us fights the Valiant One, Whom God Himself elected.
Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is!
Of Sabaoth Lord, And there's none other God; He holds the field forever.**

Now, because Jesus is the **LORD Almighty**, your Mighty Fortress, Psalm 46 assures you of two things.

1. You can live your life in peace even if things seem to be unraveling and falling to pieces. Trust the words and promises of the **LORD Almighty**; *know and believe that God is your refuge and strength, an ever-present help in times of trouble.* In Psalm 46, the **LORD Almighty** speaks words of peace to you:

"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}

3. Though devils all the world should fill, All eager to devour us.
We tremble not, we fear no ill, They shall not overpower us.

"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

You can live in peace because the **LORD Almighty** has defeated Satan, forgiven your sins, and reconciled you to the Father. You can “*be still*” and live in peace because the **LORD Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ**, is your fortress, strength, and help; He promises to be with you through it all! **No matter what might be happening in your life, its as if you are safe and sound in a Mighty Fortress!**

If you start to lose that peace; and worries and fears are getting the upper hand in your life, then go back to Psalm 46, read it, learn it, and memorize it, and then boldly sing **A Mighty Fortress is our God!** The **LORD Almighty** has won the victory by His death and resurrection: you can live every single day in peace!

2. A second thing that Psalm 46 teaches us is that we have a place to go to meet God and be strengthened in faith!

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

PSALM 46:4

4. He's by our side upon the plain With **His good gifts and Spirit**.

And take they our life, Goods, fame, child and wife, Let these all be gone,

They yet have nothing won; The **Kingdom** our remaineth.

"A Mighty Fortress is Our God" by Dr. Martin Luther, 1483-1546

The City of God is the Holy Christian Church, where God pours His blessings in your life like a river. God has given you a place to meet with Him; a “holy habitation” where He promises to be for you and to work in your life. The streams of God’s Holy Word and the life-giving Sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion make you glad; they are the good gifts that God gives through His Spirit. God’s Word and His Sacraments are the Kingdom of God in our midst. Here the **LORD Almighty** is at work to forgive sins; He sets you free and gives you peace. This Kingdom will remain with you until the **LORD Almighty** returns on the Last Day. ***The gates of hell will not prevail against the City of God!***

On this 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation, we thank God that the Lord Jesus Christ is our **MIGHTY FORTRESS!** He has defeated Satan; He gives us peace; and He makes us glad with His Word and Sacraments!

The **LORD Almighty** is with us! The Lord Jesus is our refuge, strength, and mighty fortress: an ever present help in times of trouble! Amen!