

Morning service Sunday 13th September – led by Pastor Peter Gooch



We are used to getting a 'double header' when John Wainwright and Sue are with us, so it was great to have Jenny reading us a prayer in Peter's service.

Psalm 46 gave us this invitation: **"Be still, and know that I am God."** Had we ever sat down and tried to describe God?

What words could we use to describe God and his character? Well Peter's answer was an 'Alphabet of God's Character'.

A–F: Almighty, awesome, Alpha, amazing; bountiful, beautiful, Bread of Life; Creator, compassionate, Counsellor; divine, dawn; eternal; forgiving, faithful, Father.

G–L: Glorious, good, gracious, gate; holy, Holy Spirit, High Priest; infinite, innocent; just, joy; all-knowing King; life, Lamb of God, love, Light of the World.

M–R: Merciful, majestic; (k)nowledgeable; Omega; personal, present everywhere, patient; quiet giver in a noisy world; righteous, rock, ruler, refuge.

S–Z: Son, Saviour, sacrifice; truth; understanding, unique; vine; wise, way, worthy of worship, Word of God; X remains a challenge—perhaps you can suggest one; yoke-giver; zealous.

These words held together the awesomeness of the powerful Creator and the intimacy of a loving Father.

Psalm 46 reflected on God's deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians during the reign of King Hezekiah, when King Sennacherib of Assyria threatened Jerusalem and demanded Hezekiah's surrender. Faced with an apparently hopeless situation, Hezekiah had gone to the temple and prayed, and God had answered his prayer and delivered Judah. An angel of the Lord had struck down many in the Assyrian army; Sennacherib withdrew and was later killed.

There were three elements to the psalm:

1. **Verses 1–3:** God was our tower of strength.
2. **Verses 4–7:** God was our river of joy.
3. **Verses 8–11:** God was our God, and He would be glorified.

The Psalm opened with the declaration: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present and proven help in trouble." Therefore, we did not need to fear—even if the earth gave way, the mountains fell into the sea, and its waters roared and foamed. The word *Selah*, found throughout the Psalms, was an invitation to pause and reflect over this truth: God was our refuge, our strength, and our ever-present help in trouble.

Our earth and life might be unstable, but the sovereign Creator remained in control. His people had experienced His preserving power through flood, slavery, exile, and many other troubles. Earthly turmoil was temporary; God's promised future for His people was permanent. When the foundations of our lives were shaken and problems came, we should remember that God was our strength and shelter. He would hold us with strong arms and gentle hands.

Verses 4–7 pictured a river whose streams made glad the city of God. God was in the midst of the city, so it would not be moved. Nations might rage and kingdoms totter, but when God raised His voice, the earth melted. The passage conveyed the peace that came from knowing that God was Lord over history, the natural world, and the affairs of nations.

When Jerusalem had been encircled by the Assyrian army water had been precious, but Hezekiah had constructed an underground system to bring water into the city. However, the psalmist had understood that God Himself was the true river, supplying the water of life. Jesus had used the same image. when He cried out at the feast: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me... from within him will flow rivers of living water."

Whenever God's people had sought help elsewhere, disaster had followed; when they turned to Him, His help was immediately available, as when the angel of the Lord struck down the Assyrian army and sent Sennacherib home. Whatever circumstances confronted us, we could drink from the river of His joy and blessing, finding the peace and strength we needed.

The final verses invited us to behold the works of the Lord. He brought wars to an end, broke the bows, shattered the spears, and burned the chariots. Then He commanded: "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth." In the fields surrounding Jerusalem 185,000 Assyrian soldiers lay dead. No battle had been fought; the angel of the Lord had acted. God had performed a miracle to strengthen the faith of His people, and defeated and disarmed their enemies, This was a picture of peace—peace that would ultimately be fulfilled in God's purposes at the end of time.

After the extraordinary events of Hezekiah's day, God says, "Be still, and know—recognise and understand—that I am God." We were invited to stop, release the activities that crowded our time, and consider God as He was revealed in Scripture: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Christianity was not merely a set of beliefs; it was a relationship with God. We should ask ourselves: what opportunities do I make to be quiet with Him? And hold together the majesty of the all-powerful Creator and the intimacy of a loving Father.

Life brought many kinds of turmoil—illness, family difficulties, strained relationships, pressures at work, unemployment, and old age. Yet we were called to let God be God in our lives.

- Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him.
- Give thanks for His gifts: health, salvation, forgiveness, and eternal life.
- Give Him glory through our words, our service, and our lives.