

*1God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*

*2Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;*

*3though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah*

*4There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.*

*5God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.*

*6The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.*

*7The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*

*8Come, behold the works of the Lord; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.*

*9He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.*

*10“Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth.”*

*11The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah*

A trembling, a shaking, a rolling an earthquake. And there is no safe place to go. Buildings come crashing down - the earth opens and swallows cars and humans and houses. On the shore a great wave breaks over dwellings and docks – destroying. Nothing is solid, the world is shaken, shattered, sheared.

Flood, fire, war, disease. These bring a shaking, too. Water to drink – power at the flip of a switch – clothing to wear – food to eat – health – take away any of these and nothing is secure.

A child is kidnapped – a partner leaves me for another – a son is enslaved to alcohol – decisions I have made leave me looking like a fool – my carelessness harms another - these are a shaking and a shattering also. Is there no solid ground - no safe place – no refuge?

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

When all the world is shaking and falling – failing – God is a refuge – a mighty fortress.

Everybody knows that. Even the person who has not prayed in years will be down on his knees when the world starts shaking.

But will God hear? Will God listen to the drunk whose car has just ended the life of an expectant mother? Will God have mercy on the woman whose sharp tongue and critical words have brought many to tears? Will God lift up the fallen one who has brought no offering of praise to God for years?

Will God hear you? What do you think? Have you earned a hearing? Tried hard enough – contributed enough – followed God’s teachings?

My heart knows what God should do – give what we deserve.

God should be faithful to the faithful – merciful to those who have had mercy – God should be good to those who have been good.

But God says, “I don’t want to hear about it. Not a word about your deserving this or that from me. Be quiet.”

In Psalm 46 it is said this way, “Be still and know that I am God.”

In the passage from Romans it says, “Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

Be still. Every mouth silenced.

Will God hear you? Be still. Listen.

And God will tell you what God has done in Jesus.

You are justified as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Be quiet about what you have done or what you will promise or what you will do. This is what God has done: God gave his Son to die for sinners. All your sins belong to Jesus - they are not yours any more. Everything you deserve for driving that car while drunk or cheating on your husband or just being lazy and

not being a very good mother – everything you deserve was heaped on Jesus. Your punishment does not belong to you.

Only Jesus belongs to you. He stole your successes and failures, and gives his dying and rising.

What will be at the very center of your heart? Jesus or what you will make of yourself?

When things are going well I am always tempted to think I shall not need Jesus after all. On a Sunday when most everyone is here and the sermon speaks to your hearts and my children call and all the news is good and I haven't failed anyone for a while I put me in the center of my heart and feel pretty good about me. But then comes the Sunday when the pews are empty and the few who are here are wishing the sermon would get over soon and my children call and are sad and I have said something that has made another cry, I hate me and all my failures.

God knows how I need Jesus – how you need Jesus. More than anything else God wants you to trust and believe and hope in Jesus. God calls that trusting and hoping and believing faith.

For when your faith is in Jesus you need not fear though the earth should change and the mountains tremble in the heart of the sea – though its waters roar and foam – though the mountains tremble with its tumult.