

Columbia, Missouri
The Worship of God • February 27, 2022



The Scripture
Psalm 46

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

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

*though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.*

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

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah

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

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

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

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

The Message
“Small Victories: Grounded”
Adonica Coleman, *director of community engagement*



I grew up in a church called Christ Pilgrim's Rest Missionary Baptist Church in St. Louis, Missouri. The church is memorable because it sits right on one of the main thoroughfares of the city, on a street called Kingshighway. It has what we called the stairway to heaven to take you up to the main entrance from the street.

We went to church with my great aunt, Lora Cleaves, affectionately called Aunt Toad, as she was matriarch of our family. She was serious about church attendance and participation. She didn't care what you did on Saturday night, if you were in her family, you went to church on Sunday mornings. At

church on Sunday mornings is where I remember sitting in those pews that seemed huge at the time next to cousins, headed up by either my Aunt Toad or my Grandma Delaney, her younger sister.

Countless other families sat in those pews in the same manner... an adult grandma, mom, or aunt, and a row of little people sitting right next to them. Thinking back, it seems the women always sat with the kids, maybe the men were up on the deacons' row or ushering.

In our church, and probably in many Black churches the order of service went something like this. Devotional and prayer where you would sit, then a selection where you would stand and sing and clap along. That would be followed by announcements where you would sit, and then another selection where again you could stand and participate. Those song selections were normally high spirited and gave the kids an opportunity to "get the wiggles out." What came next though was the sermon, and I don't know if you've ever been in a traditional Black Missionary Baptist Church, but the time of sermon could run anywhere from 35 minutes to an hour. And the kids, we were expected to sit through it and KEEP STILL.

We would start off well, but inevitably, because we were just kids after all, we would start to squirm. And not just squirm but figure out a way to play with each other while sitting. Sometimes that play took the form of finger wrestling, or elbow jabbing or something that would cause us to begin giggling.

No doubt, we would get one of three responses from the adult woman who was sitting with us, either the look, the pinch, or the whispered but urgent words, “BE STILL!” Depending on the kind of kid you were, you might need to get all three, but we all understood that when those words were spoken, we had better take heed. **BE STILL** was never a calm soothing request, but rather an urgent command that immediately stopped us in our tracks and got our attention.

These are the words we heard in our psalm today. This passage was written after Hezekiah had prayed, and God sent one angel to destroy 185,000 Assyrians. It teaches us that whenever disaster strikes, and it seems that all hope is lost that God can handle, in God’s will and in God’s own good time and way, things that feel like a total disaster to us. And that can be a lot of things, headlines swirl, nations rage, marriages strain, children stray, and storm clouds loom. And what do we generally do? We buckle under the weight of it all instead of focusing on the works of the Lord.

I’ll focus for a moment on headlines. Has anything in the headlines caught your attention lately and kept it (COVID, new wars)? With the constant red BREAKING NEWS scrolling across the screens, how can it not? I’m going to step out on a limb and dare to say that the 24-hour news cycle is probably NOT from God. Yes, conflicts still rage, and injustice requires voice and action. But when we get anxious, it is helpful to remind ourselves what God has done—to *“behold the works of the Lord.”*

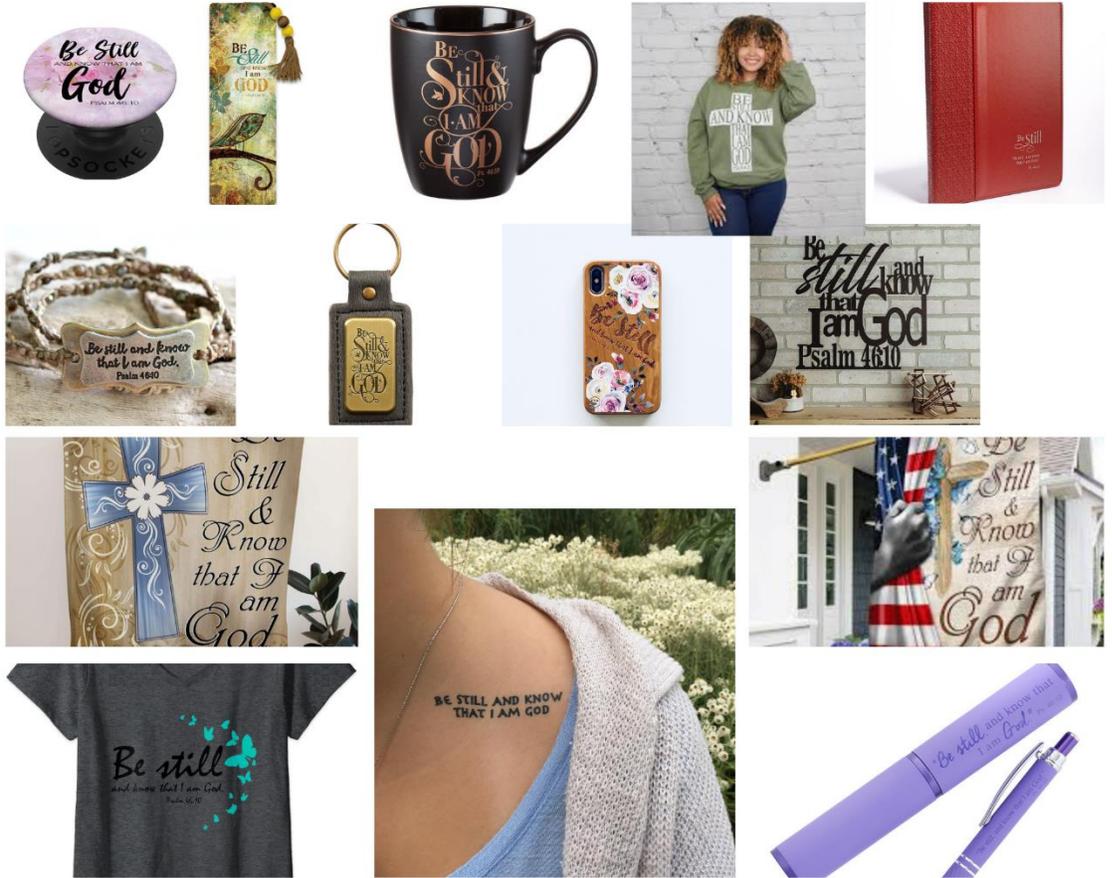
As part of this strategy, I encourage you to unfollow the toxic friend on Facebook and turn off the news for one day or one week. It is man-made, and instead of helping us to consider the works of the Lord, it causes us to be anxious about temporary problems and angry at people who disagree with us.

Do you remember what was going on in the news exactly one year ago today? Probably not. Why? Because that news has passed, and whatever was breaking that day did not, in the end, turn our world upside down as promised by the loud, “Breaking News” music and fancy graphics. That news segment grabbed our attention for a few minutes, made money for sponsors, and took our focus off the works of the Lord.

Let’s take captive those thoughts and think on more honorable things:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8 ESV)

BE STILL is a command straight from God’s mouth in this psalm. Yet it is one of the hardest things for us to do and one of the most famous verses in the Bible. We put it on posters, shirts, cards, flags, rings, bracelets, notebooks, purses, walls, phone cases, pop sockets, and sometimes we even tattoo it on our bodies.



But we have trouble living it, we are rarely still, we rarely sleep without tossing and turning, and we hardly live sold out that God is God, and we are not. Why? It seems so simple but think of us as humans... we are prone to talk, to defend ourselves, to justify our failures, to condone our defeats. We cannot **BE STILL**, which translates as to **CEASE STRIVING** or to **EXIST AT REST**.

Do you realize that the average cell phone user touches their phone 2, 617 times per day? And that’s just the average. Some of us are likely above average users, which translates into the top ten percent of cell phone users touching their phones 5,400 times per day! When is there time to BE STILL, which is the first part of the command?

And BE STILL doesn’t mean you need to be on your face in your prayer closet three hours of every day, or that you need to be in deep meditation. How do we get better at anything? Practice...yes, we are talking about practice! Be intentional about putting the phone away or turning the television off, or the radio off in the car for a few minutes or

an hour at a time so that we can practice being still. Just those few minutes could be considered a small victory in and of itself.

The second part of that command in Psalm 46 is, “And KNOW that I am God.” That, to me, is one of the greatest revelations that can ever drop into any soul. That you KNOW that God is God. Not you think, or you wonder, or you’re not sure or that maybe God is God. But you’ve got to know that you know that you know...that God is who God says God is!

And how to you know? How can you be sure? Well, let’s taka moment and get personal: What works has God done inside of you? How has God delivered you? What peace has God brought to you?

Take quiet time today to consider the works of God in your own life, how God has redeemed you and called you by name. Has God changed your heart or an attitude? Has God helped you to forgive yourself or others?

These are some of God’s most phenomenal works, works to behold, works that help us to BE STILL and know that God is God.

Amen.

BROAD HEARTS BROAD MINDS BROAD REACH