



22 November 2024

Stop Striving, Start Resting

The Christmas rush is under way. Planning, shopping, filling the calendar to overflowing. For some the peace and joy of Christmas is offstage, and will be for the entire season. How can we prevent that, or be rescued from it?

Let's focus on eight familiar words from Psalm 46.

“Stop striving and know that I am God” (verse 10).

Many of us are familiar with the King James version, “Be still...”

The word God directed the Psalm writer to use means to stop, drop, abandon, let go—to *cease and desist*! So, literally it reads “Cease!” or “Stop!”, with the “striving”, or “be still” in the King James Version, included to fill out, clarify the thought.

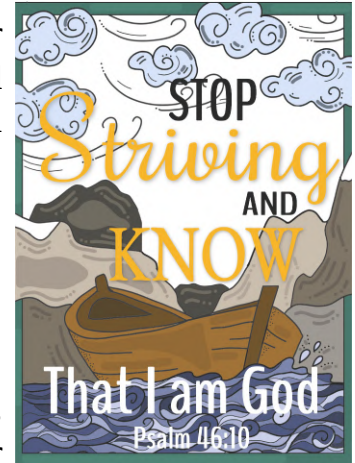
One writer reminds us that this “is not in the first place comfort for the harassed but a rebuke to a restless and turbulent world: ‘Quiet!’—in fact, ‘Leave off!’”

As we enter this Christmas season it is good to stop striving. But striving for what? And, *Why?* and how does that work? Let's think about that briefly today.

Overall Psalm 46 sings, challenges us to have confidence in Almighty God who is our refuge and strength, our stronghold even when the world is falling apart, even if the greatest disasters we can imagine take place. God is for us and with us. So then, the Psalm writer testifies we “will not fear” (verse 2). Instead of *striving*, being consumed with dread, worry and fear we can rest in God.

There is an application of this truth, a principle to guide us during the Christmas season. Gifts to buy and wrap, decorations to put up, food to be planned and prepared, entertaining people, squeezing in all the events and sights, and facing disappointments and crises that strike... it can take more striving than we have time or ability to complete. It can seem like you are trying to break the world record of keeping 108 plates spinning at the same time. It is easy to become so busy in this season that there is no way we can really be ready to celebrate Christmas as we picture it in our minds, or think we should, until Easter!

“Stop striving and know that I am God.” Stop striving and start resting in God. That begins by remembering what is really important, the birth of Jesus Christ our Savior. We can help sharpen



our focus and trim expectations when we remember that Jesus was not born in a grand palace with a fully outfitted designer nursery, and Mary and Joseph did not have family, friends or staff with them to celebrate and help. The greatness and grandness of His birth was celebrated by strangers, the shepherds, and a choir of angels that God provided.

When we rest in God because of who He is and what He has done, is doing and will do, we will have confidence and will be able to stand firm, not be shaken or moved by expectations or disasters.

And in addition to that, we will be happy! Verses 4 and 5 in this Psalm,

“There is a river whose streams make the city of God happy, the holy dwelling places of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved; God will help her when morning dawns.”

The principle here is that resting in God, trusting Him, brings freedom from anxiety and fear, replacing that with true happiness.

The Christmas season and our celebration do not have to be Christmas-card-perfect. Your circumstances may be more like Charlie Brown’s Christmas tree. Whatever they are, stop striving and start resting in God.

Pastor Lyle

