

Sermon 2009 Reformation Day
Text: Psalm 46
Theme: "Be Still!"

The world swirls around us and we lose perspective. We become caught up in our overblown opinions and petty issues and slowly begin to believe that we ourselves or at least our issues are truly the center of the universe. I attended the board meeting for Lutheran Child and Family Services in Decatur this week and on the way home I was listening to talk radio. I started out listening to right wing talk in Decatur and migrated to left wing talk in Chicago. So in the span of three hours, President Obama went from being Satan himself to Jesus Christ's right hand man. And it occurred to me, as I was thinking about Reformation Sunday, that Luther was in a very similar position to President Obama. Depending on who you listened to in 1517, Luther was either Satan himself or the great deliverer of the Church and of course Luther didn't see himself as either.

Luther saw himself as an academic who had noticed some teaching going on in the Church that did not resonate with his understanding of the Word, so he posted his understanding about

confession and repentance and invited the other academics to come and discuss it with him. He was neither Satan nor a savior. He was just a priest trying to understand the truth of God's word as best he could. As he dealt with the realities of what his simple invitation to discussion had wrought, Luther took great comfort in Psalm 46.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
²Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
³though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.
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 her; she shall not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
⁶The nations rage, the kingdoms totter;
he utters his voice, the earth melts.
⁷The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.
⁸Come, behold the works of the LORD,
how he has brought desolations on the earth.
⁹He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear;
he burns the chariots with fire.
¹⁰"Be still, and know that I am God.
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!"
¹¹The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress.

This psalm was the basis of his Reformation hymn, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.

A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon; He helps us free from every need that hath us now overtaken. 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.

Luther did not underestimate the power of the devil. Nor did he misunderstand his intentions for us. I think deadly woe just about describes it. We look around ourselves and we see the destruction that Satan has wrought and continues to wreak and we need to take the pain and agony that he causes seriously – people are hurting because of sin and we have the answer.

People are suffering because of sin and we have a sure defense.

People are bombarded by flaming darts of the evil one and we are protected.

With might of ours can naught be done, soon were our loss effected; 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.

Yes Satan is powerful and can cause us pain in this life, but let's keep him in perspective. Who fights for us? Sabaoth Lord. Sabaoth means armies. The Lord of the heavenly forces is our protector. For us, Satan is only a mild irritant because Jesus

Christ stands between us and him. Jesus Christ, who he tried and failed to kill stands upon the battle field.

Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none. He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.

One little word can fell him. One very specific word. Jesus, which means Yahweh Saves. No devil can harm us. So the talk radio folks can all rant and rave as though they have all the answers and all the insights. The Left wing can lionize and the Right wing can demonize and frankly I don't care because they're just switching sides from where they were a year ago and God says – BE STILL and know that I am God. Not Barach Obama and not John McCain. Our lives are never in the hands of small earthly rulers.

The Word they still shall let remain nor any thanks have for it; He's by our side upon the plain with His good gifts and Spirit. And take they our life, goods, fame, child, and wife, though these all be gone, our victory has been won; the Kingdom ours remaineth.

Can Satan take things away from us. Surely. Because of sin he can cause us to lose possessions and status and all manner

of things. Because of sin, he can force us to endure physical death and the ones we love as well, but who cares? The kingdom is ours, now and forever. It's all done.

That is why we can silence all of our petty complaining about this magnificent nation we have been given. We can silence all of our constant whining over not having what we think we should have. That is also why we have such excellent news to share with those who are trapped in this world. If no one has told them that none of the politics matter, why wouldn't they be miserable? If no one has told them that all the losses experienced in this life will be turned for their good and for their joy and for God's glory, why wouldn't they be miserable.

See, contrary to the right wing, the point of the Church is not to identify everyone who is sinning and hold them accountable. And contrary to the left wing, the point of the Church is not to make everyone feel good about every choice he has ever made and believe that there's no such thing as sin. The point of the church is to shut up people's blathering for just a brief moment – with God's Word and God's Holy Sacraments and

the Divine Liturgy to just for a brief, wonderful moment, be still
and know that he is God. AMEN