

**Our God Is a Mighty Fortress**

1. Amid Chaos      2. All Calm      3. In Control

*"A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"*

- 499 years ago (10/31/1517), RC monk ML, prof at Wittenberg, knowing next day All Saints, 95 Theses, door church. Theological statements/propositions intended to challenge *status quo* of church (dire straits). Wanted 95 to start academic debate; see change in church, for better. 95 got lot people talking, in Germany, Rome. 3½ yrs later (1521) summoned to mtg: Diet/Worms, official mtg of gov't & church; discuss many, incl L problem. There at Worms asked to recant; boldly refused: "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me." On trip home to Wittenberg, abducted by armed horsemen, transported like criminal into nearby castle. Little did L know this abduction was carefully executed plan to save life. Shortly before midnight, horse hooves clattered across drawbridge of mighty fortress called Wartburg Castle, sat atop tall mnt, with steep cliff faces – impenetrable fortress with towers, walls. There, almost year, protected, kept safe.
- May have had that experience on mind when, few yrs later, wrote most famous hymn, MF. But wasn't Wartburg that served as basis for Battle Hymn of Reformation (as known). No, as strong as Wartburg, its might, protective power are nothing compared to mighty, powerful words of Ps 46. Ps 46, sermon lesson for today, is very Scripture that inspired L to compose hymn we just sang. L used to say to friends, "Come let us sing 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm," because Ps 46 sings re power, stability, protection of loving God. It's a strong Psalm about our strong God. So today as celebrate Fest of Luth Ref, turn to Ps 46 and see L's hymn title correct: OGMF.

*Our God Is a Mighty Fortress – Amid Chaos*

- Vs. 1. OGMF amid trouble, chaos. Listen to this chaos: vs. 2-3. Picture of world literally falling apart: continents quaking, mountains collapsing, oceans surging – world in chaos, falling apart.
- Luther lived through time of chaos; seemed like his life falling apart. Lot of trouble 95 Th; more when two most powerful men in world, emp & pope, demanded recant, still said no. Excom by church, declared outlaw by gov't: legally anyone could kill, not tried for murder. So had personal chaos; also chaos all around. Bubonic plague (Black Death), incurable disease killed millions, wiped out entire cities. Luther opened home as hospital to sick; saw this chaos firsthand. First child, son John, had plague as toddler, survived. Second, daughter Elizabeth, died of plague 8 mos old. Third, daughter Magdalena, "Little Lena," died at 13 in Luther's arms. Death, chaos everywhere. Finally, theological chaos. Church in 1500s was in chaos; actually taught to get to heaven, had to earn or merit God's favor: through prayers, good works, even through payment; could buy indulgences as ticket to heaven – completely contrary to Scripture's main message: God's undeserved love, forgiveness for sinners through Christ. For Luther, life was chaos. Everything around seemed falling apart.
- Ever feel like your life in chaos, everything around falling apart? Maybe chaos of life in general: crazy schedule (everywhere all time). Or maybe chaos of health: maybe your health deteriorating; just lost loved one (parent, spouse, friend) – feel like chaos, pain of death constantly surrounding you. Or maybe financial situation is chaotic, job security isn't secure at all. Maybe the chaos is internal, theological: weight of your sins (other may not know; you certainly do) becoming too much to bear; you feel guilty; hurts. Is your life in chaos? Everything around you seem to be falling apart?
- Vs. 1-3. World may be falling apart, around/within us; may feel on brink of collapse, at point of death. But OGMF amid all chaos of life! We are safe, because by faith in Jesus Christ we stand upon that unshakable, unbreakable fortress. No matter what chaos you are facing right now, vs. 1. Always there! Your strength! Vs. 2a. "Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill. They shall not overpower us." Amid all the chaos, OGMF.

*Our God Is a Mighty Fortress – All Calm*

- OGMF where all is calm. Ps 46 moves from chaos of collapsing world to peaceful calm. Vs. 4-5. Close eyes, picture babbling brook, trickling gently over rocky riverbed, wending through field of green grass, under cloudless, sunny sky. "He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside quiet waters" (Ps 23:2). That's place of peace, a river, in city of God, where God himself dwells, and all is calm.

- Luther found that peaceful place where God dwells, where all is calm. Found in Gospel of JC. For entire life L taught that way to find peace with God: earn it. Become monk, quit sinning, pray more, give more, visit more holy places, buy more indulgences, beat body; show God you love him, he's love you back. But L learned what we all need to learn: these human action can never take you to river, peaceful city where God dwells, and all calm. Just leave you feeling phony before a God who is holy. L found pure Gospel (lost for so long); found, in Scripture, the message that Jesus stands before holy God for us. Jesus is sinless Son of God, who takes our sins, guilt on himself; in exchange gives us credit for his righteous, sinless life. Trades with us: so we get Jesus' heaven, he gets our hell. Suffered that hell on cross. Then rose from dead, went back to heaven, so that we could go to heaven. That's what Luther found in Scripture: pure Gospel, where all calm.
- That Gospel brings peaceful calm to us, as well. It forgives our sins; takes away guilt; makes us glad. Promises God is with us; won't leave us; loves us. Means never have to be afraid. Means that Jesus died for us; rose for us; will come back for us, to bring us to heaven. At end of Bible, in Rev, heaven is pictured as a city with a peaceful river flowing through it. **"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the great street of the city"** (Rev 22:1). Here, vs. 4a. We are inhabitants of that city; we live in fortress, where all is calm. This is vs. 4b-5. *"He helps us free from every need that has us now o'ertaken."* So it's all calm. Outside fortress, nothing is calm. Vs. 6a. But vs. 7. OGMF, where all is calm.

### *Our God Is a Mighty Fortress – In Control*

- And OG who is MF is in control. Sometimes we Christians, even from within safety of fortress, begin to doubt whether God in control. When Jesus was suffering, dying on cross, didn't look like God control. When Luther was excom by church, declared imperial outlaw, didn't look. When RC armies, in 1547, 1 yr after Luther died, invaded German Lutheran territories and killed over 7000 Lutheran soldiers in attempt to squash the Ref, didn't look. When, in our own country, teachings of Jesus are so rejected that where everything seems upside down (what God calls good, here called bad; bad, good), doesn't look.
- Ps 46, vs. 8-9. Stops wars, by destroying his enemies. Greatest enemy God ever destroyed was devil. *"The old evil foe now means deadly woe; deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight."* But on Easter Sunday morning, when Jesus broke open tomb, he disarmed Satan and destroyed sin, Satan, hell once and for all. There can be no doubt, our God is in control. And says vs. 10. *"Be still, because I'm in control: of this world, of your life and family's future, of your salvation and eternity. And everything's okay; I promise. Vs. 10a."*

### *Conclusion*

- *"A mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon."* ML's Battle Hymn of Reformation, based on Ps 46, reminds us: amid chaos of world (own lives), all is calm in God's kingdom, because we have Gospel of Jesus, and we know Jesus is in control. Just like a huge castle, on high mnt – impenetrable fortress, with towers, walls – enemies outside, but peace inside (and we're inside!) – OGMF. Vs. 11.

### **Psalm 46**

For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. According to *alamoth*. A song.

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. <sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, <sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. <sup>5</sup> God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. <sup>6</sup> Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts. <sup>7</sup> The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

<sup>8</sup> Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth. <sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire. <sup>10</sup> He says, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth." <sup>11</sup> The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.