

Be Still and Know That I Am God
Psalm 46
June 25, 2023 – Center Harbor Congregational Church, UCC
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My grandchildren will arrive at the lake later this week. There will be giggling and splashing, cookouts, roasted marshmallows, and more giggling and splashing. I will certainly watch seven-year-old Luther do at least 100 cannonball jumps into the lake in the coming days. Ten-year-old Simon will show off his strength and confidence in swimming to the raft on his own. Everett will find some new way to demonstrate that he is fourteen years old now and above all the hullabaloo. And our adult children, who don't get to see each other all together except this one time each year, will play board games and work jigsaw puzzles together and catch up with one another till late in the night. I am sooo excited!

But I have to tell you, this is both a joy for me and also it has historically been a lot of work. Hosting and cooking for 12 people for a couple of weeks can be exhausting, as I am sure you know. When everyone is here, it has often felt like I am providing a wonderful vacation for everyone else and not taking time off myself. This week, I need to remember today's scripture: "Be still, and know that I am God."

In the swirl of arrivals and unpacking and hungry children, when kids get tired and cranky, when one wants to stay in the water forever and another is over it, when the tie dye project does not come out the way someone wanted, when it rains, when someone ate the last piece of watermelon that someone else wanted, when the marshmallow lands on the dirt instead of the graham cracker, how do we find the quiet center then? "Be still," God says. "Be still, and know that I am God." That's the trick, isn't it? To remember that we don't have to be responsible for everything. In fact, we CAN'T be responsible for everything.

God is God, and we are not. What a relief!

It is not only summer celebrations that can overwhelm us. Just listening to the news can do that. Many of the same kinds of things were happening a thousand years before Jesus was born, when this psalm was written. You can hear it in the text: The nations are in an uproar, the psalmist writes. Kingdoms totter. The earth changes, he says; mountains shake in the heart of the sea; the earth melts. This psalm was not written to praise God in the best of times. It is a reminder for the ordinary anxious times, even for the worst of times. And it calls on the eternal name of God, "I AM," the name that reminds us that God has been with God's people from the beginning, rescuing them from famine and from slavery, bringing them safely across the wilderness to the Promised Land: The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. "Be still, and know that I AM."

God IS. Rest in that knowledge.

Sometimes we need to withdraw from everything that is going on around us. We need to turn off the television and get away from our phones, and turn our attention inward and upward, to pray, to listen to quiet music, to reconnect with the wellspring that feeds our souls. Especially when the world around us feels frightening, God says, "Be still, and know." We have this sure knowledge at the core of our being.

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

What do you do to find that inner stillness, where you know that all is right because it is in God's hands? One way is to walk the labyrinth. I hope you will stay for a bit after church today, especially if this is something you have not done before. It can be a deeply meditative experience, or it can just be something new. Slow down enough this morning to feel God's presence in every step that you take through the labyrinth. See what bubbles up in your spirit as you walk. You might be surprised. You just might find that this is a way to find that stillness that we all need sometimes, the stillness where we can let go of the world and meet God. "Be still," God says. "Be still."

I don't know how many of you will be hosting friends and family this summer, but I know a lot of you will. And so, it is a time to remind myself – and you – that Sabbath rest is sacred for hosts, too, not just for our guests; that not everything needs to depend on us; that grown children can shop and cook and let us know when to show up for a meal. Even God needed rest after a good week of work setting up the Universe. We need it, too, and we are better hosts when we don't try to take the whole world on our own shoulders. Carrying the whole world is God's job, not ours. A little chaos won't kill us. In fact, it was from chaos that the earth was formed, and that turned out just fine.

The Lord of Hosts is with us. The God of Jacob is our refuge. From before time, God is and was and evermore will be.

"Be still, and know that I am God," says the Lord.

"Be still, and know that I AM."

"Be still, and know."

"Be still."

Find God in the stillness.

"Be still."

Amen