

The Shepherd's Staff

(May, 2024)

A NOTE FROM OUR PASTOR



"Sanctified Solitude - Psalm 46:1"

I was reading about the history of English proverbs. One such proverb first found in publications in 1546 is "It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good!" The idea behind this proverb is that it is highly unusual that events, even negative ones, don't have some silver lining, or benefit someone. For example, a company goes out of business during a recession, it harms many who lose their jobs, but it yet benefits their competitors. Well, Nebraska is a windy state to be sure. Does it seem gustier in recent years to you too or am I just noticing it more? This spring's strong winds have at times been ill winds, strong storms have caused much damage and disruption. Is there a silver lining? It is hard to come up with any, but perhaps one who had been living a selfish life and narrowly survived, will reevaluate their priorities and maybe even dedicate it to seriously serving Jesus.

This all got me thinking, in the whirlwind of our daily routines, some things go our way, and some do not. It's easy to feel fearful at times. Ironically, at times even surrounded by people, we can feel alone in the storms of life. There are certainly times when we are alone in some sense, be it a business trip, an unfair situation or dispute that arises, a nervous wait in a doctor's office, or the loneliness we can feel after a loss. It's in these stretches of solitude that God, through **Psalm 46:1**, whispers a profound truth to us: "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*" This ancient verse from the Sons of Korah in the Holy Scriptures offers a timeless reassurance, especially when we find ourselves navigating the lonely or challenging times of our individual lives. God let us know I am your strength. I am with you.

Imagine the scenario: You're boarding a flight to a city you've never visited, surrounded by faces you don't know, tasked with a project that weighs heavily on your mind. Or perhaps you're sitting in a sterile doctor's office, awaiting a consultation that could bring unsettling news. Maybe you have experienced the painful loss of a loved one. Maybe the IRS has selected you for an audit. In these moments, we can feel alone, and the loneliness can feel like a thick cloud; however, **Psalm 46:1** cuts through the solitude of struggles with the reminder of God's presence—His promise to be an unfailing strong pillar of support and refuge. A light for our way.

The original Hebrew text uses the phrase "very present," which translates to an abundance or a richness in presence. It's not merely that God is with us; He is overwhelming, more tangible, than our very breath. This is not the passive presence of a bystander Lord looking on, but the active presence of a God who loves us and fortifies us if we just take notice. As King David pointed out in **Psalm 139:7-10** "*Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.*"

This concept of divine presence invites us to reconsider our perception of being alone. I was just at the eye doctor for my annual checkup and learned that I have developed cataracts in my left eye. So, things are not as sharp when viewed out of that eye as they used to be, but it can be corrected with surgery. Well, sometimes our spiritual lens gets a little foggy too, and we need the surgery of the Scriptures to clear our view of God back up. When viewed through the lens of **Psalm 46:1**, solitude changes from isolation into a sacred space for experiencing God's nearness. Consider the business trip: It becomes less about the solitude of travel and more about recognizing the opportunity to witness God's guidance and providential care, a peace that overcomes travel anxieties. Similarly, the solitude of waiting in a doctor's office transforms into a reflective pause, a moment to feel God's comforting presence.

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Moreover, **Psalm 46:1** offers a perspective that reshapes our interactions with the world around us. If God is our refuge, then each place we set foot in—no matter how foreign or intimidating—becomes holy ground, ground walked with God. If God is our strength, then the challenges we face are surmountable with the reassurance that we are not facing them alone.

The brilliance of this passage lies in its ability to apply universally. Whether you are a parent in the quiet aftermath of a school drop-off, or adjusting to life without a loved one, the promise of **Psalm 46:1** remains steadfast: God is present, reach out. He is right there and will take your hand. God is a constant and comforting reality.

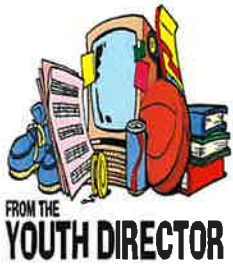
In a world that often feels fragmented and hurried, **Psalm 46:1** calls us to acknowledge and appreciate the divine presence that accompanies us in every chapter and season of our lives. It challenges the narrative of loneliness, transforming our solitary journeys into a profound walk with the Divine. As we navigate the terrains of both bustling activity and quiet solitude, let us hold fast to the truth that we are never truly alone. Our very present help is always at hand, not just as a shadow but as a real presence sculpting our moments into experiences of grace and spiritual growth.

God loves you.
-Pastor Jeff



**NOTICE: SUMMER WORSHIP WILL
BEGIN AT 10:00 A.M. JUNE 2ND.**

**THE LAST DAY OF SUNDAY SCHOOL
FOR THIS SEASON WILL BE MAY 19TH.**



I had so much fun delivering May Baskets to our church neighbors. The smiles on people's faces when they realized we were not selling, canvassing for politicians, or any other form of solicitation, were simply a treasure to behold and oh so heartwarming. I had the great pleasure of delivering the May "Buckets" with Stef, Sonja, and Liana. Their energy, positivity, and smiles added to the joy of the evening. Our conversations were interesting especially as Liana shared about her plans and dreams for her future. What a delightfully fun way to spread the love of Jesus around to our neighborhood and bring joy to our own lives. Thank you so much to the Faith in Action Team for planning, organizing, and implementing this outreach! The pizza was an added bonus as it was quite delicious and I didn't have to prepare my own dinner. We shared a splendid evening.

One of my friends from my Aqua Fit water exercise class lives in our church neighborhood and caught me right away Thursday morning to share how thrilled she was to get such a fun surprise on her front porch. She was out of town and had seen a live video of two people with a wagon on her phone through her Ring doorbell. She thought for sure the wagon meant they were selling something. She was delighted to discover the small metal bucket filled with treats and could even name the items she had received. She was quite appreciative.

Oh the joy that a small treat can bring when it is delivered in Jesus' name and with Jesus' love.

We have a busy May with our Recognition Sunday coming up on May 19, Mother's Day, Graduations, Ripple Sunday School, and we are fully into our preparations and continued planning for our "Hero Hotline" Vacation Bible School.

Thank you so much to those of you who are praying for VBS!! If you did not get a 31 Day Prayer Calendar and would like one, please let me or Carole know.

The sign up sheet to bring snacks and drinks for Vacation Bible School will be available at the back of the church. Many of you have supported VBS and made such a difference in keeping our volunteers fed, energized, and hydrated. We are planning our end of VBS picnic for Friday, June 7 at Westminster and appreciate all food donations for this celebration. A great big thank you to our VBS volunteers! Without you we could not offer this fun and faith filled week to God's younger ones. So many adults have shared how VBS positively impacted their spiritual lives and helped them grow in their faith. Thanks to those of you who are able to volunteer, we have the opportunity to continue to spread the love of Jesus.

Our Moms Group is off and running. Thank you so much to Alicia Schuller. Do you know of a young mom who might like to connect with other moms? Get in touch with me or Alicia.

Please join me in extending a big congratulations to our three graduating high school seniors. As brothers and sisters in Christ, I ask that you pray for these graduates to be guided by God as they move on to the next chapters of their lives. We ask that Mia, Carson, and Alayna stay strong in their faith. We are very proud of their accomplishments and wish them great success in their futures. May God richly bless each of their lives.

Alayna Bailey, daughter of John and Jen Bailey, graduated from Lincoln Christian High School. She plans to attend UNK where she will work to earn her degree in Music Business. Alayna received a music scholarship for piano and to perform in the UNK resident string quartet. She was very involved in theater and music including Strings, Choir, Band, and Jazz Band. She was in many school musicals and performances. She also received awards from District Music Contests for outstanding performances for viola and piano. She has been an active member of our Good Shepherd youth group and has blessed us many times with her talents during our worship services.

Carson Pierce, son of Jeff and Cindy Pierce, will graduate from Lincoln Northeast High School on Sunday, May 26. His plans take him to Peru State where he will work to earn his Business Administration Degree with a Marketing and Management emphasis. He has earned many honors, awards and scholarships and is a member of the National Honor Society. Carson participated in Tennis, Unified Bowling, Bowling, Pershing Pals, Baseball, Golf, Marching, Symphonic, and Pep Bands, and was a Varsity Basketball Student Manager. Carson has earned various All-State, All-Conference, and All-City honors.

Mia Rikli, daughter of Brad and Tammy Rikli, graduated from Elmwood Murdock High School. She is headed to Wayne State College and plans to major in English Writing and Literature with a minor in Editing and Publishing. She hopes to be a high school or college level teacher or an independent publisher. Mia has been involved in many activities including One-Act plays, speech, yearbook, FBLA, 4-H, and Student Council and has earned many awards throughout her high school career. She has been an active member of the GSPC youth group and served our church in countless ways.

Blessings to you and yours and Happy May.
Dee Hughes

VBS 31 Day Prayer Calendar

(Please note: The days and dates don't match the calendar, simply start with the first day.)

VBS Dates: Monday, June 3 – Friday, June 7, 2024

Hosted at Westminster Presbyterian Church

While we prepare for Vacation Bible School, join us in the vitally important spiritual preparation for the week. Our 2024 theme is: "Hero Hotline, Called Together to Serve God!".

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." – Ephesians 3:20

1 Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare hearts to receive Jesus. 1 Jn. 1:9	2 Pray for The Lord's Kingdom to come through our VBS. Mt. 6:10	3 Ask the Lord of the Harvest to send workers. Mt. 9:38	4 Pray for God to provide for all VBS needs. Phil. 4:19	5 Pray all volunteers serve with humility. Phil. 2:3	6 Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal Jesus to unbelievers. Jn. 16:8	7 Pray for inner strength for the VBS leadership team. Eph. 3:16
8 Pray all kids feel loved & accepted by staff and God. 1 Jn. 4:19	9 Cover all VBS workers in the Armor of God. Eph. 6:10-18	10 Pray for parents and families to live by Scripture. Deut. 6:6-9	11 Ask for a spirit of unity in the bond of peace at VBS. Eph. 4:3	12 Pray for all to know how deeply loved they are. Jn. 15:9	13 Pray kids become life-long followers of Jesus. Jn. 6:66-68	14 Pray for kids & teens to receive ministry callings on their lives. Eph. 4:11-12
15 Thank God for hearing your prayers for VBS! Ps. 116:1	16 Pray kids will believe Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jn. 11:25	17 Pray for teens and young adults helping with VBS. 1 Tim. 4:12	18 Pray for good health for all volunteers. 3 Jn. 1:2	19 Pray for everyone at VBS to grow deeply in their relationship with God. 2 Pet. 3:18	20 Pray for boldness in church families to invite new people to VBS. Lk. 19:10	21 Declare the protection of Psalm 91 for everyone at VBS. Ps. 91
22 Pray for all VBS volunteers to boldly proclaim the gospel. Eph. 6:19	23 Ask the Holy Spirit to build good and godly friendships for kids. 1 Cor. 15:33	24 Pray young people set their minds on things of God. Mt. 16:23	25 Ask God to help everyone serve in VBS with gentleness, patience & love. 1 Cor. 16:14	26 Ask God to fill everyone with hope. Rom. 15:13	27 Ask God to help us finish VBS strong! Phil. 1:6	28 Pray for everyone at VBS to have a love for God's Word. Ps. 119:97
29 Pray for all at VBS to become mature believers. Heb. 5:14	30 Thank God for all He has done in our church & through VBS. 1 Thes. 5:18	31 Pray our VBS efforts continue to bear fruit all lifelong. Jn. 15:8				

