

Psalm 46:10-11
Reformation Weekend;
November 1 & 2, 2015

“Be Still and Know that I am God!”

Orson Welles was only 23 years old when his Mercury Theater company decided to update H.G. Wells’ 19th-century science fiction novel *War of the Worlds* for national radio. On October 30, 1938, Welles introduced his radio play with a spoken introduction, followed by a weather report and more music. But instead of just telling the story, the broadcast presented it as a series of newscasts that *interrupted regular programming*. An announcer broke in to report that an observatory had detected explosions on the planet Mars. Then the dance music came back on, followed by another interruption in which listeners were informed that a large meteor had crashed into a farmer’s field in New Jersey. Then it began. An announcer claimed that at the crash site a Martian was emerging from a large metal cylinder that had crashed.

The Martians mounted walking war machines and fired “heat-ray” weapons at the puny humans gathered around the crash site. They annihilated a force of 7,000 National Guardsmen, and after being attacked by artillery and bombers the Martians released a poisonous gas into the air. Soon Martians were landing in Chicago and St. Louis. The radio play was extremely realistic, with Welles employing sophisticated sound effects and his actors doing an excellent job portraying terrified announcers and other characters. An announcer reported that widespread panic had broken out in the vicinity of the landing sites, with thousands desperately trying to flee. In fact, that was not far from the truth.

Even though the broadcast was just a play on the radio, many had not heard the introduction and thought it was a real invasion. Panic broke out across the country. Reportedly, one woman ran into an Indianapolis church where evening services were being held and yelled, “New York has been destroyed! It’s the end of the world! Go home and prepare to die!” The following day, Welles issued an apology to the nation. There was no Martian invasion. People’s fears needed to be calmed. Everything was okay.

Even though we don’t know the occasion that caused the writing of our Psalm for this morning, it is clear that God wanted to calm the fears of his people. Believers can remain calm in the midst of the greatest calamities because God is their strong fortress. It is only God who can calm his believers with the words: **“Be still and know that I am God!”**

We can point to many occasions in history when the Lord intervened to protect his people from destruction. God kept Noah and his family safe in the ark during the raging waters of the flood. *Be still and know that I am God*. In the morning after the children of Israel’s narrow escape from Pharaoh’s army, they saw the bodies wash up on the shore of the Red Sea after God had rescued them. *Be still and know that I am God*. Nearly 500 years ago, God would use a man named Martin Luther to once again bring His Gospel to a world that desperately needed to hear it. It is no wonder that the words of this Psalm would become the basis of one of Luther’s most favorite hymns: *A Mighty Fortress is Our God. Be still and know that I am God*.

God gives the same comfort to you and me --- *Be still and know that I am God*. We fear illness taken over our bodies. We fear that our children may wander away from the Lord. We fear the challenges that our grandchildren may have to face in the future. We fear for our investments – investments that have taken a lot of hours of hard work to build them; investments that we may even have wished to carry out the Lord’s work. We fear for how we can pay our bills on time. We fear about elections in our country and across the world. We fear that the new born baby that we are holding in our hands may have to face some real challenges in the life that is to come. It is hard to get all those fears out of our minds. Yet, in the middle of all these fears, our God says to us as he did to people for all time: **“Be still and know that I am God.”**

That trouble doesn’t just stop in our lives. We see it in the world around us. We see the political upheavals in the nations of the world. We see natural disasters – earthquakes and tidal waves. We see man-made disasters. Yet as we sit in the middle of all these troubles, the Psalmist says: **“Therefore, we will not fear.”** Why? **“God is our refuge and strength, an**

ever-present help in trouble.” Why can we trust those words? **“Be still and know that I am God!”** We can remain calm even in the greatest of troubles because God is our strong fortress and refuge.

We have the greatest power in this world on our side. The Psalmist reminds us earlier in this Psalm: **“The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Come and see the works of the Lord, the desolations he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire.”** Who brings this protection to his people? **“The Lord Almighty.”** This is the one who is more powerful than any army in the world. This is the one who leads the angel armies of heaven. This is the one who directs the stars in the skies. This is the one who is the greatest of any power in the universe. This is the Lord Almighty.

As we celebrate the Reformation, we remember how the Lord Almighty has *“reformed”* our hearts. With cross of Christ and through faith in Him, God has turned us from being his enemies to being his children. He says to us: **“Be still and know that I am God!”** Our God doesn’t just sit quietly in this world as some would like us to think. He says: **“I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth. The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.”**

We may not have to worry about our world being invaded by Martians. But Satan likes to interrupt us in our lives with his many temptations. He wants us to think that God’s protection and care in our lives has been destroyed in our lives. He wants us to panic and turn away from our God. But God wanted to assure the children of Israel and the people of Luther’s day that they didn’t need to panic. Instead he assured them and assures us: **“Be still and know that I am a God!”** May you remember that promise every day of your lives. Amen.