Be Still And Know That I Am God

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[0:00] Let's back to Psalm 46, and we're going to read again at verse 10. Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations.

I will be exalted in the earth. This is a beautiful verse that's telling us to do something that many of us actually find very hard to do.
This verse is telling us to be still. And that commandment in verse 10 is particularly remarkable in the context of the whole psalm, because the whole psalm that we read describes a world that's noisy and that's unpredictable and that's intimidating.
As you read through verses 1, 2, 3, you've got the intensity of earthquakes and storms. As you come into verse 6, you've got the threat of war and conflict. And in the midst of all that tension, you have this remarkable commandment.
And that language that Psalm 46 uses definitely describes the world that we live in today. We see all around us that the world is still a hostile environment where you see disaster, disease, suffering, and pain.
[1:15] We also see a hostile social and political environment around us. We see tensions between people within communities or in the workplace, and especially we see it between nations.

In other words, Psalm 46 describes the world that we see on the news today. But maybe Psalm 46 also describes your heart.
So often we feel shaken, we feel bruised, we feel threatened, we feel exposed. Now that might not be by, for some people that is by war or by natural disaster. For us it might not be like that.
But still, we feel that sense of vulnerability as the bruises and the disappointments and the struggles of life affect us.
And so the intensity of Psalm 46 resonates very powerfully with the world that we live in. And it resonates with the personal battles and struggles and sorrows that all of us experience in different ways.
[2:25] In the face of all of that, God is saying to us, Be still and know that I am God. And I want us just to spend just a few minutes unpacking that under three headings.

Be still and slow down. Be still and quieten down. Be still and let your guard down. So first of all, this verse is telling us be still and slow down.
That's one of the biggest challenges that we face today because life is so busy. Every day we are just flying through our lives.
Days whiz by. Every week flies in. Every month disappears. I think a few weeks ago we were all still hoping for summer. Now we're counting down for Christmas. The year has flown in.
And so much of that comes from good things. Those of you who are here today as parents, your lives will be super busy because there's a ton of really good things for your children to do. And that's amazing, but it's busy.
[3:22] There's community events that we want to participate in. And there's good habits that we want to cultivate. We want to get more exercise. Many of you will do something like Duolingo. Or we want to pick up a new hobby.

And it's great, but it's just there's always something to do. We're busy, busy, busy. There's good things in our lives, but all of it combines to leave us busy. And it can definitely feel as though we are left far too busy to ever think about being still.
And that's where this psalm, in fact, the whole book of Psalms helps us because it's really important to remember that at a very basic level, what Christine read for us is a work of poetry. The Psalms are all poems.

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And the key thing to remember about poetry is that it's not designed for speed reading. So you can read Psalm 46 in less than 30 seconds.
It's not very long at all. But the whole point of poetry is that we're meant to read it and stop and think. And so you've got this beautiful language of God as a refuge, our strength, our fortress.
[4:33] And you cannot take these things in quickly. You've got this contrast between the storms of life in verses 2 and 3 and the flowing river of God's provision in verse 4.

We've got the purposes of God in bringing peace, bringing ultimate peace in a world of conflict. None of that's meant to be rushed.
When you think of God as a refuge, we need to stop and think about that. When we think about God saying he makes war cease to the ends of the earth, we need to stop and to think about it.
Life today is relentlessly busy. Psalm 46 is telling us to be still and slow down. And one of the key things that we need to recognize is that verse 10 is telling us to be still and to know that he is God. That is teaching us that we will never know God unless we slow down. Even that little phrase, I am God, that is a monumental phrase.
[5:50] But we are going to miss what it's saying unless we slow down. And often our thoughts of God can be quick, fleeting, and maybe even dismissive.

And when that happens, we miss out on so much. Our thoughts of God need to slow right down. And so when you see those three words, I am God, what do you think about?
Or maybe I should say it better, do you actually realize what you're thinking about? Because you're thinking about the absolute of reality, the final and ultimate explanation for everything.
You're thinking about the questions of our origins and our destiny. Where does the universe and life and humanity and me come from?
And where are we going? You're thinking about the ultimate definer of our moral categories, the one who sets the whole concept of right and wrong, of truth and lies, of justice and injustice.
[7:05] Where do all these frameworks come from? Where do they find their ultimate source? And most of all, when we see that phrase, I am God, we're thinking about the logical explanation of why every single one of us today knows that love matters more than anything else.

Why is that the case? It's because of who God is. But the key thing is that we're not going to see any of that unless we slow down.
And there's two really important points of application here. One, there are far too many hasty rejecters of God. So there's people who have jumped very quickly to the conclusion that God's not worth believing in, the Bible's not worth listening to, Jesus is not worth following.
And very, very often, that comes from a hasty decision. Maybe you read a book. Maybe you heard a podcast. Maybe you saw a website. And you thought, oh yeah, that's it, I'm done.
Done with the idea of God. Maybe it's the influence of somebody else. That's something I've seen many, many times where people will say, oh well yeah, they said that that's a load of rubbish. Or they said this. And it's like, well I'm going with them. And so there's a hasty rejection of God.
[8:19] But maybe, and this is perhaps the most likely, maybe something rubbish has happened to you. Maybe you've been hurt. And that's not necessarily a hasty rejection of God, but you've maybe made it the single reason for rejecting God.

Because something happened that you wish hadn't happened. And we can use any one of these things to think, actually I'm moving on from God, I'm not going to think of it. And I just want to say today, please, please don't be a hasty rejecter of God.
At the very least, think about it. At the very least, please talk to me about it. Rather than a quick decision. And so that's the first big lesson here.
There are far too many hasty rejecters of God. But the second lesson is even more important. God is never a hasty rejecter of you. And if I can press anything into your heart today, that's what I want to press into your heart.
God is never a hasty rejecter of you. God is not rushing on without you. He's not impatient. He's not fleeting. He's not moving on.
[9:28] He is never giving up. He's waiting. He is still.

Waiting for you to know that he is God. This is where it's so important to remember that God is magnificently fast and majestically slow.
He's magnificently fast. In that he never misses anything. It's never anything that God misses, that slips by, or goes through his fingers, or takes him by surprise.

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He's always, always, always ahead. God is magnificently fast. But at the same time, God is majestically slow. Because it means that if you are trusting in him, he's never going to go off without you.
He's never going to leave you behind. And if you're not yet trusting in him, he's brought you here today because he's waiting. And so to know God, we need to be still and slow down.
[10:33] Secondly, we need to be still and quiet and down. Life today is not just busy, it's also really noisy. And by that, I mean the fact that there's just a bombardment of information placed in front of us, and there's a ton of demands placed upon us.

And we all have that. We have that with work, with our phones, with social media, TV, whatever it might be. It's just constant, and it's relentless. And that's reinforced very powerfully today because when we stand shortly for two minutes in silence, it feels weird.
Because it's actually alien to all of us to stand still in silence for 120 seconds. Life is so noisy. It's so relentless.
Psalm 46 captures this beautifully. You've got the imagery of the earth shaking, of storms, of landslides, mountains crumbling.
All of that is noisy. And then you've got the threat of hostility there in verse 6. Again, that is noisy. And many, many people in the world today are living through that just now.
[11:42] If you're in the front line in Ukraine, it's noisy. And if you're in a place of conflict in the Middle East, it is noisy. And, I mean, there must have been just horrendously relentless noise in Gaza over recent years.

That noise is there all the time. And we don't experience that conflict in the same way here, and we're so thankful for that.
But at a kind of personal level, that feeling of being bombarded with noise is definitely something that I am sure all of us can relate to.
And sometimes that's the noise around us, or the pressures of work, of family, of responsibility, of when you're in school, with what everybody else expects you to do, and what everyone's saying about you, or not saying about you, and all that kind of stuff, and that can continue in different ways with work, with family, with community, whatever it might be.
There's noise around us, and sometimes that can be overwhelming. At the same time, sometimes the bigger problem is not the noise outside us, but the noise of our own voice within us. And all the time that can be overwhelming.
[12:52] Our mind is full and constantly filling us with anxieties or fears or what-ifs. And it can all be overwhelming. And God is saying to us today, be still and quieten down.

And I'm sure those, and there's some of you here today, I think you know this, who've served in the armed forces, been in areas of conflict, and you will be able to contrast that, the noise of conflict, with the silence of peace.
And that must be immensely powerful. And certainly for those who went away, you know, to the great wars of the last century, when they came home here, those who did come home, the silence of peace must have been such a contrast to the noise of war.
All of it's reminding us that there needs to be moments when we're still and when we're quiet. And in terms of our faith, this is so important to recognize, because I think Psalm 46 verse 10 is reminding us that we're never going to know God if we don't quieten and listen to what He is saying.
And all of this is highlighting, again, two important things that I want us to recognize and think about. The first is that it's vital to recognize, in terms of the context of the whole Bible, that all the war, all the tumult, all the chaos, all the violence that we see in the world around us, it comes from one source.
[14:19] It comes from not listening to God. That's what the Bible emphasizes when it speaks about sin, that at its heart, sin is a refusal to listen to God.

And so it's a rejection of His authority, a rebellion against His commandments, a dismissal of His purposes. If you look at the way the Bible describes sin, it's rooted in the mindset that says to God, I don't want to listen to you.
And the results of that have been devastating. And it's also not hard to prove. There are some things in the Bible that are hard to prove. One thing that's incredibly easy to prove is the doctrine of sin and everything that the Bible teaches about sin because everything that we see that's wrong in human behavior today, it's all stuff that God has told us not to do.

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And so we're recognizing that many of the problems that we face individually, in our communities, and nationally and globally come from not listening to God.
That's the first thing we need to remember in terms of being still and quieting down. The second thing that we need to recognize is that the tumult, the chaos, and the tension in our hearts, that voice within us that can so often hound us, that voice also comes from not listening to God.
[15:42] We are bombarded with noise around us. Very often that noise is telling us that we're not good enough, that we're not smart enough, that we're not successful enough, that we're not rich enough, that we're not good-looking enough, that we're not impressive enough, and that everybody else is in far better shape than we are.

That is how so many of us feel. We feel this deep sense that we're just not, we are not matching up to everything around us. And that's the noise that our society just now is being deafened with. Because every single time you turn on the telly, you're going to see either a TV program or an advert that's going to say something, that there's something about you that needs to change, whether it's your car or your looks or your hair or whatever.
Something needs to change because the way you are right now is not good enough. That's the kind of, that's the sort of subliminal message that is being just pounded into people's lives at the moment. And it's so, it's no wonder we live in a society where people are struggling so much with self-confidence that our idea of self-worth is just being, it's just evaporating, and we are all battling insecurities.
And all the time God is saying, be still and quieten down. And the reason we need to quieten down is because while all that noise is going on around us, Jesus is saying something magnificently different.
[17:05] He is saying, I love you as you are. And I will be your refuge and your strength and your ever-present help no matter what trouble you're going through, no matter what mistakes you've made, no matter what it is that pierces your heart with fear and anxiety.

Jesus is saying, I have not come to condemn you. I have not come to load you up with even more burdens. And I have not come to hold your mistakes against you.
He's saying, I've come so that you can be forgiven. I've come so that you can have freedom from guilt and fear and anxiety. I've come so that you can be restored.
And I've come so that you can be safe forever. And the key point is this. If we're listening to all the noise of life around us, of pressures and expectations and opinion, if that's the dominant voice, we're going to end up misunderstanding Jesus because we will never hear what he is actually saying.
So often we feel like Jesus is just another one of those voices hounding us. So work is hounding us to do more. Society is hounding us to be richer. That kind of the celebrity culture is hounding us to be better looking.
[18:33] And church is hounding us to do a better job in every other part of our lives. That is not the gospel. That's not the gospel. Instead, Jesus is saying, look, just come and fall into my arms and I will forgive you and hold you and love you and protect you forever.

And I will take care of everything else. That's the gospel. What Jesus is saying is stunningly beautiful. He's saying to all of us, come to me and you will find rest for your soul.
So we need to be still and slow down. We need to be still and quieten down. But last of all, and I think this is maybe the most important of all, verse 10 is teaching us that we need to be still and let your guard down.
And the reason why this is so important is because this is actually getting to the very heart of what this verse is all about. The Psalms were originally written in Hebrew. And so as we read them, we're reading a translation of that original language.
And the word that we have translated as be still there comes from a Hebrew word that conveys the idea of lowering. It can mean dropping down.
[19:47] It can mean sinking down. And it can be used to refer to the idea of lowering your hands. And some Bible translations, instead of saying be still, they will say cease striving.

In other words, it's describing the posture where you're letting your guard down. So be still. Instead of arms up in defense, it's arms down.
You're letting your guard down. And I think this is so important for us to recognize because a lot of what we've been saying today is about how lives are so busy, so noisy, so full.

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And what we have to recognize is often, sometimes that busyness is actually a guard that we put up in our lives. And so we want to keep busy.
We want to keep on the go. We want to keep doing things as a coping mechanism just to try and stay ahead of all our struggles and insecurities.
[20:55] We just think, keep going. Just keep going. And so often the noise in our lives is a guard. And so we face fears and struggles.

And worries. And very often, you know, sometimes in life we are confronted with moments where we sort of find ourselves thinking about the big questions of faith and of truth and of life and of death and of time and eternity.
And these things start to come in our minds and it can feel daunting and it's so, so easy to think, I just want to think about something else.
And we just put on something on iPlayer or go and do something or take our minds off these big questions. We want to stay distracted.
We just don't want to have to think about these things. Often our busyness, our noise, can be a guard to just hide behind.
[21:57] Sometimes that guard that we want to put up in our lives, it can sometimes go from a defensive posture to a confrontational posture where when we feel exposed and vulnerable, not only are we, we don't just withdraw defensively, we actually attack and we can become confrontational.

And that's where so often we see that aggression, whether that's personal or national, is actually motivated by insecurity. And if you look at history and if you even look at the world today and you look at the leaders who are being most proactively aggressive, they are, virtually all of them, very insecure people.
And they're reflecting very insecure nations or very insecure ideologies. And all the time God is saying to us all, be still and let your guard down.
And the key point is this, we will never know God unless we let our guard down. And that's because knowing God is not a kind of intellectual thing where we're like, oh yeah, I know about God.
That's not what the Bible means when it talks about knowing God. Knowing God, in biblical terms, is a relationship where it's not like, oh yeah, I know about science. It's actually, no, more. I know Neil.
[23:23] I know Tixie. They're my friends. It's a relationship. I know them. That's what the Bible means when it speaks about knowledge. And you know, all of you know this, that a genuine relationship is only possible if you let your guard down.

And in fact, the most precious moments in those relationships come when you let your guard down.
And that means that being still before God, it doesn't mean stopping and inspecting Him.
It doesn't mean standing and instructing Him. And it doesn't even mean pausing and reflecting on Him. It actually means coming to Him just as we are and falling into His arms and surrendering our lives to Him.
That can feel so scary. And yet the truth is, that is where you will find ultimate security. And this is where we see that the language of the psalm is so beautiful.
God is not saying, let your guard down so I can expose you and show everyone the failure that you really are. No, God is saying, let your guard down because I will be your guard forever.
[24:32] And that's what the psalm is getting at. He's our refuge, the place where we can hide. He's our strength, strong enough to deal with all our weaknesses. He's our fortress, that with Jesus, we're safe and secure forever.

And this is where we see that this psalm ultimately, like all the psalms, is actually pointing us to Jesus. The second half of that verse speaks of God being exalted among the nations, God being exalted in the earth.
Where does that actually happen? Well, when you read through the rest of the Bible, you discover that the place where God is exalted is at the cross. And the thing that we have to notice there is that on the cross, Jesus dies.
That means that he had to completely let his guard down. And he was completely exposed to all the punishment that our sins deserved. But in doing so, he conquered our greatest enemy.
He conquered sin and death. And he did it so that we could all find refuge, eternal refuge in him.
Psalm 46.10 is a brilliant verse.

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[25:39] It's telling us to be still and slow down. It's telling us to be still and quieten down. It's telling us to be still and let your guard down and follow Jesus.

Amen.

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