



WESTMINSTER
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

“IN SILENCE, GOD”

John Galbreath
Bible Study Series

Text: Psalm 46
Date: December 31, 1946

About Westminster's Galbreath Bible Study Series:

This lesson is one taken from a sermon preached by John Galbreath in a joint service at Mt. Lebanon Presbyterian Church on December 31, 1946.

To complete the lesson, we suggest that you begin by reading the designated Bible passage (Psalm 46).

Next, review the outline of the sermon. Reflect on the chosen scripture and how you would “fill in” the remainder of the message from the chosen passage.

Then, review the study questions posed about the lesson — whether by yourself or in your small group.

Finally, share your thoughts on the Galbreath Bible Study blog on the Westminster Intranet.

I. Introduction

A. Difficult to choose the thought for this occasion.

1. Challenge to high endeavor for the coming year.
2. Thanksgiving to God for his bounty to us during the year past.
3. For those who have had tragedy in their homes -- a note of hope for the coming year.
4. Confession and repentance.

B. All these are bound up in a few words from Psalm 46 -- "Be still and know that I am God."

II. We find God in our quietness

A. Ours is an age of noise -- radios blaring, street cars clanging, auto horns blowing, people shouting.

B. We very seldom can sit down in silence -- there is always a noise.

C. Noise is one of God's arch-enemies today.

D. Our God is a God of silence.

1. The only sound of creation was, as the poet put it, the sound of the morning stars singing together.
2. When Elijah went in search of God, he went to the mountain top. God wasn't in the wind, the earthquake or the fire, but in a still, small voice that pierced his soul.
3. When God came to earth, to live as man with men, He didn't come with loud fanfare of trumpets, and the shouting of throngs, but in the silence of a stable in Bethlehem.

III. In the silence we may have our needs fulfilled.

- A. In silence, we contemplate the Goodness of God, and our hearts overflow with adoration.
- B. In silence we can look upon ourselves, and see the unworthiness within us.
- C. In silence we receive the strength to carry on in the face of tragedy.
- D. In silence God will send us a vision of the task He would have for us in 1947 -- in silence we are given His strength.

IV. Conclusion

In a few minutes, at the stroke of twelve, the world will let itself loose with all the horns, whistles and noises it can muster. Let us welcome the year in the spirit of the Psalmist. "Be still, and know that I am God."

Study Questions -- Part I

Bible Reading: Psalm 46

Psalm 46: 1 says: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. "

- Take a moment to reflect on a time when God has been a refuge and strength to you in a time of trouble.

Psalm 46: 2 through 7 say: "Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. Selah. There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells. God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day. Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts."

- How do you interpret the term nation? Could it represent a community? A school district? A congregation?

Psalm 46: 7 says: "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah"

- The term fortress can suggest hiding. How do you use God as support but not solely to hide from challenges and problems?

Psalm 46: 8 says: "Come and see the works of the LORD, the desolations he has brought on the earth."

- Why do you think the writer suggests that we look at and reflect on God's desolations?

Psalm 46: 9 says: "He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, he burns the shields with fire."

- Why do you think this comes after the mention of destruction?

Psalm 46: 10 says: "'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'"

- The first half of this verse is one that is frequently quoted. What do you do when you want to "be still" and reflect on God and your results to exult Him?

Psalm 46: 11 says: "The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah"

- Do you think the mention of Jacob is strictly for the poetry or do you think there is a reason why Jacob is mentioned here?

Study Questions -- Part II

Sermon :

I.A. This sermon was preached on New Year's Eve, a day usually associated with great noise. Why do you think Dr. Galbreath chose the idea of silence as a subject for his message for that date?

I.A.1 Dr. Galbreath originally wrote it as "challenge to high courage." Why do you think he changed courage to endeavor?

I.A.2 and 3 Do you think many people actually spend New Year's Eve thinking more about the past year or the one ahead? Dr. Galbreath suggests both.

I.A. 4 Do you think the notion of confession and repentance are linked to the tradition of New Year's Resolutions? How can we cast those in a light reflective of our faith?

II. A The message talks about it being "an age of noise." This message was preached in 1946. To people in those days, how would you describe the level of noise and distraction in our own age. What can we learn from that time to help us set aside more quiet time for our faith? How can we approach making a commitment to creating that kind of quiet time?

II.D. Dr. Galbreath gives three examples for his belief that our God is a God of silence. Do you agree? What other examples might you use to support that view?

III. The message speaks of several ways in which God can fulfill our needs in silence. What other examples would you add to this list?

IV. How might this message help you to prepare for your own spiritually meaningful New Year's Eve?