

## DEVOTION for PENTECOST 23 / REFORMATION

### PSALM 46

**God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.**

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.**

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.

**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.**

“Be still and know that I am God; 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.**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;*

*As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen*

### REVELATION 14:1-13

#### *The Eternal Gospel*

Who might the 144,000 be?

Why is it important to know the gospel is “eternal?”

Why is the death of believers called “blessed?”

### MATTHEW 13:1-30

#### *The kingdom heaven suffers violence*

What is the “kingdom of heaven”?

In what ways does the kingdom of heaven suffer violence?

How do we enter and remain in the kingdom of heaven?

#### **“THE KINGDOM of HEAVEN SUFFERS VIOLENCE”**

The kingdom of heaven is God’s righteous reign, which begins in the hearts of believers and which one day will encompass the whole earth. God begins His reign when the Holy Spirit opens our hearts to His mercy in forgiveness, received through faith in Jesus. The human heart is hard because of the sin in which we were conceived and hardened by the sins we commit. Through the law the Holy Spirit first reveals our sin and convicts us of our sinfulness. Through the gospel the Holy Spirit draws us to Jesus, in whom we receive the grace of forgiveness and through whom, we are transferred from the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God’s marvelous light.

The kingdom of God suffers violence in the world, because the devil and the world are opposed to God and resist His will. The devil considers the world his domain and the human heart his possession. Jesus suffered great violence to redeem us from the control of the devil. He claims us through the blood He shed on the cross for the atonement of our sin. The kingdom of God suffers violence, because the devil and world take out their anger at God on those who bear His name and have received His mark in holy baptism.

The kingdom of God suffers violence, as believers wrestle with their sinful nature that resists the reign of God and fights against the desires of the Spirit. St. Paul spoke of his own struggle with the sinful nature and asked, “*who will rescue me from this body of death?*” The answer to his question and our deliverance in our struggles, is Jesus. He calls us to Himself that we may receive the mercy of forgiveness, grace to help in time of need; and the ultimate deliverance from this body of death, the hostility of the devil and the world, through our share in His resurrection.

The kingdom of heaven suffers violence in the world, but those who live in the Lord’s kingdom have peace in their sufferings and receive strength in their struggles. Those who live in the Lord are blessed with forgiveness, the empowerment of the Holy Spirit and the love of God in Jesus Christ. Those who die in the Lord are blessed with freedom from the world, the devil and the sinful nature. Whether we live or die, we are blessed because God reigns in our spirits and one day we will reign with Him over the whole earth.

## **“A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD”**

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**A mighty fortress is our God, A sword and shield victorious; He breaks the cruel oppressor’s rod.  
And wins salvation glorious. The old satanic foe has sworn to work us woe.  
With craft and dreadful might, he arms himself to fight. On earth he has no equal.**

**No strength of ours can match his might. We would be lost, rejected. But now a champion comes to fight,  
Whom God himself elected. You ask who this may be? The Lord of hosts is he, Christ Jesus, mighty  
Lord, God’s only Son adored. He holds the field victorious.**

**Though hordes of devils fill the land, all threatening to devour us, we tremble not, unmoved we stand;  
They cannot overpower us. Let this world’s tyrant rage; in battle we’ll engage.  
His might is doomed to fail; God’s judgement must prevail! One little word subdues him.**

**God’s Word forever shall abide, No thanks to foes who fear it; For God himself fights on our side, with  
weapons of the Spirit. Were they to take our house, Goods, honour, child or spouse.  
Though life be wrenched away, They cannot win the day. The kingdom’s ours forever!**

### **Prayer**

**Loving Lord we praise and thank you for the gospel of your love, eternal in the heavens, which gives eternal  
life to all who receive it in faith for the sake of Jesus. Love is the essence of your being. You express your  
love daily and constantly in the creation and in the lives of every human soul. You bless us richly with your  
love for the sake of Jesus in forgiveness and eternal life. Bless us always with faith to believe the gospel of  
forgiveness in Jesus. Bless us to walk in your love. Bring us to the fullness of your love in our share of Jesus’  
resurrection to eternal life. In His name. Amen**

### **The Lord’s Prayer**

**Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be Thy name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as  
it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who  
trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and  
the power and the glory, Forever and ever. Amen**

### **The Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth. And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our  
Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was  
crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He  
ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to  
judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of  
saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

### **Benediction**

**Matthew 11:28**

***“Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.***

### **Bible Knowledge Quiz**

What was the name of the prophet Hosea’s wife?  
What did God tell Ezekiel not to do when his wife died?  
What was the name of the evangelist Aquilla’s wife?

### **Answers to last week’s quiz**

Unknown. He is without lineage to resemble the Son of God (Hebrews 7:3).  
Amram and Jochebed (Exodus 6:20).  
Elizabeth and Zechariah (Luke 1:13).