

CbC to Sep 19

September 13 Su Reading B256 — Psalm 46 — God is Our Fortress

Audio: [Psalm 46 \(ESV\)](#)

A Mighty Fortress — Martin Luther based his hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” on this psalm. God is shown here as being His people’s *“refuge and strength”* (v. 1). At the end of both stanzas, He is called *“our fortress”* (vv. 7, 11). In contrast to the instability of the roaring seas and shaking mountains (v. 3), Zion, the mountain of God, pictured with a flowing river and calm streams, *“shall not be moved”* (v. 6). Although the surrounding nations rage, they also totter and fall (v. 6). Our response to the turmoil around us should be this: *“Be still, and know that I am God”* (v. 10). God is also *our “refuge and strength ... [and] very present help in trouble”* (v. 1). Are there quaking mountains and storm-tossed seas in your life right now? The same solution is given to you: *“Be still, and know that I am God.”* Take your burdens to our Mighty Fortress and leave them there!

September 14 M Reading B257 — Psalm 80 — Restore Us, O God

Audio: [Psalm 80 \(ESV\)](#)

Empty Promises — The theme of this psalm is repeated three times: *“Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved!”* (vv. 3, 7, 19). They seem to have known why God had pulled back His protection from them, when they asked, *“how long will you be angry with your people’s prayers?”* (v. 4). They had been unfaithful, and their prayers had been superficial and insincere. The second question they asked was this: after You had planted and cared for us as a nation, *“Why then have you broken down its walls”* (v. 12). Then, God’s people made a rather hollow-sounding promise: *“... let your hand be on the man of your right hand ... Then we shall not turn back from you; give us life, and we will call upon your name!”* (vv. 17-18). The basic structure of this prayer is that if you do something for us, we will do something for you. Do you ever offer prayers like that? They sound like foxhole prayers—promise-prayers made in desperate situations. God knows us too well for that. We cannot rightly ask for His help on the basis of what we have done or what we promise to do. He is a God of grace, but we ought to be people of honesty, obedience, and faithfulness.

September 15 Tu Reading B258 — Psalm 135 — Praise the LORD!

Audio: [Psalm 135 \(ESV\)](#)

Praising God — This is a great psalm of praise. It begins and ends with, *“Praise the LORD!”* (Hebrew: *hallelu-jah*). The first stanza uses the word *“praise”* four times and the last stanza uses the similar word *“bless”* four times—all aimed toward God. The middle section gives the *reason* He should be praised: *“The LORD is great”* (v. 5). First, the psalm shows His greatness by stating that He can do anything: *“Whatever the LORD pleases, he does”* (v. 6), including controlling the weather (v. 7). Second, Israel is reminded about what He had done in the past. He miraculously delivered His people from slavery in Egypt (vv. 8-9) and led them victoriously into the Promised Land He had given to them as a heritage (vv. 10-12). Third, the living and powerful God is contrasted to the lifeless and helpless idols of invented gods (vv. 15-18). Yahweh is the only God. This psalm provides a good pattern for us to praise the Lord in our worship: We can praise Him for His greatness, His provision, and His uniqueness.

September 16 W Reading B259 — Isaiah 49 — The Servant of Light

Audio: [Isaiah 49 \(ESV\)](#)

Knowing God — This is the second of four Servant Songs, featuring the coming Messiah. It looks ahead to the exile of Judah to Babylon, a time when everything would look hopeless for God’s people. There is hope, however, not only for Judah and Israel, but also for the whole world, as the Messiah comes and His kingdom spreads. His goal will be *“to bring Jacob back to him; and that*

Israel might be gathered to him" (v. 5; cf. v. 6), so that in the end, *"you will know that I am the LORD"* (v. 23). His overarching goal, however, is that *"coastlands, and ... peoples from afar"* (v. 1) might give attention to Him. He said that He will be *"a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth"* (v. 6). Jesus would later declare Himself to be that light: *"I am the light of the world"* (John 8:12). God's desire for all the world and for all of history is that all people might come to recognize and acknowledge their Creator. In the future, when the people of Judah and Israel would see this harvest, God said, *"Then you will know that I am the LORD"* (Isa. 49:23). Also, when their oppressors see this future development, *"Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior"* (v. 26), which is God's ultimate purpose.

September 17 Th Reading B260 — Isaiah 50 — I Gave My Back

Audio: [Isaiah 50 \(ESV\)](#)

Reasons and Choices — The first three verses of this chapter review the two main reasons Judah would be exiled to Babylon. First, it was because of their sin: *"for your iniquities you were sold"* (v. 1). Second, it was because they ignored God's call: *"when I called"* (v. 2), no one answered. These are the same two reasons we also get into trouble: we submit to sinful temptations, and we ignore God's Word of strength and hope. The next seven verses contain the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah. This is the same Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53. He would not be hesitant to expose Himself to abuse: *"I turned not backward. I gave my back ... I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting"* (vv. 5-6). He would be steadfastly determined to go through suffering: *"I have set my face like a flint"* (v. 7). Yet, through all of this, He was innocent, saying, *"who will declare me guilty?"* (v. 9). The innocent Servant would die for guilty people. The chapter ends with a choice: will you be one who *"fears the LORD and obeys the voice ... [to] trust ... and rely"* on Him (v. 10), or will you go the way that seems right to you (*"Walk by the light of your fire and by the torches that you have kindled"*)? (v. 11, emphasis added). Those same two choices apply even to us Christians today: will we follow God wholeheartedly or will we follow what we want to do?

September 18 F Reading B261 — Isaiah 51 — Listen to Me!

Audio: [Isaiah 51 \(ESV\)](#)

Awake or Asleep? — There is a series of back-and-forth comments between God and His people in this chapter. First, God calls for their attention: *"Listen to me ... Give attention to me ... Listen to me"* (vv. 1, 4, 7). His message is for them to consider that they were formed from a single man, Abraham (v. 2), that His plan is to use them to be *"a light to the peoples"* (v. 4), and that they should *"fear not the reproach of man"* (v. 7). God is their creator, their purpose, and their protector. Second, Israel responds from their exiled position in apparent belief that God had neglected them, calling Him to *"Awake, awake, put on strength"* (v. 9) as He had done in their early history. Third, God answered them with the assurance of His awareness and care for them: *"I, I am he who comforts you"* (v. 12). He had not forgotten them, but they *"have forgotten the LORD, your Maker ... [which is why] you fear continually"* (v. 13). Rather than having to wake God up, He said to them, *"Wake yourself, wake yourself, stand up, O Jerusalem"* (v. 17). Despite the sin that landed them there, they would be rescued from Babylon, and they would return to Jerusalem. Remember Judah when circumstances are going badly for you. You may be there because of your own sin. If so, repent and return to your Savior's side! God never leaves us, but His timing never seems to match our urgency. Learn while you wait!

September 19 Sa Reading B262 — Isaiah 52 — Loose the Bonds

Audio: [Isaiah 52 \(ESV\)](#)

Released to Freedom — In the previous chapter, God's exiled and discouraged people cried out to Him, *"Awake, awake, put on your strength, O arm of the Lord"* (51:9), but here, God returned the

challenge to them: “*Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion*” (52:1). They were going to return from bondage to freedom in Jerusalem (v. 2), and accompanying them would be the presence of Yahweh (“*the return of the LORD to Zion*”—v. 8). The surrounding nations would see this unexpected return as an act of God (v. 10). Judah was to leave Babylon confidently: “...*you shall not go out in haste ... [because] the LORD will go before you*” (v. 12). They would not fear, even though they carried with them all the wealth of the vessels from the temple. At the end of the chapter, we see the beginning of the last Servant Song, a picture of the crucified Savior: “*his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance*” (v. 14). That picture will be painted more clearly in tomorrow’s reading, where “*he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities*” (53:5). Being released from 70 years of captivity and brought back victoriously to Jerusalem is a picture of the Christian’s conversion from the bondage of sin to the freedom of living with Christ and our eventual eternal existence in heaven.