

## Friday Morning Prayer Reflection Sept 11, 2020

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The 46<sup>th</sup> Psalm:

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
<sup>2</sup>Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
<sup>3</sup>though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

<sup>4</sup>There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.  
<sup>6</sup>The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

<sup>8</sup>Come, behold the works of the LORD;  
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
<sup>9</sup>He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.  
<sup>10</sup>"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."  
<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge.

The Word of the Lord.

Good Morning Everyone!

I am so honored to have this opportunity to be here with you all today. As I was reflecting on what I wanted to talk about this morning I was thinking about how fast my time here at Valpo has flown by. As much as my time here has flown, it has been nothing short of

meaningful. From my involvement in the Lutheran Leader Program, to Sweetwine Music Ministry, to Gamma Phi Beta, to my campus job in the union, Valpo had provided me with so many different impactful opportunities. I am incredibly thankful for all the people here at Valpo who have walked alongside me, those who have helped me grow, and have helped make this place feel like home.

As I was thinking about my faith when I came into Valpo versus where my faith is today, the words that came to mind were authentic and honest... contemplative yet steady. I came into Valpo with a mindset of, Life is always good when you let God into it, no questions asked, after all look at all the ways that God has blessed me, He is within me and I will not fail. There is nothing necessarily wrong with this perspective and well, at this point in my life, this perspective of my faith worked out quite well for me. It's not to say that I had not walked through hard times, because I have, but I hadn't had experiences that had pushed me to sit in the more complicated and complete part of faith.

My sophomore year, I studied abroad in Costa Rica. It was such a beautiful part of my Valpo experience. Not only was I blessed by a truly wonderful and loving host family but I grew in my faith in many ways. I can recall many instances of looking out to the mountains and volcanoes, the waterfalls and the oceans and saying wow, I cannot, not see God and all his power and might when I look out over His beautiful creation.

About halfway through my time there, I started an internship for one of my classes in what ended up being a very impoverished and gang ridden area. And in those weeks I saw really hard things. I saw so much hurt, so many injustices, pain, and violence. And suddenly I found myself having to wrap my head around how the God within me would let all that intense evil and pain exist in this world. And quite honestly I found it difficult to make sense of this. I was so

used to a mindset of, life is good with God in it, that when I saw intense injustices and hurt, I didn't know how to process this in any way related to my faith. I found myself sad, angry, and confused about the things I was seeing.

It took me some time to get to the realization I could have a strong faith and still feel confused and frustrated with God. It took me time to understand that I could come to church and worship God even when the state of the world had me heartbroken. These injustices and violence in our world, they aren't new and the bible is full of accounts of suffering. I think the author Rachel Held Evens puts it beautifully, in her book "Inspired" when she says,

"I'm in no rush to patch up these questions. God save me from the day when stories of violence, rape, and ethnic cleansing inspire within me anything other than revulsion. I don't want to become a person who is unbothered by these texts, and if Jesus is who he says he is, then I don't think he wants me to either. There are parts of the Bible that inspire, parts that perplex, and parts that leave you with an open wound. I'm still wrestling, and like Jacob, I will wrestle until I am blessed. God hasn't let go of me yet."

Somewhere along the line during my time at Valpo I realized that God calls us to come to him just as we are. That I can come with questions, out of brokenness, out of joyfulness, no matter where I was at, I can come to God authentically as I am. That at the end of the day no matter the hurting in this world and no matter what I fail to understand, that I can be still and know that He is God and that, brothers and sisters in Christ that is enough.