

**Let Go**  
**Psalm 46**

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In June of 2020, I took what I would consider my first major risk during COVID. I was living in Dallas, Texas at the time and my now-husband then-boyfriend, Keith was living in North Carolina. He had been able to come to Dallas for an extended time in the spring, and I was going to spend a couple weeks with him in the summer. Since it was far too unsafe to fly, I drove almost 1200 miles to see him. As I drove, I developed a very methodical, tense routine.

I only stopped on the drive when I absolutely had to for gas. When I pulled into each gas station, I would mask-up, grab two Clorox wipes, make sure I only touched things with the Clorox wipes, and promptly use copious amounts of hand sanitizer upon getting back into the car. I took breaths very sparingly, practically holding it until I could get back into the security of my car to sanitize my hands from anything I might have accidentally grazed outside of the Clorox wipe. It felt like I was holding my breath until I reached my destination.

It's felt like I've been holding my breath most days since March 2020 when the whole world went into lock-down. I'm still holding my breath hoping no one I love gets sick from a bad case of COVID or anything else. I'm holding my breath waiting for a ceasefire in Gaza. I'm holding my breath because the air we breathe isn't the cleanest, the climate is changing so rapidly, and who knows how long before the next natural disaster. I'm holding my breath because America idolizes guns and I never know when or where the next mass shooting may occur. I am preemptively holding my breath because next year is an election year, and we all know how high the stakes are. I am holding my breath because even though I am doing what I can to advocate and organize and work against systems of oppression and injustice, I have no control over it. I am holding my breath. We are all holding our breath.

After two days of driving in June 2020, I arrived in North Carolina and Keith and I took to the mountains to camp and fly fish in Great Smoky Mountain National Park. I stood in a stream with the water flowing by me, enveloped by the sound of the running water, and I let out the fly-line. I began to methodically move the rod back and forth to bring the line out, and eventually, I let go. When I let go and watched my fly move through the air and land in the stream, I felt myself let go of the breath I had been holding. I let go, I could finally exhale and breathe deeply again. As I reeled in my line and cast it back out into the water, I breathed to the rhythm of the line moving through the air, back and forth until it was released to meet the stream. Standing in the stream, breathing in the cool mountain air for me was breathing the breath of God.

In Bible Study this week, someone remarked that the psalmist really seems to grasp the human experience. Another person noticed that the picture the psalmist paints of the world is no different from our world today. The earth breaks apart. The mountains collapse. The waters of the seas roar and roil. Nations roar. Kingdoms collapse. We all know what it is to watch these things happen, and hold our breath as we wait for what might happen next. The psalmist shows

us the world we know, the world we live in. But, even in the midst of all of it, God is there. God is present, a shelter and strength, help readily found. God is in the stream that gladdens the town, that brings life, that brings breath. God is in the midst, until the morning breaks in the long night. The psalmist clearly has a deep, intimate knowledge of what it is to hold the weight of all of the pain of the world. There is no sugar-coating it or trying to say it's not all that bad or it's not as bad as it could be. Instead the psalmist says that God is there present through it all.

As I read and re-read the psalm this week, I kept hearing Bob Dylan's voice in my head. "How many times must the cannonballs fly before they're forever banned?...How many years must a mountain exist before it is washed to the sea? And how many years can some people exist before they're allowed to be free?...How many deaths will it take 'til he knows that too many people have died?...The answer, my friend, is blowin' in the wind. The answer is blowin' in the wind."

"Blowin' in the Wind" is a protest song that became popular in the Civil Rights movement, and gained popularity again to protest the war in Iraq. Bob Dylan eloquently depicts the world of the 1960s through rhetorical questions, that still ring true today. He said this about the song, "There ain't too much I can say about this song except that the answer is blowing in the wind. It ain't in no book or movie or TV show or discussion group. Man, it's in the wind—and it's blowing in the wind. Too many of these hip people are telling me where the answer is but oh I won't believe that."

Often, there are things we think will save us from all that is happening. People in power or "hip people" to use Bob Dylan's words, try to tell us what will keep us safe: weapons, wars, walls, wealth, control. But none of those things will, and they actually keep us and everyone else from a full life where there is enough for every body.

The psalmist speaks of God causing desolations—ceasing wars, breaking the bow, splintering the spear, and burning chariots. It's a bit of sarcasm, because for those who hold power who use things like wars to maintain their power and oppress, it is a desolation for war to be no more, and weapons to be destroyed.

I don't fully know what Bob Dylan means when he says "the answer is blowin' in the wind." Maybe he means the answer is abundantly obvious like when you feel the wind on your face. Maybe he means that you can't see the answer, but you can feel it and you'll know the answer when you feel it. Maybe he's referring to the Hebrew word "ruach," which means, breath, wind or spirit. Maybe the wind is the movement of the Spirit of God in the midst of it all—working to ban cannonballs, freeing people from systems of injustice, seeing the people and things that many look away from, listening to the cries of the oppressed, working to bring life in the face of overwhelming death.

But here's the thing, we'll never feel or experience the wind blowing if we don't step outside. The psalmist, says "Go, behold the acts of Adonai." To behold the work and action of God, we have to let go of certain comforts and step outside to participate.

God speaks at the end of psalm, most often it's translated as "Be still, and know that I am God!" Which is a word that we all need from time to time, we need to remember that it is okay to be still, to rest.

But, this line is more accurately translated as, "Let go, and know that I am God."

Let go.

Let go of the control we think we have. Let go of the things we think will save us. Let go of the things that hold us back from the fullness of life. Let go of some of the pain and the weight of everything around us. Let go of the breath you've been holding. Let go because you don't have to hold it all on your own, and you were never meant to. Let go and know that God is a shelter and strength, a help readily found. Let go and know that God is in the midst of it all. Let go and know that God is with us, making wars cease. Let go and know that God is God, and because of this we can inhale again. We can catch our breath and breathe. We can breathe in peace. We can breathe in new life. We can breathe, breathe deep the breath of God.

I want to close with a prayer—so that we can all let go and breathe, breathe deep the breath of God.

Let go, and know that I am God.

Let go, and know that I am.

Let go, and know.

Let go.

Let go.