

Greetings Redeemer family!

It's an interesting thing to have the 4th of July fall on a Sunday this year. On one hand, we have the great opportunity to thank God for the wonderful ways He has blessed our country with freedom, safety, and prosperity. And He has been very good to our nation. At the same time, this holiday is a time to remember that our ultimate hope and allegiance is not found in a flag, document, or mass of land. Our hope is in a King and His coming Kingdom. He is the Lord Sabaoth – which means Lord of Hosts, the commander of the heavenly armies. As we gather this Sunday, we celebrate His decisive victory over the enemies of sin and death that we might live in everlasting freedom and life.

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;
Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing:
For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great, and, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side, the Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be? Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth, His Name, from age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.*

I feel a slight tinge whenever I sing that last line. Christ must and will win the battle. “Take heart, for I have overcome the world” (Jn 16:33). Yet I look around and still see so many places where the world is full of sorrow and brokenness. There are so many good things we still long for and have not seen. The world is still not the way we know it's supposed to be. The King has come, but His kingdom has not yet come in its fullness.

We begin our service this week with a promise from Psalm 40 that God will hear our cries and will answer us with His goodness.

*I waited patiently for the LORD;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
and put their trust in the LORD.*

This week we continue in our Summer series looking at the Fruit of the Spirit, and this week we focus on Patience. One song that instantly jumped to my mind will be familiar for many, although we've not sung it at this church. The words, taken from Isaiah 40, are a confident reminder that when we place our hope in the Lord, we will not hope in vain.

*Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord
We will wait upon the Lord
We will wait upon the Lord*

*Our God, You reign forever
Our hope, our Strong Deliverer*

*You are the everlasting God
The everlasting God
You do not faint, You won't grow weary
You're the defender of the weak
You comfort those in need
You lift us up on wings like eagles*

Following the sermon, we will sing a familiar hymn of waiting on God's goodness and deliverance. The story behind "It is Well" is both heartbreaking and inspiring. The hymn was written after several traumatic events in Spafford's life. The first was the death of his only son in 1871, shortly followed by the great Chicago Fire which ruined him financially (he had been a successful lawyer). Then in 1873, he had planned to travel to Europe with his family on the SS Ville du Havre, but sent the family ahead while he was delayed on business. While crossing the Atlantic, the ship sank rapidly after a collision with another ship, and all four of Spafford's daughters died. His wife Anna survived and sent him the now famous telegram, "Saved alone." Shortly afterwards, as Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, he was inspired to write these words as his ship passed near where his daughters had died.

*When peace like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll;
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well, with my soul.*

*And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
The trumpet shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.*

As I sing that final verse of "It is Well", I am reminded that the point of patience is not necessarily that God will change our circumstances. Some things don't change. Family members may never repent. Couples may not get pregnant. The right job may never come. But our hope is in a God who is bigger and better than all of these things.

*Holy, Holy, Holy
Is the Lord God Almighty
Who was, and is, and is to come
With all creation I sing:
Praise to the King of Kings!
You are my everything,
And I will adore You!*

Our hope is found in the Lord Almighty, the maker of Heaven and Earth. And so we patiently pray according to the model Christ Himself taught us:

*Let Your kingdom come
Let Your will be done
So that everyone might know Your Name
Let Your song be heard everywhere on earth
Till Your sovereign work on earth is done
Let Your kingdom come*

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus, come.

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