**Sunday, July 26th, 2020**

**Psalm 46:10**

Be still and know that I am God.

The Word of The Lord.          **Thanks be to God**

**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

We humans like to make plans.

            We have our To-Do lists.

                        We have our schedules.

                                    Our calendars are filled with color-coded appointments.

We know what we are going to do, where we are going, what comes next.

But then things happen.

            Our plans are disrupted.

                        Our To-Do lists are not completed.

                                    Our schedules end up in chaos.

                                                Our appointments are neglected.

                                                            Chaos enters our lives.

One minute we are firmly rooted in familiar territory with a song in our hearts.

Then . . . the pink slip comes.

            The rejection letter arrives.

                        The doctor calls.

                                    The check bounces.

                                                A policeman knocks on our door.

The Corona Virus arrives.

Our plans are destroyed.

            Our schedules are turned up-side down.

                        Life is in total chaos.

Chippie the parakeet knows what it is like.

He never saw it coming.

One second he was peacefully perched in his cage singing.

The next he was sucked in, washed up, and blown over.

The problems began when Chippie's owner

            decided to clean Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner.

She removed the attachment from the end of the hose and stuck it in the cage.

The phone rang, and she turned to pick it up.

She had barely said "Hello", when "sssopp!" Chippie got sucked in.

The bird owner gasped, put down the phone, turned off the vacuum, and opened the bag.

There was Chippie – still alive but stunned into silence.

Since the bird was covered with dust and soot, she grabbed him and raced to the bathroom.

She turned on the faucet and held Chippie under the running water.

Then, realizing Chippie was soaked and shivering,

            she did what any compassionate bird owner would do,

            she reached for the hair dryer and blasted the pet with hot air.

Poor Chippie never knew what hit him.

A few days after the major trauma, a neighbor stopped in to see how the bird was recovering. "Well," his owner said, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore – he just sits and stares."

It is hard not to see why.

Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . that's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart.

It took time, but Chippie gradually started to sing again.

Very quietly at first.

But day by day he sang a little more,

            a bit more cheerfully, a bit more confidently, a little more loudly.

We can relate to Chippie.

Everything was going fine.

And then sssopp! The Virus arrived.

We were sucked into a black cavern of doubts,

            doused with the cold water of reality,

                        and stung with the hot air of empty promises.

The life which had been so calm was now so stormy.

Assailed by doubts and confusion.

Pummeled by questions and conflicting answers.

And somewhere in the midst of the storm, we lost our peace.

We lost our joy.

Somewhere in the middle of the storm, we lost our song.

It is hard not to see why.

Sucked in, washed up, and blown over . . . that's enough to steal the song from the stoutest heart.

Sometimes we simply sat and stared.

But gradually we have adjusted.

We have each other.

But most important, we have God himself with us.

God is with us, closer than we ever dreamed.

We are never alone, no matter what is happening in the world around us.

Jesus knows how we feel.

He walks with us through the storm, every storm in our lives.

Because He is with us, we adjust.

Trusting Him, we are able to continue, we laugh and sing again.

If we pause, and look around, we see God in all the storms of our lives.

No matter how violent the storm is, we can trust his promises:

            Never will I leave you.            Never will I forget you.

            I am with you always, even to the end of time.

AMEN