

Scriptures & Sermon Starters

For the occasion of the fifth-anniversary of the September 11th attacks on New York City.
Contributed by Rev. Kevin A. Massey, ELCA Domestic Disaster Response

Scriptures

Psalm 46

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

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

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

Lamentations 3:19-26

¹⁹The thought of my affliction and my homelessness
is wormwood and gall!
²⁰My soul continually thinks of it
and is bowed down within me.
²¹But this I call to mind,
and therefore I have hope:

²²The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases,*
his mercies never come to an end;

²³they are new every morning;
great is your faithfulness.

²⁴'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in him.'

²⁵The LORD is good to those who wait for him,
to the soul that seeks him.

²⁶It is good that one should wait quietly
for the salvation of the LORD.

Sermon Starters

Fear

Do you remember how afraid we were that day? No one knew what was going to happen next, we didn't really even know what had happened that day. We couldn't believe what we were seeing. It just seemed like it couldn't be real.

Do not fear... be not afraid... fear not... worded different ways, it is probably the words Jesus repeated the most. He said it to his followers the first time they saw him after he rose from death. He's not telling us that it's somehow a sign of weakness or unfaithfulness to feel fear, he's assuring us that he is with us no matter what happens.

Grief

This too will pass. I heard someone say those words once to someone immediately after news of the death of a loved one. It is very hard for many of us to be in the presence of grief that sometimes we say things to try to move it away. Sometimes it is hard to be in the presence of grief because our own feelings of grief frighten us. Many of us have feelings of grief that remain from people we love who have died many years in the past.

To all those who lost someone they love on September 11th five years ago, we express to you our deep condolences. Please know that friends here care for you and will continuously remember you in our prayers. To all others I wish to share that remembrances of disaster and loss such as we remember today from September 11th five years ago can awaken feelings of grief from other losses. Please let those feelings come, don't stifle them. Tears are the communication of feelings so deep that we don't have words for them. Let them come. Jesus wept when he lost a friend and will give us comfort and his nurturing presence in these times.

Peace

We knew our lives had all changed the moment the attacks happened, we didn't know how much. We knew that the world and our country had entered a frightening and dangerous time, we didn't know how dangerous. We knew that peace may be gone, we didn't know for how long.

The last five years has brought our people and the peoples of many other lands conflict and war. The fighting in so many countries, and the violence escalating in so many parts of the world shows us that we don't know when peace, true and lasting and just peace will ever come.

The world in Jesus' time was also an unstable and dangerous world. He didn't promise to his earliest followers that he would change all that, and unfortunately we don't have that promise now. He did promise then, and his promises endure forever that in the midst of difficult times, that he gives us something rich and comforting and enduring, the peace of his presence. Jesus said "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." *John 14:27*