

Sep. 24, 2017

# The Joy You've Been Looking For

## Psalm 16

There is no Joy on earth like the joy that flows from the fountain of relationship with God in Christ.

LTS: Psa. 27

If the Christian's purpose in the world is to "proclaim the excellencies of Christ in all things..." then one means of such proclamation is our joyful suffering. I suspect that for many of us "Joy" is something we appreciate and desire but we wouldn't call it an essential virtue. The Bible, however, casts a different complexion on Joy. In God's mind, joy is not a throw-away virtue. It is essential in the Christian life. In fact, Paul names it as the second of 9 fruits of the Spirit. First there is love and then... Joy.

If you are a true Christian than you have the Spirit of Christ, and if you have the Spirit of Christ you have a supernatural capacity for joy – even in the midst of hardship, trial, and suffering.

The Bible mentions Joy and rejoicing well over 400 times in both Old and New Testaments. Say what you will about the Christian faith, say it is a call to salvation. Say it is a call to repentance. Say that it is a call to obedience. But say also that it is a call to joy!

There is no Joy on earth like the joy that flows from the fountain of relationship with God in Christ.

This morning I want us to consider Psalm 16. Here is the prayer of one who knows the joy that the word of God speaks of and commands. Here is the worshipful meditation of one who has discovered true happiness and contentment in this life. Here is a man who's trust in God inspires joy not only in this life but also in thoughts about the life to come. Psalm 16 is a psalm of Joy.

There are two realities in life that make this Psalm especially relevant for us. The first reality is that all people search for happiness, satisfaction, and joy.

The French Mathematician and theologian, Blaise Pascal considered the motives of men and concluded,

All men seek happiness. There are no exceptions. However different the means they may employ, they all strive towards this goal. The reason why some go to war and some do not is the same desire in both, but interpreted in two different ways. The will

never takes the least step except to that end. This is the motive of every act of every man, including those who go and hang themselves."<sup>1</sup>

This point hardly needs to be defended. I would only say that in the Scriptures God frequently appeals to our desire for our own good (our own happiness, if your will) as motivation for obeying His word. For example, in the book of Ephesians, Paul appeals to children with the following argument: Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, for this is the first commandment with a promise, that it may go well with you and that you may live long on the earth.” So the first relevant reality is that everyone seeks their own happiness.

The second relevant reality is that no one finds lasting happiness apart from God. Puritan pastor, Stephen Charnock, explains this reality with the following insight:

People tend to act as if something below God could make him happy without God, or that God could not make him happy without the addition of something else. Thus the glutton makes a god of his pastries; the ambitious man of his honor; the fleshly man [makes a god] of his lust; and the covetous man of his wealth; and consequently esteems them as the highest good, and the most noble goal, to which he directs his thoughts: thus he dishonors the true God, who can make him happy, in a multitude of false gods, that can only render him miserable.<sup>2</sup>

Look for happiness in money and you will be miserable. Look for satisfaction in drugs and you will be shamefully disappointed. Look for joy in the acceptance of others and you will become disillusioned. As Solomon concluded, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and a striving after the wind” (Ecc. 1:14)

But this is NOT the experience of those who discover the fountain of Joy that flows from relationship with God in Christ. **He is the joy you have been looking for!**

There are two major themes in this Psalm. David sings this prayer to the Lord and glories in

I. The joy God Offers in the Present Life.

II. The Joy God Promises for the life to come.

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<sup>1</sup> Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, p. 45

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Mack & John MacArthur, *Into to Biblical Counseling*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition. (chapter written by Dr. Ken Sarles

Read Psalm 16

## **I. Joy in the present life: (1-9)**

1. This would be interesting all by itself. But it becomes all the more intriguing when we consider the first words of this psalm. “Preserve me. O God, for in you I take refuge.”

2. This psalm is first of all a petition for help. David is in some kind of trouble. We don't know what the struggle was.

- The words “preserve me” may be translated, “Protect me,” or “Save me.” So it seems like David is facing a serious and fearful trial.
- Some say David's problem is Old Age; that he is coming to the end of his life, hence his comments about the grave in v. 10.
- Some think he is on the run from Saul or perhaps Absalom. We just don't know.

3. David doesn't tell us what the struggle is, but that allows us to legitimately insert any struggle we might be facing. What struggle are you facing right now?

- It may be a fearful diagnosis from the Dr.
- It may be an intense struggle with someone you love.
- It may be a problem on your job or division in your church.
- Perhaps it's a strong temptation to sin.

4. No matter what your trial may be today the question this text poses is, how does God want you to respond?

5. Notice how David responds to his trial. He decisively bends his thoughts away from worry and toward the joy he knows he will find in God, His refuge.

6. A Refuge is a shelter, a protection from danger, a place of sanctuary and security. There is perhaps NO time that we long for happiness and joy more than when we are facing a severe trial. We want relief. We want the pain to stop and the tension to go away. We want our fears to subside, our sorrows to dissolve, our mourning to turn laughter!

7. But as Stephen Charnock alluded to earlier, people in trouble tend to run to everything but God in search of happy refuge. You get a new toy, or you get high, or you get sex, or you get money, or you get pornography, or you get megadoces of entertainment. But when you get these fragulent saviors, you miss the refuge and reward that has been promised to you in God 8. But not David! Instead of fretting

over his problem he runs to the Fountain of Living Water where he knows his souls will be fully satisfied. Notice v. 2.

“I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord:

8. David’s choice of words here is very intentional. He speaks of God in the exact same terms he did in Psalm 8. He says, “I say to Yahweh, you are my Adonai. In Psalm 8 he said, “O Yahweh, our Adonai, how excellent is your name in all the earth.”

- A. Yahweh is God personal, covenantal name. It is the name he used on Mt. Sinai when he referred to Himself as “I am that I am.” He is the eternal God who enters covenant with men to save them and bless them and claim them as His own.
- B. Adonai refers to God as King, Master, or Lord. He is the sovereign Ruler over all things. He reigns supreme over every every planet, every star, and every molecuel in the universe. And by His hand of providence He orchestrates every event that takes place in our lives for His glory and our good.
- C. For a person in trouble to remind himself that His refuge is no less than Yahweh our Adonai is to put a rock under his feet and a song in his heart, because there is no problem so deep that God is not deeper still.

9. Verse 2 goes on to show us that David not only reminded himself that God provides safety, but that in the shelter of His refuge his people are blessed by every 8. But not David! Instead of fretting over his problem he runs to the Fountain of Living Water where he knows his souls will be fully satisfied. Notice v. 2.

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11. Verse 2 goes on to show us that David not only reminded himself that God provides safety, but that in the shelter of His refuge his people are blessed by every good thing. He writes, “I say to the Yahweh, ‘You are my Adonai,’ I have no good apart from you.”

12. Here David flat-out confesses that every happiness, everything that ever brought Him real joy and satisfaction in this life finds its source in God. And this is not the only time David says such things. For example, in Psalm 36 he writes,

How precious is your steadfast love, O God! The children of mankind take refuge in the shadow of your wings. <sup>8</sup> They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights.

13. Now that’s the kind of refuge to which every man should run! In the day of trouble, nothing on earth compares to the happy, joyful, satisfying fountain of delight that God is to those who choose to run to Him.

Read v. 3

14. Isn’t it theologically correct to say that when you truly love God you also love His people? David’s words here point forward to what the Apostle John would one day write (1 John 4:21), “And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”

15. Because David loved God, he loved all those who were rightly related to God. On the other hand (4), he wanted nothing to do with those who ran for refuge to another God. He knows their idolatry makes them a direct target for the judgment of God. One day they would have to stand before the true God and give an account for why they rejected Him in favor of idols that promise refuge but whose end is destruction. On that day, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

16. But David also had a practical reason for avoiding such men. He said, “The sorrows of those who run after another God will multiply.” Or as Proverbs 13:15 puts it “The way of the transgressor is hard.”

- Sometimes I will find myself counseling a person who is devoted to trying to find happiness and joy in things that are absolutely contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. It might be a forbidden relationship, or drunkenness, or drug abuse, or some get-rich-quick scheme.
- The reason they come for counsel is that their family is falling apart, or they are losing their job because of their sin, or they are so deep in debt

they despair of ever getting out. And yet, they persist in their sin.

- I find myself saying to them, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” “The sorrows of those who run after another god will multiply.”
- Listen, God’s way is not only the right way to live, it is also the best way to live!

17. David knew that God had irrevocably promised that he would care for him, and bless him, and watch over him, so he wanted nothing to do with the way of the wicked.

18. In contrast to the idolatry of the wicked, David said (5) “The Lord (Yahweh) is MY chosen portion and my cup.”

- A. Portion often referred to food.
- B. Cup often referred to drink.
- C. So David must be saying that God is his food and drink. In other words, God fills me and satisfies me and delights my soul.
- D. Consider this: If money were no obstacle and you could go anywhere you wanted for lunch today and eat as much as you like, where would you go? Bonell’s? Del Frisco’s? Texas de Brizille? David is saying, I go to God. Psalm 63

“My soul thirst for you. My flesh faints for you as in a dry and weary land where there is no water... My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food, and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips.

19. “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup” (5). Later on (chap. 34) David invites us all to join him in feasting on God when he declares, “O taste and see that the Lord is good. Its an invitation to come and delight in the Lord, to be satisfied in Him; to be refreshed by Him; to be nourished by Him, and delighted in Him.

- A. When you get up in the morning to read your bible and pray, what is your motive? Do you do it merely to check it off your list of daily duties? Or do you come to his word saying: Father, “My soul thirst’s for you! I know that the only person who can satisfy my soul is You.
- B. Come, O God, by your spirit and your word and nourish my soul. Feed me, and satisfy me and I will praise you with joyful lips.

20. “You hold my lot.” In other words, my life and all its circumstances are in your hand. Here he reaches back to the phrase, “Yahweh, you are my Adonai.” That is, the God who is personally involved in my life rules over all my circumstances orchestrating them perfectly to maximize the glory of God and the good of His children.

- Oh beloved, never let Rom. 8:28 become an empty cleche.
- Paul says, “We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love him...”
- Is Yahweh your Adonai? Is the personal, covenantal God who created you the One under whose rule you willingly live. Then there is no need to be afraid. He is the perfect refuge because He is the sovereign King of the cosmos!

21. Then we come to verse 6. If you have eyes to see it, you can detect an underlying Promise Land theme running through these verses. In verse 3 he mentions the land. Here he alludes to the division of the inheritance of the land among the tribes of Israel and their individual families. David says (Read v. 6).

22. The “lines” here are the boundary lines of his inheritance. But David’s theme is NOT about a geographical inheritance, but a spiritual inheritance. When you realize that your allotted estate is God Himself, then you know that your boundaries are “pleasant” and your “inheritance” is “beautiful.”

- Do you struggle with contentment? Fellowship with God is the cure.
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- As the old hymn says, “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace.”
- You’ve heard the phrase, “Where there’s a will there’s a way? To the contrary, “Where there’s a will there’s a relative, I always say!” More family relationships are scared and broken over inheritance issues than perhaps anything else?
- But when your source of contentment is God rather than possessions, its easy to let go of all that stuff which has absolutely ZERO capacity to make you happy.

23. David is content because, like the O.T. levites, the Lord is his inheritance. Then notice verse 7.

Read v. 7

24. David delights in the Lord because he knows that when he needs wisdom for life, the Lor’d counsel is always available and it is always perfect. How did the Lord counsel David? The same way He counsels you and me: through His word. And when he is not reading or studying God’s word, God can still counsel him at night while he lies in bed because he had treasured God’s word in his heart.

25. Verse 8 may be the most important of all. It tells us what to do so that we too can know this kind of joyful, satisfying, happiness of soul in this life. He says, "I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand I shall not be shaken."

- A. Listen, you will never have this kind of relationship with God if your time with God consists only of visiting his house once a week. Gathering with believers on Sunday is an essential part of walk with God, but it's insufficient for building a vital relationship with God.
- B. You couldn't build a good marriage if you only spent an hour and a half together once per week. And so it is with God.
- C. David said, "I have set the Lord ALWAYS before me." I meet with him in the morning. I talk to Him during the day. I seek Him out when I need wisdom or when I see something that ascribes glory to His name. I proclaim His excellencies to others, and fellowship with His people. Then I meditate on his truth at night and entrust myself to His care.
- D. No wonder his soul could not be shaken. No wonder he had no need to panic about the circumstances of his life! "I have set the Lord always before me."
- E. If you desire to know God as David knew God, you will probably have to say NO to some things so you can say YES to the Best thing. And business is no excuse. Remember, David was Israel's king. I suspect his daily to-do list was at least as full as mine. The fact is, we do what we do because we want what we want.

26. The result of all this? Read v. 9

27. Here is the joy you've been looking for! And it is impossible to sufficiently describe it to you in words. If you had never tasted Trader Joe's famous Cookie Butter and you came to me and asked, "What does Cookie Butter taste like, I might attempt to describe it to you in abstract terms. I might say that it is the the perfect blend of yummy sweetness ever to grace the culinary world. I might tell you that it's sweet but not too sweet, and has a hint of ginger flavor. But you will never really know the wonderful taste of Trader Joe's Cookie Butter is until you open a jar, scoop some out and put it on your tongue. If at that point you still don't understand, I can't help you!

28. In the same way, you must "Taste and see that the Lord is good." You must fly to God yourself and seek Him for refuge. Only then will you know the means when David says, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices." True and lasting satisfaction, contentment, and joy in this life can be yours regardless of your circumstances. Setting the Lord continually before him is David's secret to joy in the present life. But there's more. He also reveals something of...



## **I. The Joy he anticipates in the life to come: (10-11)**

1. Why does David say (9-10) that even his flesh dwells secure? “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

2. “Sheol” is the Jewish term for the grave. David knew that when his “flesh” (his body) died he would be put in the ground. But because of this marvelous relationship he has with Yahweh his Adonai, the grave would not be the end. You see, David understood the O.T. doctrine of resurrection. He believed the truth that for God’s people death is merely the door to life! As Paul explains later on, to be absent from the body is to be... present with the Lord.”

3. You see, contrary to what the world believes, living under the loving, sovereign rule of God is not a path to death. Rather (v. 11) “You make known to me the path of Life! In your presence is fullness of joy! At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

- When we were in the hospital with Dana a few nights ago and she got some bad news, she asked me to read this psalm for her.
- Then, when we got to this part it is said, “Dana, there is no need to fear death. Try to remember the best, most wonderful, most exhilarating and happiest 5 seconds of your life. Then consider this, that 5 seconds is just a taste of what eternity will be like for us with God.

4. Back in the 1700’s Jonathan Edwards wrote,

The enjoyment of God is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied. To go to heaven, fully to enjoy God, is infinitely better than the most pleasant accommodations here. Fathers and mothers, husbands, wives, or children, or the company of earthly friends, are but shadows; but God is the substance. These are but scattered beams, but God in the sun. These are but streams, but God is the ocean.”<sup>3</sup>

5. David is saying, this is the life of one who knows God and walks with Him as a lifestyle. In this life God will be your refuge, your satisfaction, your happiness, your joy, your wisdom, your security and peace, your very great reward. Then, in the life to come there is fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore. The pleasures of the world are nothing compared to this!

## **III. Conclusion:**

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<sup>3</sup> Ian Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*, 143

1. And by the way, all of this is yours because of Jesus. You say, how do you get there from this text. Well, I don't. But Peter did and so did Paul.

2. When Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, here is his argument for why the people should accept the fact that Jesus is their living Messiah. In Acts 4 Peter explains (4:23-32):

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. <sup>25</sup> For David says concerning him, 'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; <sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. <sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. <sup>28</sup> You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.' <sup>29</sup> "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. <sup>30</sup> Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, <sup>31</sup> he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. <sup>32</sup> This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses."

3. You see, my friend. If you don't know David's God you can come to know Him today through the risen Savior, Jesus Christ.

There is no Joy on earth like the joy that flows from the fountain of relationship with God in Christ.

**This is the Joy you've been looking for!**