

Sermon Series: *Summer in the Psalms*

In Your Presence Is Fullness of Joy

Psalm 16

A Miktam of David

Psalm 16 (ESV)

- 1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- 2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
- 3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.
- 4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.
- 5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- 6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
- 7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- 8 I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- 9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
- 10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
- 11 You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.—

Introduction

The superscription, "A miktam of David," indicates that David is the author of this Psalm. The meaning of 'miktam' is unknown, but it also appears in the superscription of Psalms 56, 57, and 60. The majority of scholars assume the word is a musical term.

What Are the Psalms?

Last week someone asked me, "What are the Psalms?" The title of the book of Psalms comes from the Greek word *psalmos* which translates the Hebrew word *mizmor*, which means 'song.' The Hebrew title of the book is *Tehillim*, which means 'praises.' The book of Psalms is essentially a

¹ *The ESV Study Bible* in "Introduction to the Psalms."

collection of 150 poems that were written with the intention that they be sung to God as an offering of praise within the context of the corporate worship service.

Songs are powerful because they help you memorize. If you can sing it you can memorize it, whatever it is. Songs serve as a means of memorization. The songs you listen to again and again when you are young, you almost never forget even though you may not conscientiously be able to recall their lyrics of the song—until you start singing them, then they miraculously return.

The Sudden Return of Songs Sung During High School

At my twenty year high school reunion I heard songs I hadn't heard in two decades and I was absolutely amazed that the words came immediately back to me as I found myself singing them. And, whether good or bad, often along with those songs come the memories and the emotions that were then attached to them.

God knows the power of song. Before the Lord allowed the children of Israel to enter the Promised Land, He told Moses to teach Israel a song that would serve as a reminder and a warning to them because God knew that after they entered the land they would turn away from Him and be unfaithful to him and go after and serve other gods. So God said to Moses,

Deuteronomy 31:19-22 (ESV)

19 “Now therefore write this song and teach it to the people of Israel. Put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the people of Israel. **20** For when I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey, which I swore to give to their fathers, and they have eaten and are full and grown fat, they will turn to other gods and serve them, and despise me and break my covenant. **21** And when many evils and troubles have come upon them, this song shall confront them as a witness (for it will live unforgotten in the mouths of their offspring). For I know what they are inclined to do even today, before I have brought them into the land that I swore to give.” **22** So Moses wrote this song the same day and taught it to the people of Israel.

Songs have the power to *live unforgotten in our mouths* and in the mouths of our children. This is the reason we have to guard carefully the theology of what we sing. This is the reason you need to be incredibly discerning about the music to which you listen.

- Above All by Michael W. Smith word change
- Depending upon who sings the song, it teaches that the singer of the song was uppermost in the mind of Jesus which is internally contradictory, biblically untrue, and theologically warped. If I sing the song it means Jesus was thinking of Todd Cravens above all other people in the world. If you are singing it, the meaning is that you, whatever your name is, is whom Jesus had his mind most fixed upon. Well, if he was thinking of me, Todd Cravens, above all, then he can't possibly be thinking of you also because we both can't be above all.
- Like a rose, trampled on the ground, you took the fall and thought of me, above all.
 - Changed: like a rose, trampled on the ground, you took the fall, **you'll always be**, above all.
- Jesus was thinking of neither you nor me above all. He was thinking of being obedient to his Father above all and I'm glad that He was because it was in his obedience to His Father that He effected my salvation and yours.

Above all powers, above all kings
Above all nature and all created things
Above all wisdom and all the ways of man

You were here, before the world began

Above all kingdoms, above all thrones
Above all wonders the world has ever known
Above all wealth and treasures of the earth
There's no way to measure what you're worth

Crucified, laid behind a stone
You lived to die, rejected and alone
Like a rose, trampled on the ground
You took the fall and thought of me
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Songs also have the power to comfort us and remind us of what we need to know. Songs have the ability to cause us to remember our God and to help us recall all the mighty works He had done in the past. Songs have the ability to breath life into a weak faith and as acts of worship they become part of the means through which we draw nearer to the Lord. That is what the book of Psalms was written to do—it was written as an aid for corporate worship. The Psalms are a collection of poems which are intended to be sung directly to the LORD to give him praise and express our love for Him and our thanksgiving for the things He has done.

Psalm 16 begins and ends with David speaking directly to God in a very personal way. In verses 3 and 4, his focus turns to the saints and the wicked respectively. Then in verses 5-8 David speaks about why he enjoys the LORD and reminds himself of the reasons why he retains a sense of security amid the difficulties of life. Verses 9-11 then turn to the joy that comes from being near to the Lord and the benefits that accrue from remaining happily in His presence.

The Necessity of Refuge & the Goodness of God (v.1-2)

Although we do not know the details surrounding the writing of this psalm, it is possible that it was written during a time of some difficulty in David's life since he begins with a plea for help while looking to God as a place of refuge.

Psalm 16:1-2 (ESV)

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."

Preserve Me, O God (v.1) A Plea of Praise

As David writes this psalm, he has no problem speaking directly to God in a very personal way. He offers up a plea for preservation. He looks to God to preserve him, for evidently he knows that he does not possess the strength or the ability to preserve himself. David is not trusting in his own strength, but he is confessing his need for his life to be preserved by God because he knows that God alone has the power and ability to safeguard David's life. Asking for help from God is way of praising His power in that it is an assertion of His strong ability.

For In You I Take Refuge (v.1)

David runs to the Lord for refuge. O how often I need a place of refuge—a place of hiding, a place where I feel safe and secure and protected from all threats. Physically I enjoy a sense of safety, though we have simply to open the newspaper and we realize that such a place of *true* safety does not exist in this broken world. I don't live with the sense of daily foreboding that just around the next corner someone will attack me and kill me because I am a Christian, though our brothers and sisters in the Lord around the globe do live with such cruel realities.

Just this past Tuesday [Reuters reported](#) that 65 Christians in northern Nigeria were killed in attacks by the radical al Qaeda affiliate Boko Haram. Carl Moeller of Open Doors USA wrote, "[Nearly every Sunday Nigerian Christians face attacks as they attempt to gather to worship God.](#)" I feel certain that these words, "**Preserve me, O God, for in You I take refuge,**" have a much deeper meaning for the followers of Jesus who live in these kinds of contexts than they might for us who live in 'Disney Land.'

Nevertheless, there are other ways in which we need a refuge—a hiding place or a spiritual place of quiet and respite. A place where you can draw near to the LORD without fear. A place to be spiritually renewed and find refreshment for your soul. David writes that he found that place **in God**. This tells us this is not a physical place. It was not a cave to which he went or a secret hill or a hidden room. David took refuge in God.

I say to the LORD (v.2)

And when He was taking refuge in God, he spoke to God. David here tells us exactly to whom he is speaking. He speaking directly to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. David is using the personal name by which God revealed Himself. It is first used of God in Genesis 2:4 distinguishing Him as the one who created all that exists. It is used 6,823 times in the Old Testament² and always refers to the one true God, the God of Israel.

You Are My Lord (v.2)

David confesses that Yahweh is his *adonai*, his lord, his superior, his master, his sovereign. Yahweh is the One whom David obeys. In the day of trouble or in the time when you are seeking refuge, it is good to remind yourself whom you serve. You serve the Lord. *He* does not serve you, but you serve Him. He is Sovereign and you are His servant.

I Have No Good Apart From You

² Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale reference library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 540.

This is not a bad arrangement. It is not bad to be the servant of the Sovereign, because David also reminds himself that there is “**no good apart from You.**” God, the Sovereign Lord, is also the source of all good. In fact, for David, there is no good apart from Him. Jesus confirmed the same truth. When once called “Good Teacher” by a rich young ruler, Jesus said, “**Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone**” (Mk 10:18; Lk 18:18-19).

Do you view God the Father this way? Do you see Him as good? Do you understand all the good in your life as coming from Him? If there is any good in your life, the Psalmist would remind you that it came from the LORD and apart from Him there is no good.

James 1:17 (ESV)

17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

To have God in your life is have true goodness in your life. To be without God, is to be without true goodness. Apart from Him there is no good. That means that everything you think is good in life apart from God would be one million times better if it was enjoyed while being mindful of the One who gave it to you.

The Saints Who Worship YaHWeH vs. the Idolators Who Don't (v.3-4)

David now shifts his thinking away from being directly focused on God and His goodness and onto the people around him.

Psalm 16:3-4 (ESV)

*3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.
4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.*

Why does David do this? What moves him from God and the good in his life that comes from God to mention “**the saints in the land?**” Is it not because David sees the saints in the land as being part of the goodness that God had given him? No doubt David is thinking of his godly friends—the saints who also love the LORD just as he does. David delights in godly people. They are the excellent ones! They are good people. These people are the ones David delights to have as neighbors.

Do you delight in God's people? Do you rejoice in the people of God?

However, there are also others in whom David does not delight. These are the **idolators** in the land. These are the neighbors whom he dreads. These are those who worship other gods. These are the people whose problems multiply. David looks upon them with pity because of the sorrows that fill their lives. Running after other gods simply results in sorrow being added to sorrow. David vows not to participate in their idolatrous rituals, nor will he even take the name of their god on his lips. He will not even speak the name of their god because in actuality it is no god at all. Their cup is a bloody cup but David has chosen a different cup.

The Lord Is My Chosen Portion (v.5-6)

Psalm 16:5-6 (ESV)

- 5** *The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.*
6 *The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*

This language is the language of Joshua as he portioned out the Promised Land to all Israel and they finally received the inheritance they had been promised. The divisions of the land were chosen by lot, that is by the roll of the dice (Num 34:13; Josh 14:2; 18:8), which God controlled and caused the larger tribes to have a larger inheritance and the smaller tribes to have a smaller inheritance (Num 35:8). Every tribe received a portion of land, except the Levites. They did not receive a portion of land because the Lord gave Himself as their portion.

Numbers 18:20 (ESV)

- 20** *And the LORD said to Aaron, “You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel.”³*

David likes the deal given to the Levites and chooses to receive what they received—the Lord Himself rather than the land. David would rather be identified with Levi than with Judah. He would rather inherit a spiritual person than a spacious palace. And about this David says,

***“The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.”***

The LORD is beautiful in the eyes of David. So he chooses the LORD Himself over the land that the LORD gives. David is more content with a great personage than with great acreage. David would rather possess the Giver than all the gifts. David delights more in God than in worldly goods. To him the LORD is beautiful.

Land or Lord?

If right now you were offered the choice of either receiving any 100 acre parcel of land, tax-free for as long as you live, anywhere in the world, OR receiving the LORD as your inheritance, which would take?

The Benefits of Choosing the Lord as Your Portion (i.e. inheritance) (vs. 7-8)

David offers some of the reasons for which he made the choice he did. The beauty and the goodness of the LORD can be seen in verses 7-8.

Psalm 16:7-8 (ESV)

- 7** *I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.*
8 *I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

³ See also Dt 10:9; 18:1; Jos 13:33; 18:7, 10; 19:51; Ez 44:28.

The Benefits listed by David.

1. **The LORD gives me counsel & instruction** (v.7). David blesses the LORD because He gives him counsel and instruction. This happens, apparently, at night when David contemplates the decisions before him. The idea is that when he is totally alone, in the quiet and solitude of the night, then all distractions are removed and he can listen for the voice of the Lord. He communes with the LORD within his heart and there in the still quiet of the night, and in those moments he receives from the LORD the instruction and counsel which he needs. Spurgeon wrote, “The night season which the sinner chooses for his sins is the hallowed hour of quiet when believers hear the soft still voices of heaven, and of the heavenly life within themselves.”⁴
2. **The LORD is a secure foundation** (v.8). Having his mind constantly focused upon the LORD means David is seeking the LORD’s wisdom always in constant prayer. Keeping his face trained upon the LORD causes his thinking to constantly be influenced by the LORD’s will rather than his own will, thus the LORD’s advice becomes his most trusted counsel, as if the LORD was **at his right hand**. Having the LORD at his right hand means the LORD is the first person to whom David goes to get advice. And the LORD’s opinion is the one opinion whom he most cherishes. Because of this, David makes good and wise decisions, thus he is confident that he **shall not be shaken**. His confidence rests not in himself or his own wisdom, but in the goodness of the counsel of the LORD.

Psalms 16:9 (ESV)

*9 Therefore my heart is glad,
and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.*

3. **This results in joy and gladness of heart** (v.9). When the Lord’s counsel and wisdom marks the decisions of one’s life, the result is gladness of heart and rejoicing that affects one’s whole being (i.e. ‘tongue’ NIV cf. LXX). Being near to the LORD, brings joy and security. Not only is David confident that the future is secure, but also the present. He trusts in the LORD to keep him physically safe, “**my flesh also dwells secure.**” This is an amazing thing to say considering that David was a warrior and fought enemies (mostly from without but some even from within his own family, among his own sons) all the days of his life! David lived with the knowledge that there were literal enemies who waited for an opportunity to end his life. David once told his best friend Jonathan, “*As the Lord lives... there is but a step between me and death!*” (1 Sam 20:4). Yet in spite of all the trials of life, David rested confident in the sovereign nearness of the LORD such that his heart was glad, his whole being rejoice, and his flesh dwelled secure. This kind of living will not be shaken.

Verse 10 might cause us to wonder. What did David mean by this verse?

Psalms 16:10 (ESV)

*10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.*

⁴ C.H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1869, Psa 16:7.

At first, we might think, “David thinks he will live forever.” However, we have the apostles to help us understand this. This verse has been quoted by both Peter (Acts 2:23-32) and Paul (Acts 13:34-39) as ultimately pointing forward to Jesus. Both apostles, Peter and Paul, do not understand David to have been mistaken, since he did die and his flesh did see corruption. But Peter teaches us, and Paul agrees, that David here was speaking prophetically about Jesus because God gave him the ability to see beforehand what was to come after him (see Acts 2:30). Peter tells us that David remembered God’s promise to him—that one of his descendants would remain forever on his throne⁵—and so he was looking forward to the resurrection of Jesus. Because though Jesus did die, he did not stay dead. His body was raised on the third day and thus his body never “**saw corruption.**” Jesus was raised from the dead and because David was able to foresee the resurrection, he knew that Jesus would not abandon his soul to death, but rescue his soul from death. This is the meaning of verse 11.

Psalm 16:11 (ESV)

*11 You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

The path of life comes through death and resurrection. Jesus would destroy death. Jesus would conquer death and remove its sting. This pathway was revealed to David about a thousand years before Jesus was born.

It was also revealed to David that fullness of joy right now in this life can be experienced by being in the presence of the Lord. The LORD grants fullness of joy, now! No just a hint of joy, but fullness of joy. To the degree that we are able to enter into the presences of the LORD, to that degree we are able to share in His joy.

And there is more to be experienced in the future. There are **pleasures forevermore** at His right hand. Pleasures that do not grow old or fade away or require a prescription. The LORD promises to give you pleasure when you enter into His presence. And when we are with Him we will enjoy Him forever more. He is good and apart from Him there is no good. He is our heart’s delight. He is a secure foundation and those who trust in Him shall never be shaken. He is refuge and He is wise counsel. He is instruction and He is the wise counselor who visits you with comfort in the night. He is the God who is near who makes the heart glad and causes your whole being to rejoice. His name is Jesus and the one who trusts in Him shall never die and shall experience in His presence pleasures forevermore!

Application: Do what David did. Write out your prayer to the LORD just as David did in this psalm.

⁵ 2 Sam 7:12-14.