

Press Pause

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[0 : 00] We're going to read God's Word together in Psalm 16 in both morning and evening services, so you need to come back again tonight. It's a two-part sermon, so this morning we're pressing pause and tonight we will be pressing play. As I was saying to the young ones, we're going to be thinking of what David says and sings in this psalm, so I think Brian's going to come and read Psalm 16 to us. We read together in God's Word at Psalm 16. A mictum of David, keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. Apart from you, I have no good thing. I say of the holy people who are in the land, they are the noble ones, in whom is all my delight. Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips. Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup. You make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord who counsels me. Even at night my heart instructs me. I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand I shall not be shaken. Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead. Nor will you let your faithful one see decay.

You make known to me the path of life. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. Amen. May God bless us this reading from his Word.

Well, if you turn back with me in your Bibles to Psalm 16, it would be helpful to keep your Bibles open. Brian was asking me just before if I had a question, a hook for those who will see this on Facebook later on. And I guess that question could be, have you considered God? And if you have a notepad and pen, Brian, Brian, for tonight it's have you considered eternity? Or to put a bit more bluntly, have you considered dying? Psalm 16, we begin today though, have you considered God?

[3 : 19] I was traveling back on the ferry to the Isle of Lewis just this summer. And I happened to be doing some work on the ferry. On the ferry, I was going over there to preach. So I had my notepad out and my laptop and my Bible. And eventually, after about an hour on the ferry, this man turned around to me, who was on the table just in front of me. And he asked me a question. He said, why are you reading the Bible?

Oh, well, this is a good opportunity. I need to take this one. And so I explained to him that I was going back home to Lewis to preach. And so he asked me some more questions. He asked me about how I became a minister. He asked me about the church. And he asked me about Jesus. And eventually, I thought, well, it's my turn to start asking this man some questions. And I asked him, why do you care? Why do you care that I'm reading the Bible? Because even the vast majority of people in this boat don't care.

At that point in his life, he was exploring all kinds of faiths, and even modern ideas of how to find satisfaction, how to find contentment, how to find God was his ultimate quest.

He told me later on that he had four alarms set on his phone. And each time the alarm would go off, there was a title on the alarm that reminded him to be present. So in other words, the idea behind these alarms for this man was to step aside from the rush of the day and to be present, to be thankful for his wife and children, and to try somehow to relate and make contact with God.

[5 : 35] I said to him, well, that's not a bad idea to have that. It's good to step aside from the rush of the day. But I said to him, why don't you change it from saying, be present, and have these alarms going off throughout the day, but saying, be praying. And so by praying, you're not only going to hope for the best, you're not only going to hope to make contact with God or with our God, you will be speaking directly to the living God of heaven and earth. In Psalm 16 that was read to us, we were listening into one of David's prayers. And this psalm takes us on a journey through life and into eternity.

And however, to begin this journey this morning, we don't need to go forwards or backwards, we need to stand still. David invites us in this psalm to step aside from the ordinary business and busyness of the day and to take stock of our lives. As David prays and sings to God, this morning we're going to focus on verse 1 to 6. He looks in two directions. He looks up and he looks around. He looks vertically and he looks horizontally. So let's just consider these two aspects in verses 1 to 6.

First of all, David looks vertical. He looks up. There in your Bibles you see and read in verse 1, David says, keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. You know, almost a third of the Psalms that we find in our Bibles speak about refuge. Finding shelter, finding security, finding a safe place to hide.

Very often, the psalmist seeks refuge in the midst of a storm. I was even praying about that a moment ago. Some of us are engulfed in what we would call the storms of life. The psalmist would find refuge during when the enemy's at the door. The psalmist looks for refuge when he feels like life is closing in around him. But not Psalm 16. Not Psalm 16. Here there's no known crisis for David. He isn't under attack.

He isn't wounded. He isn't fleeing from a certain sin. But he is still found in God's refuge. You see, the refuge is not only for us to enter into in the moments of catastrophe or emergency.

[8 : 41] Of course, the doors are open for you then, but the doors are always open. You know, some of you don't like going to the dentist. And so you put it off as long as possible until you begin to feel the pain in your tooth getting gradually worse. And of course, you will get an appointment. You'll get seen and the procedure will get done. But your dentist is going to remind you that he or she doesn't only want you to come when the tooth hurts. They want you to come even when it doesn't. The Lord wants you to come to him. Yes, when life hurts. But even when it doesn't.

He wants to care for you every day, not only in the moments of crisis. So from his safe place, David's eyes are fixed above. And he declares his commitment, first of all, to God. We see that in verse 2.

I said to the Lord, you are my Lord. Apart from you, I have no good thing. He confesses it with his mouth. He'll say it to other people, but he's also saying it to God.

How often do we verbally tell God that we love him? You know, your parents, if you're younger, they want to hear it. Your children want to hear it. Your spouse wants to hear affectionate words from you. They want to hear those three words from time to time throughout your marriage.

Not because they doubt that you love them, but simply to be reminded and for the fact to be reiterated. The Lord shows us daily how much he loves us. Through his word, he reminds us every time we read it of how deep his love for us as saved sinners has been poured out. And so pray right now in your heart. If you love the Lord, pray to him and tell him that you love him. Speak to him directly.

[11 : 16] You know, we can sing how great is our God, and that's wonderful to do. But don't only say it like a song. Don't only say it as if others were listening, but speak to him yourself.

I love you, Lord. You are my Lord and my God. Let me look on in verse 2. David says, apart from you, I have no good thing.

And also in verses 5 and 6, he says, Lord, you have assigned me my portion and my cup. You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance.

Here is David, the king, looking to God, and his conclusion is, everything pales into insignificance compared to God.

David's words, they speak here of contentment. He's satisfied with what God has given him. He's satisfied with God.

[12 : 35] A mark of our age is discontentment, boredom, restlessness. The generation with short attention spans, the constant need for excitement, the 24-hour-a-day entertainment needs to know what David knows.

And we see that no clearer than in ourselves. It made me think of a very childish illustration, but it's very basic, but let me share it with you.

Because I've always remembered, for some reason, I remembered when my parents gave me an MP3 player. So we had moved on from CD players, hadn't quite reached the iPods yet.

But I was pressing all sorts of buttons. I had plugged it into my computer. I was desperate. I remember even thinking to myself, or saying to myself, if only I could get two or three songs

downloaded onto this MP3 player, I would be happy, I would be satisfied.

Now, somehow I managed. There was two or three songs downloaded onto the MP3 player, and have I ever been discontent since then? Of course.

[14:00] I was probably wanting more songs on it as soon as I had listened to those three. And that's the pattern for all of us as sinners. We want something. We think we have to have it.

But as soon as we do get it, we want something else. We want more of it. We want a better version of it. The cars we save up for, the houses we build, the possessions we buy, have never and will never, will never satisfy the deep craving for fulfillment that lives inside each and every one of you. So what you're saving for now, it may not be wrong to do so, so don't worry. But it's not going to satisfy you. The world will search their whole lives for what they are missing, for some magic potion they think is going to satisfy them.

Yet here it is, David says, the ingredients for all our happiness is found in God alone. And speaking of contentment, as you look again at the end of verse, in verse 6, the boundary lines of fallen and pleasant places, it made me wonder, could the, we can skip over these two verses, we don't have too much time today to think about them more deeply, but could, I wondered, the persecuted church, for example, say what David says here in verse 6, that the boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places.

Could our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan say this morning of how the boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places for them? Can you see it with the various crises you've been through or are going through in your life?

[16:02] Well, David pauses and he looks over his life and he sings, the Lord has been good to me. Not because his life was easy or trouble-free, this is David who's lost his own son, who lost his friend Jonathan in battle.

His other son became an enemy of his. His predecessor spent his life trying to kill him. He has come through many dangers, toils and snares.

And yet, David's delightful inheritance is God. You see, apart from God, he has no good thing. God is his everything.

God is enough. So it begs the question, is God enough for you? Or do you find the sparkle of this world too attractive?

Is God your life? Or is he just part of your life? I came across this other hymn when I was preparing a different speaking engagement.

[17:24] It's entitled, Have You Counted the Cost? You may trade your hope of eternity's mourning for a moment of joy at the most, for the glitter of sin and the things that will win.

Have you counted? Have you counted the cost? Why would you settle for glitter when the Lord is offering you gold?

So David pauses. He looks up. He looks vertical. He pauses and considers God. But secondly then, let's think horizontally.

Let's look with David around us. With his faith fixed on God above, David shifts his gaze and attention to those who are around him.

And he finds two groups of people in verses three and four. He finds the saints and the sinners. The believers, the Christians, and the sinners.

[18:29] You know, the first psalm in the Bible, Psalm 1, illustrates the division so distinctly. It says, The blessed man does not mingle with the wicked. Instead, he delights in the word of God.

He meditates on it and all he does prospers. But not so the wicked. They are blown one way and then another and ultimately they will not stand when the judgment comes.

So he begins talking about the saints, the Christians. In verse three, As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.

You see, a vertical relationship with God is always connected to a horizontal relationship with the people of God. Faith in Christ spills over into love, care, and esteem for his people.

You know, the pandemic separated us from having physical fellowship with one another and we missed that. Zoom and Facebook and YouTube are wonderful aids in a time of trouble but are no substitute for being here and gathering with God's people.

[19:55] John Calvin wrote, God's will is that here on earth he should be exalted in the assembly of God's people as they live harmoniously under his authority and the guidance of his spirit.

This is the true communion of saints which separates them from the pollution of the world that they may be holy for his own, they may be a holy people for his own possession.

And this is what really got me. In this way, as the saints become manifestations, pictures of the brightness of God's glory, they will draw others to him.

As the world sees you together, as they witness the true joy of God in our hearts, as they hear the notes of praise in our voices and the love of Christ on our faces, they will be attracted not to us but to the light of the world, to Jesus Christ.

So do not give up meeting together. What sweet moments we can all recall when we have met together.

[21 : 19] Those of you who are Christians, you can think back of different times spent with God's people, services in the boundaries of your church walls, fellowships in the homes of those who are now home with the Lord, evenings of spontaneous praise and worship to God.

You know, as hard as the last year and a half has been fellowship-wise, one thing that I did find precious and will never forget when we were in the depths of our lockdowns.

I remember Ailey and I were out for a walk, one of our allocated hours of the day, we were allowed to be outside and as we were walking around our village, a couple from our community were driving past and because there was very few other cars on the road at that time, they just stopped in the middle of the road, put the window down and we stood there talking, talking about God and at the end of our conversation, I prayed with them, standing in the middle of the road, praying with them, praying together, worshipping God and that story is repeated over and over on people's doorsteps, on the other end of the phone, on Zoom calls.

it's precious to be together and it's a simple test for us how we can measure our own relationship with the Lord.

Do you love these people? Do you love them? Do you find it good and rewarding to be with God's people? Do you seek out their company?

[23 : 11] Those who love the Lord, they'll love gathering with those who love Him because they also have tasted and seen that He's good. They have had their eyes open to the truths of the gospel and in a world of billions of people, here are those who are traveling with you on the narrow road to glory.

There's a connection, there's a magnetism, I believe, between the people of God because you can travel the world but when you find a believer you find your family.

And if I, if these affections are stirring up in you, if you have an affection for these people, then I think I would take that to be a wonderful token of assurance that the Lord God is working in you.

those who love God love God's people. But he moves on and in verse 4 very starkly and with great contrast, David says, the sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods.

You see, mixed in with the saints is the sinners and this world will provide no shortage of other gods. we're surrounded all day every day by the idols that this world bows down to.

[24 : 37] And as David looks around him, he cannot help but notice the ungodly, those who call the devil their fathers. But David is utterly committed to standing against the pagan worship that he sees and is devoted to upholding the first two commandments, love God and have no others.

that may be basic to you. I only bow down to God, Yahweh, the creator of heaven and earth.

Yet the danger and the possibility and the temptation is to stray. And so let he who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

We're reminded by David that there is no place for the blessed amongst the wicked. The fact that the Christian is holy means that you are set apart.

You have been called out to live in this world but not to be a part of this world. You know, Jesus said, my prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

[25 : 53] Sanctify them by the truth. The Bible is truth. As I finish, let me just share with you again about that man that I mentioned at the very beginning.

He was exploring other faiths and different religious practices. And he confessed to me after I had spoken to him for a while, he confessed to me that he would find it hard to go down just one route, one religion, one faith.

faith. Because how would he know that that was the right one to choose? So he was trying to adopt a little bit of them all. I didn't have all the answers for him.

I didn't try to disprove all those other religions. All I could say to him was the reason Christianity is singularly different. Our Jesus says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through me. I told him about our Jesus. I told him that Jesus came to seek and to save the lost.

[27 : 09] And that if you step out in faith, if you trust in Jesus, then all your sin can be forgiven.

You know what he said to me? nobody's ever told me that Jesus can take away my sins. Jesus can take away your sins.

And as we came to Stornoway Harbor, he asked, or I asked him if it would be okay to pray with him.

And so we prayed in the middle of the ferry, praying that Jesus would come into his heart.

And that is our prayer for any of you who have not yet put your trust in this God alone, where you will find full fulfillment, where you will find full satisfaction, where you will find full contentment, and where you will find it nowhere else.

all other religions say you need to do something to be saved. Christianity says Christ has already done it. He's already saved you if you would believe in him.

[28 : 30] Press pause, look to God, and then you will be able to see clearly everything that is around you. Let's pray. Lord our God, we thank you and praise you that you are the God, the creator of the heavens and the earth, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

And our prayer this morning, Lord, is that any here today who have yet to taste and see the goodness of God, who are yet to have their sin forgiven, that the Holy Spirit will be moving amongst us even out, that you would save them from the darkness of themselves and lead them to the light of Christ.

We pray as a church for souls to be saved. In Jesus' name, Amen.