

AM John 14:1-14 & Psalm 16 Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow

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Preacher: Rev Douglas Cranston

[0 : 00] If you would, to your Bibles. First of all, to the New Testament, and there to the Gospel of John, chapter 14.

What I thought I would do is, we're still very much in the beginning of a new year, and I thought I would look at this passage and Psalm 16 to use it as an encouragement to us as believing people as we face the new year, as I go round, as I minister to people.

I think there's a good deal of fear and hesitation in a lot of people's lives and believers' lives. They're confused about all that's going on in our world.

They find much of it hard to believe and to understand. And I think it's good to set a focus and a perspective on what is going on.

And of course, our perspective as believing people is always the Word of God. That gives us an insight and a perspective so that we should not be troubled.

[1 : 21] We should be concerned for our world. We should pray for our world. But we should have our focus on higher things, on God's promises, and on how He seeks to direct our focus.

And that's what I want to do this morning. I want to consider the challenge that is laid down to us about what it means at the beginning of a year to have a perspective that is a biblical perspective based on the truth and the promises of God.

So I want to turn first of all to the 14th chapter of John's Gospel. We're at a key stage in the Gospel here.

Jesus is clearly very much now focused on the fact that His time for going to the cross is getting ever closer.

And throughout John's Gospel, He's been saying to the disciples that this is not the time, that we're not yet there, this is not the time. And now His focus begins to be more clearer in terms of instructing the disciples about what is about to happen to Him.

[2 : 49] So this is the Word of God. Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me.

In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself. But where I am, you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going. And Thomas said to him, Lord, we do not know where you are going.

How can we know the way? And Jesus said to him, I am the way. And the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him. And Philip said to him, Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us.

[4 : 00] And Jesus said to him, have I been with you so long and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, show us the Father?

Do you not believe that I am in the Father? And the Father is in me. The words that I say to you, I do not speak on my own authority.

But the Father who dwells in me does His works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me. Or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do. And greater works than these will he do. Because I am going to the Father.

Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do. That the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.

[5 : 10] I am going back to the Old Testament, to the Psalms. You will find this, if you are using the Pew Bibles, on 1086.

Sorry, on 544. And in the Psalms we continue to read God's Word. Preserve me, O God. For in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, you are my Lord. I have no good apart from you. As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones. In whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply. Their drink offerings of blood I will pour out, or take their names on my lips.

[6 : 13] The Lord is my chosen portion, and my cup, and my lot. The lions have fallen for me in pleasant places.

Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. I will bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me.

I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices.

My flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to shoal. Or let your Holy One see corruption.

You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

[7 : 20] Amen. And may God bless to us this reading from his Holy Word. And to his name be praise and glory given. Once again you might pray for a moment.

Heavenly Father. Well over this last week I've been thinking and contemplating how significant New Years are.

And as I've been thinking about it, I've come to the conclusion that a lot of it I suppose depends on our personality. There will be some of us who are just so excited that there's another 12 months opening up in front of us.

And their vision for the new year. And as we move through that new year is one of enthusiasm and energy. Another 12 months God willing of opportunity to serve him.

To praise his name. To advance the gospel. To seek to build his church. To walk on and grow and flourish in our own Christian lives.

[8 : 30] And in our family's life. Inevitably some of us will be looking forward to things that are going to happen this year.

Perhaps a big holiday. A big anniversary. Perhaps the birth of a new child. And the year and the months that are about to unfold in God's good providence.

Are exciting times. There will be others who will be the opposite personality.

Who face the new year with a sense of trepidation. As each year passes we wonder at the start if it will be a year where we'll make it through to the end.

Will we make it through to the end. With the people we love. Along with that are a host of other concerns.

[9 : 33] Will I take unwell. Will something happen to change my life. Will I still have a job at the end of it. Do I have the finances in place.

To make sure that I can live comfortably. In this year that comes. And that's before we take in all the other things that are going on in our world.

It's not a political statement. It's a mere personal observation. That we probably live in a country that is now governed by the most godless group of people.

That we have ever known. The whole questions of identity. The whole questions of priority.

The whole question of independence. Create uncertainty. Confusion.

[10 : 38] And in many cases fear. Not least. The fear that we have. For our children. And in our case.

Our grandchild. Indeed many of us. Can look back over some years. And know that if we knew what was going to unfold.

During those 12 months. We would be less than confident. That we would survive or endure it. And yet we do.

And by God's grace we do. And therefore as I said earlier. I thought it would be good for us. Just to spend a moment. Not saying anything new.

Or clever. Or fancy. But to remind ourselves. This morning. Of what we must never forget.

[11 : 41] As I said in the passage we read from. John's gospel. Jesus at the very heart. Of preparing. The disciples for the future. For the days to come.

For what they were going to witness. In his trial. And in his saving death on the cross. He was in essence preparing them.

For days. That would be very different. From all that they had been used to. And in and around Galilee. Different. From the daily routines. And more immediately.

What they would have grown used to. Over the past three years. When they had been traveling around that area. With Jesus. Specifically.

He was preparing them. For the time. Which was now. Ever closer. When he would no longer be with them. In bodily form. And in actual presence.

[12 : 38] He was preparing them. He was preparing them. For dramatic change. And significant challenges. That resulted from that change.

That was going to. Lie ahead of them. And Jesus. Jesus you will notice. Engages with them. By first of all. Giving them a command.

Let not your hearts be troubled. And he accompanies that. With a promise. I go.

To prepare a place for you. In this command. And in this promise. Going hand in hand. As it often does.

In scripture. It is very evident. That Jesus is conveying to them. And through the Bible. To us. Two vital aspects. Of what it means.

[13 : 37] To be a believer. Two vital aspects. Of what it means. To have saving faith. Strength. Strength for today.

To endure the trials of the day. And the trials of each day. As they come. And bright hope. For tomorrow.

Both these states of mind. And perspective. Are you will notice. Unique assurances. And sureties. For the one.

Who is saving faith. And trust. In the person. And in the work. Of the Lord Jesus Christ. Strength for today.

And bright hope. For tomorrow. Are the unique characteristics. Of the believer. You would need to be awfully blind.

[14 : 40] To miss this. As Jesus. As Jesus. Clearly. Clearly. Anchors. These two assurances. Strength for today. Bright hope. For tomorrow. He anchors them.

You will notice. In himself. Indeed. In those first seven verses. Of that chapter. That we read. From John's gospel. Jesus references. Himself. On no fewer. Than twelve occasions. Persons. And they revolve around.

What he says. In verse six. Where Jesus makes. The most significant. Clear. And unequivocal. Claim. To be himself.

The only means. To eternal life. And the only way. To God. And the only source. Of this strength. For today. And bright hope.

[15 : 37] For tomorrow. For tomorrow. And the issue here. Seems to me. To be very clearly. An issue. About perspective.

What Jesus. And indeed. The Bible. From start to finish. Is seeking to do. Is to give believers. A perspective. That is distinct. From those. Who have no faith. Or those who have false faith. Which sooner or later. Is exposed as false. When it fails the test. Of life. And circumstances. David's testimony.

That we read. In Psalm 16. Helps to put. Additional. Flesh. Upon this concept. Of perspective. And it will be helpful.

[16 : 39] For you to have your Bibles. Open. At Psalm 16. As we look. And identify. Some key aspects. Of. What David.

Is saying there. Verse 8. You will notice. Of the Psalm. Makes clear. The perspective. Of the Psalmist.

In the very terms. That we have already noted. The focus. The perspective. In first and foremost. Is on the Lord.

I have set the Lord. Always. Before me. Biblical faith.

And biblical perspective. Is about a relationship. With a person. It's not.

[17 : 38] First and foremost. About a place. Or a set of rules. And principles. Or even about. Religious orthodoxy. That we sign up to.

Now these things. Are important. But they're not. What the gospel. Is essentially about. When Jesus. Called his disciples. He didn't lay before them.

The apostles. Creed. He didn't lay before them. A set of rules. And regulations. His initial engagement. With these people.

Was simple. Follow. Me. And the essential. Foundational. Perspective.

For the believer. Is the Lord. God. Now as I said earlier. There is nothing. New in that. There is nothing.

[18 : 35] Fancy about that. There is nothing. Clever. About that. But it is a useful. Reminder. Of what we must. Never forget.

Look. To Jesus. Look. To the Lord. Set the Lord. Always. Before you.

In every trial. In every joy. In every trouble. In every celebration. Set the Lord. Always.

Before you. Our faith. Has to be personal. It is faith.

In a person. And in what. That person. Does. And if we had time. To read on. John would have told us. That. The answer.

[19 : 34] To. Jesus. No longer. Being with them. In bodily form. Is that he is going to send. The Holy Spirit. To indwell. Within them.

Do you see. The point. That he is making. Is that the Christian. Cannot. Function. Out with. That personal. Relationship. With the Lord. Jesus Christ.

It is Christ. And Christ. Dwelling. Within us. In the Holy Spirit. That creates. The perspective. Our faith.

Is in a person. And in that. Personal. Relationship. And in him. As David says. We have a refuge. You see. Christian faith. Is never private. But it is always. Personal. Earlier in the week.

[20 : 45] I was. I was. Skipping through. The TV channels. And came across. The program. Called. Between the covers. It is. A program. That does. Book reviews.

I would normally. Not watch this program. But what caught my attention. Was the fact. That one of the books. That was being reviewed. Was written. By a pastor. Of an American. Mega church.

I won't tell you. His name. Because his books. Are next to no value. In my opinion. But what caught my attention. Was a question. That was asked. And the answer.

That was given. The question was this. This is a Christian book. Does it have anything. To say. To people of other faiths.

Or to the dyed. In the wool. Atheist. The answer came. Oh yes. It is an amazing book.

[21 : 43] In that regard. Yes. It talks about Jesus. But when it talks about Jesus. You can switch that. To Buddha.

Or to Allah. Or whoever. Or whatever. You believe in. And even if you believe in nothing. The whole point. Is that the answers to life. Are within yourself.

Is that the answers to life. Now Psalm 16. Brings us to the place. Where we know. That this kind of woke thinking.

Is simply utter nonsense. I have set the Lord. Always before me.

And it is that perspective. On him. And on him alone. That brings us to the place. Of strength for today.

[22 : 42] And bright hope for tomorrow. You will notice. That is what he articulates. Very clearly. And again. Simply and straightforwardly. In verse 2.

In the Lord. I have no good. Apart from you. You. From you. From you. From you.

Lord. Without you. There is no good. There is no perspective. You see friends.

This is the first. Uncrucial perspective. There is but one God. He is not my God. God. He is not my understanding of God.

He is not how I like to think of God. He is the revealed Lord of creation. He is the Lord and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[23 : 37] Christ. And we need to recognize. That instead of trying to live in a world. Where God can be anything that you want God to be. Or God that you find inside yourself.

We need to let God be God. God. And in his grace and mercy. Appreciate the wonder that God who is God.

Almighty God. Is gracious enough. To have found a way to reveal himself in all his fullness. To blind sinners.

To get to the point. Where his existence. Is not dependent on us. As our modern day Gnostics would say.

But our existence. Is dependent upon him. To declare God to be God.

[24 : 45] To declare God to be the Lord. You see. Is not first and foremost. A statement. Of my personal devotion. My choice.

Of one who stands amongst a number of alternative options. To declare God as God. To declare him to be the Lord. Is a declaration of who he is.

His own true identity. By means of a gracious revelation. I am.

I am the Lord. There is none like me. The Hebrew here that is used is Adonai.

The word in Hebrew. The word in Hebrew is what is called an emphatic plural. It speaks of plural of majesty. And that shows us.

[25 : 46] The word in Hebrew. The word in Hebrew. The word in Hebrew. The word in Hebrew. And that shows us the point about David's perspective. Here is not the God that one summons before him.

But rather David is the one who lives his life. Summoned before the Lord. He is the Lord. He is the Lord. And I am always before him.

And so we read there that present faith puts life in perspective. Before the Lord.

Secondly then. Present faith puts life in perspective. In the refuge we have in the Lord. David in verse 1 you will notice echoes Old Testament truths and statements.

of this God who is the assurance of safety. It's echoed in Isaiah's prophecy in 41.10.

[26 : 54] Fear not. I am with you. Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will uphold you with my righteous hand.

Isaiah 46 again repeats that. Even in your old age. I am he. And to grey hairs I will carry you.

I have made you. And I will bear you. I will carry you. I will save you. And Wesley echoes that.

In his hymn other refuge have I none. Hangs my helpless soul on thee. Leave I leave me not alone. Still support and comfort me.

All my trust on thee is stayed. All my help from thee I bring. Cover my defenceless head. With the shadow of thy wing.

[28 : 03] Amen. Thirdly present faith reminds us. To put life in perspective.

In it. That it reminds us. Of whose we are. Again we see that in David. You are not just the Lord.

You will notice. You are my Lord. What I have in you Lord. Is every good thing.

Many of us will remember. Our Sunday school days. When we used to sing the old hymn. He is my everything. He is my all. He is my everything.

Both great and small. He gave his life for me. He made everything new. He is my everything. So how about you?

[29 : 07] I'm coming close to. Having spent nearly 40 years. In pastoral ministry. And it's shown me. In the utter tragedy. Of seeing the realization.

Of people. Many of them religious. Church going. Some of them elders. And indeed.

In a couple of specific cases. That I remember well. Ministers. Who in the face of illness. Or terminal diagnosis.

Or the sudden death. Of a loved one. It becomes very evident. That their perspective. Born from what they have invested.

Their life in. And their energies. And their hopes. And in their dreams. Is so fickle. And quickly dismantled. And seen to be of no lasting value.

[30 : 13] And it echoes the words of the hymn. Solid joys and lasting treasures. None but Zion's children know. But thankfully.

Also in those years. I have ministers to folks. With the same perspective. As David has. Wesley reflected that perspective.

Jesus my all in all. Thou art. My rest and toil. My ease and pain. Medicine of my broken heart.

And war my peace. And loss my gain. My smile beneath the tyrant's frown. In shame. My glory and my crown.

In want my plentiful supply. In weakness my almighty power. In bondage my perfect liberty. My light in Satan's darkest hour.

[31 : 15] My help and stay. Whene'er I call. My life and death. My heaven. My all.

Peace. I count it all.

Tracy. Faith puts life in perspective. And gives us the hope of future glory. Verse 7 in the psalm has underlined that.

The mechanism of this glory is reached in the counsels of the Lord. Counsels not through the eyes of humans that are darkened by the evening hour.

But eyes of the very counsel of God who is the lamp to my feet and the light to my path. This is you see a faith that is lived in the reality of the world.

[32 : 27] Not in redefining the world. But in the reality of it. In the face of the harshest realities of life.

In the face of the confusion and the disorder. And the evidence of the outpouring of God's judgment upon our nation. This is real faith for a real world.

From the only real God. The one whom we can rely upon. Day and night.

The one who brings you through the night. As we see in verse 8. He will keep you in hope. Though the whole earth be shaken.

Can't sleep. Don't count sheep. Look to the shepherd. And find rest and hope.

[33 : 36] In the counsel of a father's heart. Verse 8 and 9. In the comfort of a father's hand. In the consummation of a father's grace.

Bring strength for today. And bright hope for tomorrow. That's the confidence of verse 9.

My flesh. Also dwells. Secure. Again there's no room for. Gnostic ideas.

That the body is all bad. And it's only the mind that. Is worth keeping. This is real faith. In a real world.

My flesh. Also dwells secure. Verse 11. At your right hand. Are pleasures. Forevermore.

[34 : 43] Friends. I've spent many hours. Sitting with people. Who are dying. These are privileged moments.

Of ministry. But also sobering moments. And the one. Singular thing. About these moments.

Consistent to every situation.

Is that these moments. Show that. When everything in this sad. Broken world. Is stripped away. The question becomes. What is left. What remains.

As I think back. On many of these people. I've seen strong men. Brought to a stage. Where little girls. Can lift them with ease. I've seen beautiful women.

Stripped of all human beauty. I've seen wealthy. And clever. I've seen wealthy. And clever. In places. Where neither wealth. Nor knowledge.

[35 : 49] Made the slightest bit of difference. As we will all one day do. Hear this.

In that moment. The absolute. The absolute. And the only thing. That will matter. Is the perspective.

You have in the Lord Jesus Christ. So what will these months bring? It's wrong to say.

Who knows? Because the answer is. God knows. Take his hand.

As David talks about. For in his presence. Is fullness of joy. At his right hand. Our surety forevermore.

[36 : 48] He is the one. Eternal presence. Yesterday. Today. Forever. Jesus is the same.

All may change. But Jesus never. Glory to his name. In Christ. All my hope. Is founded.

Strength for today. Bright hope for tomorrow. In Christ. Blessings all mine. And ten thousand beside.

Let's pray.