

Full & Forever Joy Promised

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- [0 : 0 0] Psalm 16. The boroughs 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. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup.
You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
I 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.
- [1 : 3 0] 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.
Well, my name is David. I am one of the pastors here. A warm welcome if you are visiting. I hope you can stick around for a cuppa.
Just a reminder, if you do want to use crèche for under three, now is your time. But by all means, keep your kids in here with you as well. That is fine. I want to start with something of a prayer.
It's not a real prayer. That will become pretty obvious. Oh, St. George bank account. 011200624.
- [2 : 4 4] Preserve me. For in you I take refuge. Protect me from rising interest rates. Protect me from inflation.
Protect my family's future. Oh, bank account. Oh, protect how much I'm worth in society. In you I take refuge. Oh, St. George bank account.
011200624. I have no good apart from you. My children's happiness depends on you. Our home and health and holidays and presents.
My enjoyment of the best things life has to offer. Oh, and so St. George bank account. 011200624. I say to you, you are my Lord.
Command me. What must I do for you to increase my lot in life? What worry about tomorrow would you have from me? What plans would you have my mind obsessed about to increase my lot in life?
- [3 : 5 3] What would you have? What cost? What sacrifice? Nothing is too big. My family? My health? Devotion to church? What costs would you have me sacrifice at your altar?
Amen. It's not in my script. For a country with less and less people claim to have a faith, there's still a lot of faith and hope in money and possessions.
Christmas and approaching the new year, it's such a great opportunity to just pause and take stock of your life, isn't it? We're coming into a new year.

What am I living for? What am I looking to to give me peace and joy and hope? Now, Christmas and New Year, I know, is a difficult time for me.

Some here today are going to be, it's going to feel very lonely. It's going to be filled with grief, with those no longer around the dinner table.

[5 : 06] And so, if that's true for you, I suspect your soul is just thirsting for joy. And the good news is, Psalm 16 is deep enough, even for you.

Others here, I suspect, will be quite happy with your lot in life. And so, the promises of Psalm 16 are going to feel dull and boring.

But can I suggest that's your problem? They're not dull and boring. Some, maybe most of us, have already made plans for 2024.

You've already decided how you're going to increase your joy and less sorrow. You've already made plans. Something you can do by your own effort to increase your lot in life.

But I would ask, is your end goal the same as the end of this psalm? It's summarised on the banner behind me. Verse 11.

[6 : 07] You make known to me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

What a promise. Fullness of joy. Pleasures forevermore. Pleasures? Pleasures? Yes. Pleasures.

If you've got any notion that God isn't into pleasures, he created pleasures. They're all from him.

What people distort pleasures, they're just distorting it. They're not creating pleasures. God created real pleasure. The freshness of the rain after hot days.

The refreshment of sleep. The endorphins of laughter. The satisfaction of a full belly, which we're all looking forward to in the coming days. Like, it's been ages since I've had rock melon.

[7 : 11] Now, I know I'm dividing people here by introducing rock melon, but choose whatever food you love. I hadn't had it for ages, and I put it, the other day I wasn't expecting, I put it in my mouth and, boom, wow.

I know, probably five other people are agreeing with me right now, but it just made me wonder, like, does the Lord know this pleasure? I have no idea.

I'm not sure how to answer it. Of course he knows. He designed it. He designed my taste buds. He designed my mind to enjoy it. He even designed my mind to ask such a question at a time.

Does he enjoy the pleasure, or does he get pleasure from us enjoying it? I don't know. I don't know what the answers are to all those questions. All I know is that eating that rock melon and asking that question, it just, it increased my joy.

It was pure pleasure, because I was doing it in thankfulness and in relationship with God. It was, I probably will never have another piece of rock melon like it.

[8 : 24] I don't know. I can't beat it now. I don't know. So yes, pleasures. God promises joy and pleasures forevermore.

You might be wondering, why can't I find happiness in whatever I please? Like, what's wrong with looking to money? If it does make me happy, if it does make my family happy, what's wrong with that?

Why can't I look to the new job, the new relationship, whatever it is? The golden staff of oblivion on level 20 of Zelda. Like, you can tell how out of touch I am, but why can't I choose where I find pleasure?

What's so wrong with that? Well, I just want to ask a question, or two questions. As we're coming into 2024, what you're looking for joy and meaning in life, can it offer you full?

Can it offer you full? Can you get more than full? Can whatever you're looking to give you longer than forever?

[9 : 40] Where we're headed today, if you're following the outline, I've just gone nuts with words that start with P.

It gives me a sense as a preacher that I've got a coherent outline, but I've just put lots of P words in there. Protect me.

Protect me is how this psalm, it's a joyful psalm, but it starts with a deep cry, protect me. Protect from what?

False promises. I think we'll find false promises. Protect me how? By delighting in you, Lord.

So that in the end, I am in your presence. With full and forever joy. Show me the path to life. Protect me. The Christian life, it is the fight for full and forever joy in Jesus.

[10 : 51] Getting off the bus when I was in year seven. Dread filled me when I saw two year ten boys waiting at the bus stop.

And I knew they were waiting for me because I had said some things to one of these boys at school that day. My house was a block away.

And so I don't know why I didn't stay on the bus. That would have been a smart thing to do, but I didn't. I got off and I ran home. And these boys were chasing me.

And as I was running home, I was just hoping with all my might that this neighbour in year 12, he used to hang out at our house and he wasn't afraid of a fight.

I was hoping he was home. I was wishing, praying. But someone better was there. My older brother. I didn't need to ask him protect me.

[11 : 50] I think the fear in my eyes probably said it all. I took refuge in my older brother who could defuse the situation and immediately I felt safe.

Do you hear the reason why David expects God to preserve him? It's got nothing to do with him deserving it. I didn't deserve it that day. It's got everything to do with who.

Who are you trusting in to protect you? I'm hiding in you, God. Other people look to other things. Their money, their success, their beauty, whatever it is.

I'm not looking there. I'm going to you. I'm hiding behind your legs. I'm trusting you that you can keep me. I'm not hedging my bets.

I'm all in with you. I say to the Lord, the personal name. I know you, Lord.

[12 : 51] You are my Lord. I'm all in with you. I've thrown my lot in with you. I've no good apart from you. Protect me. Keep me.

Protection from what? King David, he had many threats and dangers. I've never had someone who, I don't think, anyway, who's intentionally tried to kill me.

David did. That must be incredibly anxiety-provoking. But I think he understood there was a bigger danger even than that. And I think that's what verse 4 is about.

The danger is empty promises. The sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply.

I think he uses the word multiply because it doesn't seem like sorrow at first. But it quickly, exponentially turns against you, leaving you empty.

[13 : 57] Let's go back to money, for instance. There is nothing wrong with money in and of itself. Nothing wrong with it. It's the false promises of money. That's the problem. It can cause constant anxiety, keeping you awake at night.

Never enough. How many marriages are filled with bitter arguments about money? How many are saving up for their retirement to take life easy, eat, drink and be merry, and the next day they go to their GP?

I know of a wealthy man who felt very lonely because of his wealth, because he didn't know, does this person love me for my sake or for my money?

Isn't that interesting? Having it all made him really lonely. After a funeral, I was talking to an older man and he was very wealthy.

Well, he described something of what he owned. I don't know exactly how wealthy, but he was telling me that his son hadn't talked to him in decades. And the reason was because the son had asked him for a loan for his business and the dad didn't give it to him.

[15 : 20] Talk about multiplied sorrows. Now, I'm not casting blame here. I don't know. I don't know whose fault in that situation.

I don't know the details. I'm not. What I do know is somewhere in there, someone is trusting in money to give them all they need in life and it tore the family apart.

To put our hope in empty promises is choosing the path of multiplied sorrow.

It's crazy. It's irrational. But we all do it. I do it so often. People are choosing that path so often. Is the Christian immune from this?

No. That's the point of David's prayer, I think. That's why we pray with David. Protect me. Protect me. I'm prone to wander away from you, Lord, to other things, other goods that pretend to be everything in life.

[16 : 34] I don't keep myself delighting in you, God. You must keep me delighting in you. Keep my faith. Protect it. However innocent and good this thing might be, it might seem at the time, if it gets in between me and you and pushes you away, protect me from that.

It's going to multiply sorrows. He fights for joy. I choose the path of full and forever. I don't want sorrow. I don't want sorrow. Jesus said, enter by the narrow gate.

For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction. And those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life.

And those who find it are few. Fighting for full joy, it's going to feel like a kind of dying. Don't misunderstand me here.

It's going to feel like dying because it's going to be a lonely path. Because most people are trusting in all sorts of other things. It's a lonely path. It's also a risky path.

[17 : 52] It feels like you're missing out constantly. People who have happiness now, they will have multiplied sorrows, but gee, they look happy now.

So it's going to feel like dying, choosing full joy. And there's another thing we have to be careful of here. It's not sacrificing and saying to God, God, look what I missed out on because of you.

You owe me. You owe me big time. That's not what this psalm is about. It's saying, I choose joy. I choose the greatest joy.

It's only good if it's in you. I have no good apart from you. I want joy. I don't want sorrow. So how does God answer the prayer?

To protect our faith in his promises, to protect us from false promises, well, David draws to mind all that the Lord is to him. He fights false promises by looking to who the Lord is to him.

[19 : 02] He delights in the Lord's... Here we go with the Ps again. The Lord's people, the Lord's power, the Lord's portion, and the Lord's presence.

He fights the false promises by focusing on who the Lord is to him. So let's quickly go through these. If I was to ask you, what's an evidence of having a real love for God?

If you made a list of evidences of real, genuine love for God, I wonder what you'd put on that list. I find it fascinating that the first thing David goes to is people, God's people.

All my delight are in your people. Not anyone who puts Christian on the census.

We're talking about people who are humbled by the cross of Jesus and they delight in God's word and they're self-sacrificing like God is for others' sake.

[20 : 08] Those people, you know them and you're like, I delight in you. Why? Because they're delighting in God. If you're delighting in God, of course you delight in them.

You see God reflected in them. So the first thing, David knows his faith is being protected. He knows he's on the path to life because he really does have affection for God's people.

I love your people. I'm among your people because they delight in you. So if church is just a good environment for your children to grow up in or a place to make friends or a platform to make a name for yourself, you've got to check what path you're on.

You could be on the path to sorrow, not joy. Do you delight in the people of God? That's the first thing David knows.

He's being protected for God by delighting in his people and I delight in your power. I think that comes across in the phrase, you hold my lot.

[21 : 29] Now what's that going on about? I think lot is like casting lots, it's like drawing straws. That's how back in Israel when they got the promised land, that's how they determined where God would put each tribe and each family.

They cast lots. Here's your inheritance based on what God decides. They didn't decide, God decided. So I think for David to say, you hold my lot, is the same as saying, you are my Lord.

You determine my good. Apart from you, I have no good thing. You have the power to hold my future.

Now a very silly example of this. I found on Facebook Marketplace recently this perfect thing.

Like I've been searching for it and it was perfect, exactly what I wanted. It was free. It was nearby. And I missed it by a matter of minutes.

[22 : 39] Someone else got in first. And I was so disappointed. And the rest of the day, I was just fighting. I was like, I don't want to feel disappointed the rest of the day based off this.

I don't want you to control me. And I was just trying to fight that. And what helped is remembering, well, it's not that I just missed it.

Someone happened to just get in before me. The Lord decided. This isn't rocket science at this point. But it's so, it really helps in life where you go, the Lord decided.

It mustn't be good for me. He's blessed someone else with it. Okay. Move on. You can only be protected from something or something taking your joy if you know that God is your power.

He's in control. He's determining your good. He holds your lot. So David knows he's being protected in God, kept in the faith because he's delighting in the people of God and he's delighting in God's power that he decides his portion.

[24 : 00] And then he comes to, I delight in you. You are my portion. So when someone is dishing out the dessert this Christmas and you notice that your bowl has a lot less in it than the rest of the bowls, I wonder if you can say that the Lord is my portion.

The lions have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. You know you are being kept by God, protected to receive full and forever joy if even in loss, and I know Christmas dessert is who cares in the end, but even in tragic loss, even with tears, he's teaching you to say, who have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. If he's teaching you to say that, you know you're being protected. If God is only the source of other goods, that's true.

He determines your goods. But if he's only the source in your life, you are not safe. But if God is teaching you to say, you are my portion, then you know God is keeping you close to him.

In criticism, my creator knows my name. In sickness, my saviour suffered for me. In relational breakdown, my redeemer wants me.

[25 : 53] In tragedy, my treasure holds onto me. In disillusionment, my dad's promises can't fail.

In my own failure, my friend accepts me. In depression, I will again see my dad's face.

If he's teaching us that he is our good. I met Emma and the kids at Glendale Shops one day recently for a coffee in Baby Chino.

Don't they rip you off for Baby Chinos? Oh, some of them are all right. Four bucks or something. What? Don't know why I'm telling you that. I met them at the shops and when Sam, we were walking towards each other and when Sam locked eyes on me, his eyes lit up and he started running towards me.

He almost got wiped out from people walking across his path and he ran into my arms. And that kind of determined, instinctive, public desire to run into my arms, I felt honoured as a dad.

[27 : 17] It is not selfish to seek your joy in the Lord. It is not. It honours him. It honours him.

You are my portion. So you keep me safe by keeping my delight in your people and you keep me delighting in your power over my lot.

You keep me delighting that you are my portion and the other thing David talks about is he's delighting in your presence. This year I'm stretching the P word, I'll be honest with you.

But I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. In the night also my heart instructs me. David knows that the Lord is present and speaking to him.

Not some mystical voice in the ear. You should probably go to a doctor. No, not that voice. That's a real struggle and God will set us free from that one day.

[28 : 33] But God's word, his voice is instructing. David knows God's words. You know God is keeping you for himself if his word is guiding you, even in the night.

I'm not quite sure why he mentions the night. I don't think it's about losing sleep because other psalms are like the Lord gives sleep. If you know God's protecting you, you can sleep.

And I know we struggle with sleep for other reasons, okay? Another caveat there. I wonder if the picture of the night is even, the night is a picture of darkness.

That's when you're most vulnerable. That's when danger comes. That's where you're lost. You don't know where you're going. But the Lord is instructing even then. His word is with you.

It's a wonderful thing to delight in. You're never alone as someone who puts your hope in Jesus because he's speaking to you. So you know you're being protected if his word is your delight.

[29 : 41] Even in the darkness, even in the confusion. And so I bless the Lord.

What on earth does that mean? I bless the Lord. Isn't God the one that gives us blessing? How can you give anything to God to bless him?

What is, I bless you God. What does that mean? I think it's the same as saying, the Bible uses this kind of language all the time.

I exalt the Lord. Exalt means I lift him up. No, you don't. Who are you to lift up the Lord? He's in the highest place.

You don't lift him up. So when you say, I exalt the Lord, you're saying, I recognize you are in the highest place. I think it's the same thing.

[30 : 46] I bless the Lord. You don't give anything to him. You don't bless him. He is blessed. He is the blessed one.

We might picture God as some cranky grandfather figure or some vending machine. Nothing's further from the truth.

He is the blessed one. He is full of joy. Full and forever joy is in God.

He is the blessed one. That's why he is the source of blessings. That's why he is your portion, the greatest blessing.

Because full and forever joy is in God. No wonder it's at his right hand that we find full and forever joy.

[31 : 41] You better hope that the blessed one wants to let you get close to him. So in all these delights, in your people, in your power, in your portion, that you are my portion, in your presence, by your word, even in the darkness and confusion, I know, God, you are keeping me for yourself.

You're keeping me from false promises. I'm on the path to life. I shall not be shaken. What a wonderful place David ends up.

I shall not be shaken. Because the Lord is protecting my delight in him. But how can David know?

How can he know that full and forever joy is coming? There's really good reason to think that this psalm was written when David was kicked out of God's people.

When people were actively trying to harm him. Seemingly forgotten by God. You might be thinking, listening to this, well, okay, this does sound wonderful, but my experience is often much less than full and it's certainly shorter than forever.

[33 : 09] Like, how can you know? How can you know this promise is coming? How can David know? How can David know? How can David know? How can David know? How can David know?

Well, David knew three things. And stay with me here. The first one's not particularly pretty. But he knew he would die one day.

The Lord made a promise to him. And there's more to this promise. But the first part of the promise that he said to David was, When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers.

David was under no illusion. He knew he was going to die one day. He knew he had often given in to the false promises.

He knew he deserved emptiness. He knew he deserved to be left in the pit. In the grave.

[34 : 14] He knew he was going to die. But he also knew something else. The rest of the promise was, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

David knew I'm not the Messiah, but a son of mine will conquer death to rule forever. So verse 10 was David's hope.

He said, For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, the pit, the place of the dead. You won't abandon my soul to Sheol, for let your Holy One see corruption, decay.

He can't be talking about himself. He knew he was going to die. He knew one of his descendants would sit on his throne. So the third thing David knew is my flesh.

My flesh. Not just my soul, but my flesh dwells secure. Somehow, at some point in time, I will be in your presence.

[35 : 30] Not just soul, but body. Body and soul, I'll be in your presence. He knew that. God had promised it. And so the Apostle Peter, in Acts chapter 2, he quotes Psalm 16 at length.

The very first sermon, after Jesus had been risen from the dead. Speaking about David, he says, Being a prophet, and knowing that God has sworn with an oath. Like, God never tells a lie, but he's sworn with an oath.

Like, you know, you can bank on this. He swore with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne. David foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, to Sheol, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus, God raised up, and of that, we all are witnesses. God showed David the path to life, putting his hope in the promised King and Saviour.

To bring him, body and soul, into God's presence. Into the presence of the Blessed One. Full and forever joy. So as God showed you the path to life, what we're celebrating at Christmas is that the promised son of David has come.

[37 : 01] How good is that? The path, the full and forever joy. He's come. What we celebrate in Jesus' death is that the Blessed One, the One full of joy, took our sorrow.

He went to the pit. What we celebrate at his resurrection is that full and forever joy in the presence of the Blessed One is definitely on its way.

So can I finish by urging that this Christmas, as we enter 2024, for the Lord invites you, he commands you, seek your full and forever joy and nothing less.

Seek your full and forever joy. It's going to feel like a kind of dying as you resist the false promises of this world.

And it is not self-centered. It's not self-centered to jump into the arms of God to get your peace and your joy.

[38 : 34] It's not self-centered. It honors him. It honors him as the only blessed one who has full and forever joy in himself, who is your portion forever.

Fight the fight of faith with full and forever joy only in Jesus. You'll find it nowhere else. In you I take refuge.

Say to you, Jesus, you are my Lord. I am no good apart from you. You have made known to me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy at your right hand our pleasures forevermore. Seek your full and forever joy as we come into the new year.

Will you pray with me? Let's pray. Lord, I just want to bless your name that in you is life.

[40 : 00] In you is peace. That you are the one who has a joy Father, Son and Holy Spirit forever. And I want to thank you that you're a kind of God who wants to share that.

Who wants to give it as pure gift. So I pray that your spirit and your word might pursue each one of us wherever we're at so that we might pursue you alone.

And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.