

Finding Joy in God

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[0:00] Tonight we start an eight week series, that's not really a series at all, we're looking at just different Psalms throughout the next eight weeks. A lot of that's because our congregation is extremely transient in July and August and so we'll have different preachers and things.

So we'll be picking different Psalms throughout the summer and looking at those. So tonight we look at the passage we just read, Psalm 16. This is a Psalm of David as you would have seen in the superscript there at the beginning and David is struggling when he writes this.

You can see that in the very first verse he says, preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. So probably David is fighting for his life in some way and we're not sure if that's physically or spiritually.

But most commentators think that David writes this Psalm after several of the things that have happened in David's life that have brought him to a place of despair. So David's own son, David's own son assaulted his sister in 1 Samuel 13, Tamar.

And then David's other son betrayed him and tried to take his throne and wedged war against him not long after that. And David had done some of the same types of things himself.

[1:24] David had taken another man's wife. David had murdered the man. So David had done the types of things that his sons later would come and do as well.

And here David is struggling with something. And there's a lot that David could be struggling with here. We don't know exactly. And so we have this little word at the beginning, a mixtam of David.

And all, we don't know exactly what this word means, but the best guess so far we think is that it might mean an inscription, like the type of inscription you would put on a gravestone.

So David is saying something like, in the midst of absolute struggle of all kinds, this is what I need inscribed on my heart.

If my heart was like a gravestone, if my heart was dead, I need to have something inscribed on it. And it's Psalm 16 that he says, I need to have inscribed, written, carved in stone, right into the fabric of my heart.

[2:32] And so that means that he's saying, whatever this Psalm is going to say, it is exactly what you need no matter what type of external circumstances you may be facing.

So it could be that like David or like David's sons, your own personal failures have brought you to a place in life that have broken you or that you can't get out of.

Or it could be that there's something that's happened to you. You've been sinned against in an extreme way. And that feels like it's breaking you. Or it could be that there's some curse that's been laid upon this world, like sin, sickness, and death that's happening to you or your beloved, your family member.

And you are pushed down now below the depths of the water line. And David's saying, whatever might be the external circumstance you're facing, there's a way to have your head above the water.

There's a buoyancy, a buoyancy of heart that you can have. And it's by inscribing the message of Psalm 16 right there into the depths of your soul. And so what he's talking about here is that no matter what's going on in your life, there's a way to have well-being.

[3:47] There's a way to have safety of soul. There's a way to stand in heart. And he's talking here about the possibility of joy.

How can you have joy in the midst of all those types of things? So let's think about that. That's what Psalm 16 teaches us. What is joy? And then how to seek it.

What is joy? And how can you seek it? And what is joy? All right, there's a contrast here from verses 2 to 4. In verse 2 he says, I say to the Lord, You are my Lord.

I have nothing good, no good apart from You. So on the one hand he says, I know that if I don't have God in my life, I don't have anything good ultimately. And then he says, to the saints in the land, all the people that are loving and following the Lord, they're doing well.

They're excellent ones. But chapter, oh sorry, verse 4. He says, the sorrows of those who run after other gods will always multiply. So you see the contrast? He's saying, I know that if I chase after the Lord, no matter what, I have good in my life because I have the Lord and He is good.

[4:55] And I know that I look out and I see all sorts of people chasing after all sorts of little gods. They're chasing after bails, as the text put it, could be the God of grain, the God of any type of religion, could be the God of sexual fulfillment and money and power, anything.

He says, any God that you may chase after other than the true God, you will multiply your sorrow. And you see what he's saying there? You got to read between the lines just a little bit. He's struggling, but he's saying, I see people all around me that are chasing after all sorts of little gods and their life is going so well.

It looks like they're not struggling. It looks like they don't have sorrows in their life. And he's saying, but I know Lord. You see, he's preaching to himself and saying, I know that even though my external circumstances are terrible, that if I chase after the true God, I will ultimately have the good.

And if I chase, but if I chase after the bails, even though that may temporarily make my life look great, that's only going to multiply sorrows. You see, he's contrasting those two things there.

He's saying, one of those will bring you joy and one of those ultimately wants. He's saying, in other words, you see that joy is not related to your circumstances, that you can have joy.

[6:12] You can have a peace, a true happiness in the depths of your souls that goes beyond external circumstances. That's the point of the contrast. Now if you ask, what is that joy exactly, you can find out by coming back to verse two again and noting that the King James version translates this very differently than the ESV does.

So the old King James says in verse two, instead of, I have no good apart from you, Lord. It says, my good extended not to thee.

Now the reason that that's a very different translation is because the text is actually ambiguous. It could go either way. You could translate it either way. You could say, my good extended not to thee, or I have no good apart from you.

And so different translations do it differently. Now the beauty of it is we don't really have to choose. We can just say they're both true. On the one hand, David says, I've got no good apart from you.

I know that if I chase after little gods in my life, it may look like that might improve my circumstances, but it won't bring me joy. Why? Because my good extended not to thee.

[7:25] What does that mean? You see what the King James is getting at? What David's saying? He's saying that no matter how well I do in this life, no matter how much mercy I show, no matter how much love I show to other people, I add no good to God's being in himself.

He's getting very theological here. He's saying my good extended not to thee. No matter how much I do, no matter how many good decisions I make, no matter if I follow the Lord every day of my life, my good doesn't add anything to God's good.

Now why would he be saying that in this circumstance? Why would he be saying that I can add nothing to the being of the living God? And the reason he's saying that I think is because he's trying to highlight the definition of joy.

What is joy? And the answer is God is joy. You see he's saying I know I can't by my goodness, by my happiness, by my circumstances, by my choices add anything to the being of God.

And that's because God is completely satisfied by God. God has the fullness of joy. God is the fullness of joy.

[8:49] He is completely happy in himself. Your good extended not into his being. He is the truly satisfied one.

And David realizes that he, you see, what's joy for us? In other words, joy for us is a creaturely image of the type of satisfaction that God has in himself.

What is joy? Joy is simply when you have what God has in his own heart. It's having a heart like God. It's thinking God's thoughts. It's having God's emotional life after him, according to him.

That's what joy is in the Bible. Joy is having a heart like God has. Joy is being satisfied in God because God is satisfied totally in God.

And so that means very simply that David is saying, no matter what's going on in your life, if you want to have joy, you've got to get God.

[9:53] If you want to have joy, chase after God, not after stuff, not after the things of this world. And so that's why he culminates this whole psalm in verses 9 to 11.

So if you jump down to verse 9 to 11, you can see this. He says, therefore my heart is glad, verse 11, ultimately, you make known to me the path of life in your presence, Lord, there is fullness of joy.

In the presence of the living God, there is fullness of joy. And if you back up just a bit in verses 5 and 6, he reflects on that. And he says in verse 5 and 6, the Lord is my portion and my cup.

And you see, he's saying there, what is the portion? The Lord is my portion. He's talking about land. He's reaching back all the way to the book of Joshua and talking about when the land, the portion, was allotted to every one of the tribes of Israel.

And he's saying, I don't need land. I don't need stuff. The Lord is more important to me than my stuff is, than my land, my portion.

[10:52] The Lord is my inheritance. He's thinking like a Levite, because remember the Levites, they weren't given land. Instead, they were given the Lord. The portion of the Levites is just the Lord.

And so the Levites live all over the land. And he's thinking like a Levite saying, that's it, that if I truly want to have joy, I got to realize that my stuff, my circumstances, my wealth, my economic prosperity is not ever going to do it for me.

And then what does he say? The Lord is not only my portion, my inheritance, my land. The Lord is my land, my stuff. He says, the Lord is my cup. And he's talking there about the contents of a cup where almost every time throughout the Old Testament, when you see the cup being talked about, it's the cup of judgment.

The cup of judgment. But here he says, no, the Lord is my cup, meaning the Lord has become to me like sweet wine. That no matter what's going on in my life, when I chase after the Lord, when I seek the Lord, it's like drinking the sweet wine to me.

No longer judgment but sweet wine. All right, here's the point. That means in all this, very simply, David is saying that the goal of your life today is to be with God and to find your happiness rooted entirely in your relationship with Him.

[12:16] You were made for God and you can't have joy apart from a relationship with Him. And that means that if your son betrays you and tries to start a new kingdom, your joy is in the Lord.

And if you sin wildly and murder a man whose wife you stole, you can still find joy by coming to the Lord in repentance.

You can have joy no matter what has happened in your life, no matter what is happening in your life. You can find perhaps even in those times more and more and more joy because you realize you need God more and more and more as your circumstances get harder.

Now secondly, that leaves us to ask how do you seek that joy? How do you chase after it? All right, if you look down at verse 11, he tells us he says in verse 11, you owe God make known to me the path of life.

Now the scholars, the biblical scholars, they pick up on a number of connections between Psalm 16 and other parts of the Bible. So it's referenced explicitly not too often but implicitly all over the place.

[13:40] And one of those connections is surprising. It's hard to see, but it's verse 11 and all the way over in Ephesians 1 in the New Testament. And so here David says, Lord, you God make known to me the path of life.

And then in Ephesians 1 it says God has made known the mystery of life. So he says you owe God in the Old Testament make known to me the path of life and you owe God in the New Testament have made known Paul says the mystery of life.

And the mystery there is that secret thing hidden for all ages which is the true answer, the true possibility of joy. And he says you owe God have made known the mystery of life.

And you know what Paul's going to say there, what is the mystery of life? If you've been in the church for any time, well, we don't have to go even to the rest of Ephesians 1 to find out. You stay right here, Psalm 16 verse 10.

And verse 10 it says this, David says you owe God will not abandon my soul to shield, to death. You will not let your holy ones see corruption.

[14:44] And so you see verse 11 says you've made known the path of life of God. Ephesians 1 says you God make known the mystery of life, the true path of joy. And then he says and you owe God, David says will not let my body see corruption.

You'll not let me see sheol. And if you think about that for just a second, you've got to say something like this. David's dead. David's body is in the ground.

David's bones can be found somewhere in the land of Israel. He's a dead man. And that's why there's an incredibly important connection. You come to the New Testament and then Acts chapter 2 verse 31, Paul says, Peter, I should say, says this, brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he died and was buried and his tomb is still with us today.

Being therefore, you see what Peter's doing, he's saying, look, I read Psalm 16 and I've concluded something that there's only one possible answer to this. If David said, Lord, you're not going to let my body see corruption, but David, we know where David's tomb is.

Peter says, then he says this, David therefore was a prophet. And knowing that God had sworn by an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, that his flesh would never see corruption.

[16:13] And that means that Psalm 16 is talking about Jesus Christ. What is the path of life? What Ephesians 1 says, well, the mystery of life has been revealed. Psalm 16:10 says there is one whose body will not see corruption and it wasn't David.

And Peter tells us, he says, the answer is that this is about the resurrection. Psalm 16. In Acts 15, Paul picks up on it and he says, here's the gospel.

Jesus Christ was buried. He was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures. And that last little line is so important. He's saying it's the scriptures that told us that Jesus would die, but his body would not see corruption.

What's scriptures? He's talking about the Old Testament. He's talking about Psalm 16. He's saying the scriptures of old told us that his body would never see corruption. Remember what Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

You can translate it, I am the path. It's the same word, the path, the truth, and the life. He is the path. Verse 11, Lord, you make known the path of life.

[17:23] And the path of life is verse 10, the one whose body would never see corruption. And his never did. He was raised from the dead and he is the path of life.

And that means a very simple second message. You know, if the first message of this text is you can't have joy in your life by chasing little gods, only by seeking the Lord. The second simple message is the fullness of joy comes through seeking, through knowing, through finding Jesus Christ, through being with God by way of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

That's the message of the passage. And so that means that ultimately the passage is saying, in your presence there is fullness of joy, when you get to be with Jesus, that is the fullness of joy.

That is the moment you were made for. That is true joy. Now verse 11 is ultimately saying that the greatest moment of joy you will ever have is getting to be with God in Jesus Christ one day.

That's true joy. And you might say as we start to draw things to a close, and it's so early tonight by the way, you might say, what about today?

[18:45] You know, this passage is ultimately saying, yeah, I can have joy, but that joy, the fullness of that joy is when I will see the one who did not see corruption.

And that is in my future. That's ultimate joy. That's the fullness of joy. That's yet to come. And you say, but what about my penultimate joy? You know, I want, I desire eye long for joy today in the midst of these types of circumstances that we've been talking about.

And David says, okay, verse nine, therefore, what does he say? He says, therefore today my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices.

My flesh is secure because he did not let his holy one see corruption. And you see what David's doing? He's saying you can actually find joy in the penultimate and today knowing the fullness of that joy will not be realized ultimately until you see the living Christ, but by simply doing a few things.

One of them is doing a bit of theology. He's saying, actually, you've got to, you've got to consider, you've got to use your mind. You've got to say, you've got to say the Lord did not let Jesus Christ see corruption.

[20:04] Mind heart, you gotta, he's saying you got to preach to yourself. And you've got to say, look, you could, you can have joy today because the resurrection has already happened. You're secure.

You see, in other words, you could put it like this, let's flip it and let's, let's flip it and, and speak about the negative side. What takes away?

What takes away the possibility of joy in your life today? I think there are a few things, there are probably more, a few things I think of. One of them is anxiety. Anxiety will, will rip your joy away.

And anxiety is when you not merely stress, not merely worry about your workload. Anxiety is when you imagine hypothetical scenarios out in front of you that do not exist, that picture in your mind, the worst possible scenarios of loss.

That's anxiety. When you really struggle with anxiety, you cannot get away from thinking about circumstances of loss all the time that do not exist.

[21:04] So you're worried about losing this relationship, this reputation you've built, your successes, your financial security, whatever it may be. And when you play that game, anxiety will rip away your joy.

Another thing that rips away your joy is guilt. When you have things in your life that you're wrestling with, that will rip away your joy.

You struggle in your life with shame. That will take your joy away. If you say, look, I know the Lord has forgiven me, but I'm not sure I've been willing to forgive myself. That will take your joy away.

That'll snatch your joy. You see, what do you do? You see what he's doing here? He's doing a bit of theology. He's considering. He's saying, if the resurrection is real, and if I have Jesus Christ, then what I can say is no matter what I might lose in this life, I have something I can't lose.

That's what he's doing. He's saying, you know, what gives me penultimate joy in today is knowing that if I seek Jesus, I have what cannot be lost forever.

[22:14] And one day I'll truly get it. If my son raises up a kingdom against me, I still have the resurrection of Jesus Christ. You know, if my son does that, what his son did, I still have the resurrection.

If I, oh David, you're the man, remember Nathan's words? You're the man. You did it. You murdered. You took from another in the most heinous of ways.

And he's saying, even in that, if I'm willing to bow the knee before the cross and resurrection, the man himself, Jesus Christ, I can in the penultimate say, I have what cannot be lost even if I try to give it away.

That's the beauty of the gospel. You see, it's the gospel that has the possibility of giving you joy. Now last thing, what do you do? That means you do some theology. Secondly, it means you do what we're told in 1 Peter 5, 5 to 7, which is exactly what he's doing here.

You cast your cares upon him. You cast, it's the same word for anxiety. You cast your marim not, oh, your anxiety is upon him because he cares for you. You lift up your fears to the Lord and you consider, if I have Jesus Christ, I've got something that will never leave me.

[23:32] I've got true safety of heart. I can be buoyant. You know, remember here he says, last thing, he says, he says, Lord, he's talking about Jesus.

He's talking about him fully, but he's talking about Jesus. He says, Jesus, you are my portion. You're my inheritance. I don't need land. We all like to own land, but ultimately I don't need land.

I have Jesus. If I lose my land, it's okay. And he says, Lord, you're my cup. And every other time we see cup, most of the time it's about drinking the cup of God's judgment.

But when you can have Jesus, you can say, no, I have a cup of sweet wine, not the cup of judgment. Lord, I'm safe from corruption. My flesh ultimately will do all secure because he's prophesying.

He knows that one day he will have Jesus. And that means that finding joy in God, last thing, finding joy in God, finding joy in God is the highest aim of your life.

[24:32] This life is not about what you do, but who you become in Christ. The highest joy of your life, the highest purpose is to seek joy in God through Jesus Christ.

That's what you're made for. Let me end with two quotes. Love both of these quotes. One from Jonathan Edwards. He says this.

He wrote and stitched into his jacket as he often did. Edwards, the great American theologian of the 18th century, he said, resolved to endeavor, to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can.

With all the power, might, vigor, and vehemence, yes, even violence that I am capable of, or can bring myself to exert in any way that can be thought of. Now you see what he's saying?

He's saying, I will pursue happiness through the other world, the world of Christ, the world behind the curtain, the world that is to come, even with violence.

[25:37] He's talking about seeking it with an audacity, with a tenacious spirit. He says, I know what I'm made for. I'm made to seek true happiness, true joy. That's what I'm here for. Now one more, last one.

This is not from Jonathan, but Jack. Jack is in C.S. Lewis. C.S. Lewis put it like this into a letter to Sheldon Van Auken. He says this.

It is a Christian duty, as you know, for every one of us to be as happy as he can be. And he was talking there about happiness that you will only find in seeking Jesus Christ.

Let's pray. Lord, we give thanks that you've given us a route to joy, pleasure forevermore, true satisfaction, no matter what, even if our relationships fail us.

No matter what we've done, what we do, no matter what circumstances we might face, you gift joy in Christ.

[26:45] And so we asked tonight that you would teach us that, show us that. We seek it. We want it. Give it to us, O Lord, by the Spirit. Give us joy, peace, satisfaction.

And we pray these things now. In Christ's name, amen. Amen.