

If you have a copy of the Scriptures I want to invite you to turn, find Psalm 16. Today we'll be taking a look at that Psalm in our summer sermon series on the Psalms. In the month of August we're looking at Psalms that specifically---all Scripture directs us to Jesus Christ as our only hope---but specifically the Psalms that are Messianic in nature. They point us to Christ or they're referenced by other Scriptures, explicitly pointing us to the truth that Jesus Christ is Almighty God, who walked in the flesh on the earth that he created in order to save the creatures---us---who had rebelled against him. So we'll look at Psalm 16 today.

It was not lost on me that Kathleen had a Ravens emblem on her shirt or blouse (I don't know what you call a ladies' shirt). I saw the Ravens insignia. The Ravens had their first preseason game on Thursday this past week, the Orioles are in a serious hunt for the wild card in the American League East. That's a tough, tough league. The Redskins played, I think, this week as well...I'm not sure. And the Steelers are trying to put together a team. In the Flora family living room, the relative quiet of our home can at any given moment be shattered by a loud outburst from the head of the Flora family, immediately followed by what can best be described as a primitive celebratory dance in front of the TV screen. Ray Rice, breaking tackles for long-distance gains and yardage, Chris Davis, driving a double deep for RBI's 107 and 108 to break a tie and eventually go on to win the game or knocking a solo homerun measured out at 468 feet, or any number of other combinations that could cause the primitive celebration to occur. Of course, there's also the possibility with that elation, despondency. The deep dejection that is experienced throughout the sporting world. You may wonder aloud at the spectacle that takes place. My kids certainly do, and are embarrassed if they have friends over. Of course, now Kevin has learned the primitive dance, as well, so it's good. It's just passing from generation to generation.

But if you consider the way in which we were designed by our Creator, it actually makes some sense. We were made for worship. Our systems were designed to connect passionately to something or someone, and to connect in such a way that we would give ourselves in devotion. Our hearts are equipped with the capacity for loyal devotion that finds an outlet in passionate expression. There is within each of us the potential for both elation at the idea of grace freely given and extreme sadness at the reality of sin and its effects in our lives and the lives of people that we will love. It's when our capacity for worship isn't centered first and foremost on God in Christ that things go awry. Our affections were given to us by God to be used to glorify God. We were made for his glory. Every aspect of who we are finds its fulfillment in him. That's why we gather in a setting like this, and Christians gather in China and in Mexico and in Germany and all around the planet, to give God the adoration, devotion, and praise that he is more than worthy of receiving.

Perhaps for you it isn't the allure of sports that draws out your passion. You're a better judge than me to know what claims your attention first thing in the morning. Is it social media? What draws you to articles and discussion forums and magazine subscriptions? Is it the tech world, is it the business forum, your hobbies, your family, your spouse, your career, your reputation? There's nothing wrong with being devoted to the things that God has placed in our lives, but they are to be pursued for his glory. That's what the psalmist points us to today.

Before we get into the text, let me make a note that I made to myself this week. We have only so many days on this earth. While we're here, our quest, whether or not we embrace it, is to figure out how to respond to the One who created us, the One who is provided for our complete salvation from sin---the power, the presence, and the penalty of sin---and the One who desires intimate fellowship with us as dearly loved children. Our quest as humans is to figure that out.

Psalm 16 aids us today in that quest. Today is the day of salvation. Today, as we were reminded last week, if you hear his voice, if you hear his voice pleading with you, calling you, do not harden your heart to his activity

within. Psalm 16 is a reminder that this preacher's weak soul has to me that a deep trust and an enduring confidence in the Lord, in both life and death is not only possible, but it's provided for us in Christ.

So let me read from 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 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; my flesh also dwells secure.

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, 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.

This is God's word for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

We see first the basic and bold declaration of fidelity to God, faith in God, a loyalty to God. You may be familiar with the Latin phrase, *semper fidelis*. It's been shortened by Marine Corps---Semper Fi. Always faithful, always loyal. The psalmist is crying out, I am always faithful to you, O God. You are my only hope. You are my God, and I want no other. Preserve me, O God, for you are my refuge. I say to the Lord, You are my Lord, I have no good apart from you. We see three things in the first 4 verses: The need for God's protection and power is evidenced; the need for God's presence is felt deeply; and the need for God's people.

The need for God's protection and power. The psalmist recognizes that the solution for the emptiness of his soul, that pang that comes from within each of us, we feel it, we feel it deeply. We know that we were made for some higher purpose, we're made for some higher calling, we're made to connect to the One who made us. The psalmist recognizes that the solution for the emptiness of the soul is provided by God, found only in God. Preserve me, O God, in you I take refuge. He begins the Psalm with perpetual reminder that there is hope found in no one else. We need that reminder. Can you imagine if we spoke to one another whenever we met one another---God's preserving you this week. How has he preserved you? How you found your refuge in God this week? How has Christ become more dear to your soul this week? Can you picture a group of followers of Christ interacting on that level? I can. I know you can. The psalmist begins with that. It's a simple utterance, but it is profound in its meaning for him.

He also sees the need for God's presence. There's a real recognition on his part that any good that has come his way is a result of the good, gift-giving nature of the covenant-keeping God. He cries out to the LORD, Yahweh, the covenant-completing God. He says there is no good that I can ever have, apart from you. I'm recognizing that fuller and fuller, day by day, even more so as I grow, the psalmist says, and I cannot find good apart from you.

He also recognizes the need for God's people. He recognizes the frailty of his ability to consistently grasp the goodness of God. Fidelity to God is not a solo endeavor. It wasn't designed to be. We're weak and frail, and because of the fall, because of our sin, we need community, we need the covenant people that Randy spoke of earlier. We need to be disciplined, we need to be lovingly disciplined. We need to be encouraged, we need to be admonished, we need to be instructed, we need to be taught, we need to be served, and we need to serve one another. The psalmist is reminded of that.

He says there is kind of a black-and-white choice here. There is no gray for this psalmist. There is no middle ground. It's reminiscent of Paul's words to the Romans, when he calls us that our love must be pure, that our love must be sincere. He calls us to hate that which evil, cling to that which is good. The psalmist seems to realize this when choosing those in his life who will hold influence over his thoughts and his practices. He delights, he says, in the holy ones, the saints who are in the land, the *Hasidim*---those are the holy ones. In the Old Testament that word is normally used for the angelic beings, the ones who serve in the throne room of God. But he says, these are the holy ones, these are the saints in the land, these are the ones that God has called to himself, these are God's people. And in God's people I'll find my delight. I delight in them, and the fellowship is sweet with them. They told me to account for my fidelity to the Lord. I will fellowship with them. There's a stalwart fidelity to God and to his people, he says.

However, those who willfully reject God, as demonstrated by their running after false gods and practicing things forbidden by God---the drink offerings of blood---the psalmist says, I refuse to participate in their practices, nor to take even their wicked life-style into my system.

It's very clear-cut. Note, I just want to make one thing clear. This posture, this black and white, very clearcut posture, should never be confused for a prohibition against evangelism, by the way. We are called to proclaim the good news to the nations, beginning with our neighbors, our family, and going to the uttermost parts of the world. The people who remain faithful to God are the people who surround themselves with people who are equally, or hopefully, more greatly, committed to remain faithful to God. We are to be in the world, but not of the world. That's what the psalmist is saying. He's surrounded by people who hate God, he's surrounded by nations who practice things that God prohibits, and prohibits with the death penalty. The psalmist says, I won't delight myself in the fellowship with them, but I will with God's people.

And he recognizes then, the psalmist says, I will gladly and willingly devote my soul, my life, my all, to this One who has made me and this One who has provided for me in ways that I most need provision. He gives the reason for that in verses 5 and 6. He says, the Lord is my chosen portion. The Lord is my cup. You hold my lot. You are my sole satisfaction. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. This is language that the Hebrews would understand very quickly. Land is a precious commodity. And the psalmist is pointing out, when I observed what I've been given by grace, that I could not earn, that I do not deserve, when I observe where my lines have fallen, the inheritance that's been given, I celebrate with all. How is it possible this has come to me? It's fallen for me in pleasant places. I just showed up one day and it was said, this lush field is yours. These fruit tree are all yours. See how far the land stretches? That's all yours. You see this beautiful garden here with the brooks babbling. That's yours. Imagine greater and wonderful things. And the psalmist says, I can't believe it. God's given this to me, and I don't deserve this. Because it's been given to me, I will cling to him. I'm faithful to you, God. You are gracious, God.

The language here, the psalmist is describing the Lord as that which is necessary to live, not the gifts that the Lord gives. This is a distinction that I don't know if I make as often as I should. The psalmist is saying that you, O Lord, are my portion and my cup. The chosen portion refers to that which satisfies the hunger; and the cup, of course, is that which would assuage his thirst. It satisfies his thirst. This isn't merely a reference to the fact his God has supplied his physical needs. He is saying that the Lord---who God is and what God does---literally is his food and is his drink, and his lot is secure. He's been fully satisfied in God.

He says, I've been satisfied in God. I have this rejoicing, resting, in God. My joy is in God. In verse 7 and 8 he says, I bless the Lord. I bless the Lord. When I get a chance, I proclaim him. I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. And this is to be understood in Hebrew poetry, counsel during the day, and also he says, instruction in the night, my heart instructs me. So during the day and at the night watch, the Lord has reminded me of his goodness. I bless God, I worship God, I've set the Lord always before me: day, noon, night, evening, night

watch, just before dawn. He is at my right hand, giving me himself. Therefore I will not be shaken. I'm secure in him. The psalmist is celebrating this.

Knowledge and awareness of God through his Word is what sustains the psalmist. The promises of God have been delivered to him, and he sees that. The word translated 'heart' here is kind of a tricky word. It could be translated 'kidney' or the 'gut' or the abdominal region.' Think about that for a moment. Think about the psalmist saying that during the day the counsel of the Lord, the instruction that God brings my way, the truth of who he is---it meets me where I need to be met. But at the night---also in the night---I have the peace inward, even in those night watches. Have you ever experienced that? Often we lay our heads in the pillow, the distraction of the day is silenced, and it makes room for all the thoughts that weigh heavy on our heart. It's in those times, the psalmist, I believe, is saying, that the counsel of the Lord strengthens his faith. When the queasy stomach starts, when the anxious heart palpitations begin, the psalmist is saying, God reminds me of his goodness, and I bless the Lord.

My joy is in God. The reason, it seems, for deep and lasting joy is that the psalmist has perspective that has been lifted from the temporary, the here and now, the right this minute, to the eternal. That's what's going on in verses 9 to 11. He says the reason for my joy is this: Therefore, therefore my heart is glad, I'm rejoicing in the midst---of whatever crisis he is writing from---and I can assure you that if he was walking this planet of trial and tribulation and toil, he was writing from a place of crisis. Whether he had just come through a crisis, whether he was experiencing one at that moment, or whether he did not know what was around the corner---in this world you will have trouble. And he says, I've got joy. My heart is glad. My whole being rejoices. I've had my perspective broadened. I can see eternity, and I am secure there, as well. My flesh dwells secure. My whole being rejoices. For why? You will not abandon my soul to Sheol, to the place of death, to the place of separation. You'll not let your holy one see corruption. And I rejoice. You make known to me the path of life, and in your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand, in your throne room, are pleasures unending. The purest form of pleasure.

We just catch glimpses of it when we stand and do the primitive dance in front of the TV screen. When we hold a little baby in our arms, and we smell that little baby head. Grandparents know what I'm talking about, because you've had to take your babies, your grandbabies, to the airport and wave goodbye. Those good things that God gives to us, they are all pictures, they're all a foretaste, of that greatest, ultimate, purest, pleasure, Jesus Christ.

The psalmist says, I'm not disappointed by God in life, and I will not be disappointed by God in death. Now that's security. It's not just about being disappointed, it's about having true and lasting joy---a heart-enthraling, whole being rejoicing, secure joy. And it's all based on what the creator has done to provide. You will not abandon my soul to Sheol. The grave doesn't have the last word on my existence, my creator has the final say. He is the one who has the authority over life and death. And he's the one who will protect me through the grave. You are the path of life. You're the way to live. You show me the ultimate joy for my soul. The running after puny imitations is not only not worth my time and effort---which is really a man-centered way of doing things, anyway---but it is cosmic treason. If God is God, he is fully deserving of our loyal, devoted, and glad-hearted worship and service.

So here's where the message turns. The psalmist is calling us---you, me, ordinary folk---to unwavering devotion to the Lord, the covenant-making God with regard to our security, verse 1; our daily needs, verse 2; our choice of friends, verse 3; our worship practice, verse 4; indeed, our everything, verse 5 and 6; for finding our reasons for that devotion and what God alone is able to provide, the counsel with instruction that provides peace in the midst of uncertainties of life, verses 7 and 8; the certain hope of a resurrection to follow this life, verses 9 and 10; and a heavenly dwelling place that is beyond the greatest imaginable joys with no in

sight, verse 11. The psalmist is calling us to that kind of unwavering devotion. He says, I will not waver in my fidelity to you.

Sounds doable, right? Like we say in the house, easy peasy, lemon squeezy. It's my responsibility, but also my privilege---because I know I can offer you Christ---to tell you it's impossible for us to have that kind of unwavering devotion in and of our own strength. We can't do it. Don't leave the premises today, don't leave the campus today, thinking that you've been called to shoulder a heavy burden of faithfulness to God by yourself. Because what God, I believe, wants to call me and you and all of us to, is he wants to show you that Christ has accomplished everything that was necessary. Everything that was necessary for faithfulness to God. And he wants to give you his record of righteousness. It's impossible for us in our own strength to accomplish this, because our hearts are divided and corrupted. In order to accomplish this, we must be perfectly righteous. The Scriptures speak truthfully when it says that there is none righteous, no not one, in the past, present, future. If you breathe air, you're not righteous. Our flaw is that we're sinful people. We've sinned, we fall short of the glory of God. This is very, very bad news, because sinners are punished with eternal punishment.

So how can we have peace, then? How can we have the counsel that meets us in the midst of crisis, that gives us inner peace? How can we have the resolve to follow and to persevere, though others around us don't follow God? How can we be assured that there is a purpose to live this life according to the path that God sets forth, and have certainty that these bodies won't ultimately be grave-bound, but that we will dwell in a place of the purest pleasure forevermore---How can we? By placing our trust in the one who was and is completely righteous and completely devoted to God with all of heart, all of his mind, all of his soul, and all of his strength. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, he answered with this commandment: to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength; and the second is like it: to love your neighbor as you love yourself. And Jesus fulfilled that command, and every command ever given by the holy God, so that his righteousness could be yours. His righteousness could be your record, and the punishment that you deserve---he would deliver a shedding of blood, so that you can have forgiveness of sin by placing our trust in the one who is called Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, the one to whom the Psalm ultimately points us to.

Last week you saw how Pastor Randy showed us from Psalm 2 the arc of human history and all that that Psalm points us to, our rebellion in the garden, the provision for us in Christ, and the way that the New Testament referred to that Psalm directly and explicitly, calling our attention to the fact that Christ is God Almighty in the flesh, who rose from the grave. We see the same thing in Psalm 16. In Acts chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given to the church, we see Peter, who not several months prior was scared to death of a little girl by a fire on the night that Christ was crucified [brought to trial]. We see Peter boldly proclaiming. In Acts 2, he says among many other things, as he references Psalm 16: This one was spoken of through David, but we know that David both died and was buried, his tomb is still with us today. But being a prophet, knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on the throne, verse 31, Acts 2, "He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we are all witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves might have in this seeing and hearing." He proclaimed Christ as the sole fulfillment.

And then Paul the apostle in Acts 13 quotes from Psalm 16 again. He brings Psalm 16 right before their view. You've heard it said in another Psalm, "You will not let your Holy One see corruption." Verse 35, Acts 13. "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption. Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man, Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him, Jesus Christ,

everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.” We cannot earn the righteousness that God requires. We're not capable of it, but Christ has done all. That's the good news of the gospel. Salvation comes to all, every type of person, when they see Jesus as the source of life, the one who alone is capable of satisfying their every longing, the one to whom God has made our wisdom and our righteousness and our sanctification, and our redemption, according to 1 Corinthians 1. So that if there is any boasting to be done, Paul says, let that boasting be in the Lord, not what we can do. Who wants to boast in 'puny'? Who wants to boast in 'pathetic'? We want to boast in the persevering power of Almighty God who saves sinners.

So where do you place your trust for salvation? I want to go back through the Psalm really quickly here and see Jesus. Is your faith in Jesus Christ? Not in Christ's church, not in Christ's people, not in your ability to be or look like Christ's people, but in Jesus Christ alone? The psalmist says, preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. We know that Jesus Christ has absorbed the wrath of God that was justly to be poured out on sinners like me and sinners like you. He is our refuge.

In verse 2 the psalmist says, I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord, I have no good apart from you.' Jesus is the good shepherd. He provides for your every and deepest need.

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. Jesus established the church, his bride, so that we might learn more of him, be equipped to tell others of his love. It's the pillar of truth, it's that place of love and discipline where God's people gather, where the fellowship equips us to be in the world, and not of the world.

Verse 5, the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup, you hold my lot. Jesus is the one who promises that all who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be satisfied. He's the righteousness that is pleasing to God, and he says I am your righteousness. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper---take and eat of my body and drink of this cup---this is my blood shed in the new covenant for your sins. What Jesus is saying is, if you the hunger and thirst for righteousness, I am the one who satisfies you.

The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. We know that Jesus is the all-sufficient inheritance. He is the pearl of great price. He is more than worthy of you laying down what the world offers you in order to follow him all the days of your life. This life is brief. Christ calls you to himself.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night, also, my heart instructs me. Jesus is the peace in the midst of the storm. He's the truth of God brings that brings on eternal perspective to the temporary trials of the world. That's what Christ does. In this world you will have trouble, he said, but be encouraged, take heart---I have overcome the world. Your problem is a sin problem. I conquered sin on the cross.

I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I cannot be shaken. Jesus, seated at the right hand of God the Father where he has been given all authority, and with that authority he promises to never leave, never to forsake his own. From that seat of power, he is with you.

Therefore, he says, my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, nor let your holy one see corruption. Jesus stood in the Temple and he said destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it back up again. And John the apostle records for us that he wasn't referring to the Temple in Jerusalem, but to his body. In another place, in John 10, Jesus says, no one takes my life from me. These things are occurring, according to the time and the sovereign plan of Almighty God. No one takes my life from me. I have the authority to lay it down, and the authority to take it back up again. This authority was given to me by God the Father. Jesus says I have the authority over the grave, and on the third day the stone was rolled away and a victorious Christ with the scars that our sins deserved, walked free from

the grave. He says, why are you wasting your time---this is a note to myself, probably, but you can hear it, too---why are you wasting your time worrying about fearing man, then. Remember Jesus's words from Matthew 10: Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul, but rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Our focus can be on devoting ourselves to the one who has conquered death on our behalf.

Verse 11. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fulness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. The invitation that he makes to you through him is to come to him, is to trust him, is to see him as the all-sufficient Savior. At his right hand are pleasures, the purest pleasures forevermore. He is the source of joy, he is the reason for joy.

Think about this quote from John Piper for a moment. "The people who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there. The people who would be happy in heaven if Christ were not there, will not be there." You see the preeminence of Christ in all things? This is just another one-in-seven silver reminder for all of us, myself included. We get things criss-crossed, we lose priority, and we lose the truth that Christ must have preeminence. This is a call to that. Can you see it's all about Christ? Are you at peace with God today? We're in a moment going to sing, "It Is Well with My Soul." I want to sing that with an undivided heart. I want to worship God and sing, "My sin---oh, the bliss of this glorious thought---my sin, not in part, but the whole is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul." And when the 4th verse peals forth I want to sing that with an undivided heart. "Lord, haste the day...haste the day when the faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back like a scroll, the trump shall resound, the Lord shall descend"---to claim his bride---Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, oh my soul

I close with a little illustration. We recently had to have the fuel pump replaced on my car, and then we had to have that fuel pump replaced with one that wasn't defective. So after two tow truck tours and a new fuel pump, I drove away in the little red car that we use, and I noticed that the fuel gauge was past "F"-like a full tank of gas, but I know it wasn't. Just something got messed up. Because it wasn't a full tank when he took it in there, and I guarantee you they did not fill it up before we left. So here I am, driving around, I was going to Mexico for a week, we had various other things, errands to run, and trips back and forth to the church. And the thought hit me yesterday, I don't know much fuel is in this tank. I have no clue if I'm driving on vapors or if I've got six gallons in there just sloshing around in the tank. And boy did that hit me. I better pull into a gas pump and fill it up. It took about eight gallons. I think the tank's about ten gallons, so we were close, but whatever.

That little example caused me to stand there while I was pumping gas and think to myself, how many of us think, I've got a full tank. I've got plenty of days, plenty of time. I've got my whole life ahead of me to decide for Jesus Christ. And I don't want that to be your or my experience. I want this to be the day of salvation for all of us. A renewal for you, believer. A renewal for you, beloved. To say again to Christ, anew: Lord, those things that draw me from you, shut them down in my heart. Cause my focus to be on you and on you alone for sole satisfaction. And for those who may be here who have not ever yielded their life to Christ, my appeal to you is the one Christ makes through me. Christ is saying, come to me for salvation, come to me for forgiveness, come to me for life. Jesus Christ is all.

Let's pray. Father, help us, please, by your Spirit at work to draw us close. I pray for all of us. Lord, help us to know who you are in ways that we have not before this point known you, and to leave here with a renewed sense that Jesus Christ is preeminent. Lord, help us to delight in you, to rejoice in you, to know those words that were precious to Paul---that you loved us and you gave yourself for us. Lord, help us to respond now, to respond with hearts that are settled, at peace, and living in the victory that you provided through the resurrection from the grave. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.