**Forever in Christ**

Psalm 16

In 1997 **British yachtsman** Tony Bullimore entered a race to sail around the world. In the Southern Ocean, off of Antarctica, he was swept up in a massive storm, facing fifty foot waves. His 60 foot sailboat could not stand those conditions. The mast snapped and the boat capsized. For the next four horrifying days Tony found himself in an ice cold washing machine in his upside down boat, praying that rescue would come.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/07/obituaries/tony-bullimore-saved-in-dramatic-ocean-rescue-dies-at-79.html>



Kept alive by a special immersion suit that prevented hypothermia, Tony held on just long enough for race officials to follow his homing beacon and get help to him. The help came in the form of the Australian Navy.

**Imagine 56 year old Tony**, half in and half out of water on a shelf in his upside down boat, praying for help, hoping for rescue. Then imagine him hearing a knock on the hull of the boat, and the cries of Australians to see if he could hear them. Think of the feeling of being carried out of his damaged boat and up into the safety of the waiting navy ship!

***From life-threatening danger to safety***; from isolation to warm human contact; from the darkness of despair to the elation of new life, a new beginning. Coming out of that experience Tony said was like being born again!

***What a picture of our salvation in Christ!*** Truly we live in **stormy seas** - in very real danger, sometimes feeling a terrible isolation and darkness pressing in on us. King David felt this kind of struggle and expressed it beautifully in Psalm 16.

Let’s use this Psalm as **a guide to our prayers and worship today**.

Peter quoted this Psalm in his sermon in Acts 2.

“[David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.” Acts 2:31

***God promised David a kingdom*** that would endure forever. David believed this promise and Psalm 16 served as a prophecy of the coming Messianic King from the line of David. David himself died and was buried and his body remained in his tomb. But Jesus, the Son of David, did not remain in his tomb. On the third day Jesus got up and walked out of the darkness of death into the light of life. And so he fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm 16 and God’s promise to King David!

Let’s study those **promises to David**, seeing how they were all fulfilled in Christ and therefore how they apply to us! Psalm 16 shows us ***three blessings of being united with the Lord***. That’s our outline - In the Lord, we are secure, connected and joyful. Let’s look at each of these blessings!

1. In the Lord we are **Secure**

“Preserve me, O God, for **in you** I take refuge.” Psalm 16:1

King David faced many dangers in his life. For us a “refuge” or “fortress” are figurative ideas that give us feelings of comfort and safety. For David **a refuge was a literal strong place**, a fortified structure that you could defend against armies attacking you with catapults and siege works. If you think Lord of the Rings and the Battle of the ***Helms Deep*** you will not be far off from what David experienced.

But notice where David found refuge - **IN THE LORD**. For a warrior King like David, this was a deliberate choice - to not find his primary comfort and security in strong fortifications and a powerful army, but rather to rest his ultimate security in the Lord his God.

To express this faith and focus, **David PRAYED** to the Lord, “Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.” He starts the Psalm this way and ends it this way too. Look at verse 8.

1. In the Lord we are **Secure**

“I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand I shall not be shaken.” Psalm 16:8

The right hand of a king was his **chief advisor** - ***the prime minister*** - the main person he trusted in, listened to and worked with. Jesus is right now seated at the RIGHT HAND of God the Father in heaven. Jesus is the Prime Minister of the universe, administering all things in accordance with the Father’s will.

David saw himself in perfect ***alignment with the Lord his God***. He kept the Lord at the center of his thoughts and life - setting God always before himself. He sought direction from the Lord for military campaigns and major decisions. He didn’t move forward without clear direction that the Lord was with him.

When David challenged Goliath, the giant, he said, “I come against you ***IN THE NAME of the Lord of Hosts***, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have this day defied” (1 Sam. 17:45).

1. In the Lord we are **Secure**

“My flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol.” Psalm 16:9-10

David trusted the Lord with his heart and mind but also with his body and eternal soul. His FLESH - **his body** - ***was secure***. And even in the face of death and eternity David was confident. The Old Testament did not provide a lot of clarity regarding the afterlife. That came much more in the New Testament. So Psalm 16 is one of the best examples that OT believers did have hope for eternity - they did have confidence in a future resurrection. And that confidence, that ***security was firmly fixed in the MESSIAH***.

The quote from Psalm 16 is the centerpiece of Peter’s message in Acts 2. But his opening point comes from Joel 2 and closes with this line:

1. In the Lord we are **Secure**

“Everyone who calls upon ***the name of the Lord*** will be saved.” Acts 2:21

Look where our security is found - in the **NAME of the Lord**. This is the great blessing for every Christian - that in Christ we are SECURE. We will face trouble in this world, but nothing can harm us spiritually - nothing can separate us from the love of God. Pain and suffering and death are fearful enemies, but they are defeated enemies. In Christ, we are secure! Now, the second blessing we have in the Lord.

1. In the Lord we are **Connected**

“As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight.” Psalm 16:3

King David understood **the blessing of a unified nation**. As a young man he often had to run for his life from a deranged king. As an older man he had to run for his life from his ambitious son. In between there were some golden years of military victory and relative harmony. There are lists and accounts of the exploits of David’s mighty men. He had a group of elite warriors who were especially devoted to him.

At one point David casually mentioned wanting a drink from a ***particular well in Bethlehem***. Must’ve had some uniquely fresh and cold water. But it was held by the Philistines at that time. Still, three of David’s faithful friends fought their way through the Philistines to the well and brought some water back to their King. David was so moved by their devotion that he wouldn’t even drink the water, but poured it out to the Lord.

David knew the value of loyalty - the blessing of true friendship. He experienced the pain of betrayal, so the joy of faithfulness was especially meaningful for him.

Isn’t this one of the great blessings of the Christian life? The Christian is united with Jesus our HEAD. And through our union with Christ our head **we are united with one another in His body**. Hopefully you’ve experienced the blessing of being known and loved by a few close Christian friends.

Sadly, I’m sure we’ve all experienced the pain of when someone lets you down or betrays a personal trust. But the fact that some are unfaithful helps us appreciate when others are committed to us and continue to love and serve us through thick and thin.

***Oakwood has been through some challenging things in recent years.*** I look at the group of elders and deacons who walked through 2015, 2016 and beyond as MIGHTY MEN. Some people left the church in frustration, but most people stuck around and continued to love each other, even when there was pain and disagreement.

This is what David means in Psalm 16:3, I think. “The saints in the land are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.” Brothers and sisters - you are the saints in this land. You are the excellent ones - the faithful, righteous, persevering ones. And the King of Israel - ***King Jesus - finds His delight in you!***

Just as David looked with pride and delight on his mighty men, so Jesus looks on you today! As Ephesians 2:10 says:

1. In the Lord we are **Connected**

“For we are his ***workmanship***, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” Ephesians 2:10

That word “workmanship” means masterpiece - work of art. God is building us together as living stones in a growing temple - a brilliant and glorious expression of God’s creativity and love. Look at these words and feel the truth of them for yourself - YOU are God’s workmanship. YOU are His masterpiece, His priceless work of art. YOU were CREATED in Christ Jesus.

Did you catch that? You were not just forgiven by Jesus. You were **CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS**. At the moment you called on Jesus in faith you were born again as a new creation in Christ. You were made anew! And God continues to shape and craft each of us, chiseling away our rough spots, polishing up our service.

This is a huge blessing we enjoy in Christ - being **uniquely crafted and specially fitted into this local body** for this season of our lives. Your spiritual gifts, your personality, your experiences were custom designed to meet specific needs in this local church. God prepared good works for YOU to do them. And as you serve, others are blessed!

Those of us on staff have the great privilege of seeing all the pieces in the Oakwood jigsaw puzzle and how they fit together. Most of you have a more limited vantage point - seeing your small group or your ministry area. But we see:

* An energetic **deacon team** that tirelessly works to keep AC units running, leaky roofs repaired, jungle growth under control, pressure washing done and more.
* Wise and compassionate **Community Group Leaders** who care for and invest in most of the Oakwood church family. COVID brought out the best in our leaders as we assigned people to geographic circles and our group leaders went above and beyond to contact people to make sure they were ok.
* We have exceptionally gifted people serving in **worship and music ministry**. They not only plan and lead our services, but they continue to learn new songs and even write new songs that give voice to the songs of our hearts.
* For us to enjoy worship, we depend on our incredible **audio-visual and tech team**. So many people manage the challenging details of our audio, presentation software and now livestreaming equipment.
* We have over 40 children involved in **TreeHouse** every Sunday - so it takes a small army of loving workers and creative teachers to not only keep up with all the kiddos but to help them know and love Jesus more!
* And we have 35 or so teenagers every Sunday night in **PowerHouse** - the teamwork in that ministry is one of the best expressions of health in our church. We have amazing student leaders who run their own weekly prayer meeting, lead their own worship and help care for the younger teens. And of course we have a group of faithful volunteers who manage the drama of the teen years, who give up a week or two of work to take trips and retreats with our students and keep pointing these kids to Jesus.

We are so blessed to be connected in this local body! ***We are so glad YOU are a part of this body*** - we really believe the Lord has brought you here to do specific good works and we so appreciate your willingness to serve!

One more blessing in the Lord.

1. In the Lord we are **Joyful**

“I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.’” Psalm 16:2

Jesus is our refuge. In Christ we are secure. Jesus is our head. In Christ we are connected in His body. And in Christ we are joyful. Jesus is our life, our happiness, our everything.

David says **compared with the Lord**, he has no other good things in his life. And notice how David expresses this: “I SAY to the Lord: you are my lord.” David CHOOSES to find his joy in the Lord. David states this to himself and to others - the Lord is my life, my happiness, my everything.

This is why it’s so important to come for **corporate worship**! So we can hear each other SINGING and SAYING that Jesus is our joy. This is why we need to be plugged into a small group and connected with other believers - so we can express to each other our joy in the Lord and remind each other that “we have no good thing apart from Him!” David continues in verse 5.

1. In the Lord we are **Joyful**

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot… I have a beautiful inheritance.” Psalm 16:5-6

Again, David chooses the Lord as his portion and cup - the food he eats and the wine he drinks. David is not only content in the Lord, but satisfied - delighted in the good things of God. God holds David’s lot - his whole assessment in life - his health, family, possessions, estate, everything. And David sees that the lines have fallen in pleasant places. (He is, after all, the king.)

But even as king, David had his share of hardship. Yet still, in the Lord, David found joy. Many of the Psalms were written during times of hardship and fear. Psalm 31, for example, which we just reflected on for Good Friday. But in the midst of hardship David fixed his hope and faith in the Lord. In verse 8 David says, “I have set the Lord always before me,” so he goes on in verse 9.

1. In the Lord we are **Joyful**

“I have set the Lord always before me… Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices.” Psalm 16:8-9

When we set the Lord before us - when we fix our hope and faith in Him - ***we have peace!*** Nothing can shake us. And even when the world is shaking, we can still have joy in the Lord. Notice where David’s ultimate joy is found:

1. In the Lord we are **Joyful**

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:11

It is ***in the presence of the Lord*** that there is fullness of joy. And our great privilege in Christ is that the Holy Spirit dwells in us! We have access to God’s presence every moment of every day - if we will simply set Him before ourselves. If we will just set our minds on Him. If we will just pause to pray. If we will just stop to worship. If we will just remember that “the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go,” we will increasingly find joy in His presence.

So here is our summary:

|  |
| --- |
| In the Lord... |
| We are **Secure** | We are **Connected** | We are **Joyful** |
| **Forever!** |
| “In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.” Psalm 16:11 |

We get **a foretaste in this life** of the joys of God’s presence. But still we only see through a glass darkly - we only see a dim reflection of God’s awesome glory. We can only imagine what joys await us in eternity.

But we know that those joys will be centered around the throne of God! When we ***see the Lord in the fullness of His unveiled glory*** all other sources of joy will fade into insignificance.

Think of these three blessings we enjoy in Christ - and extend them to INFINITE.

* To be **SECURE forever** - safe, at peace, at rest - with no more fears, not a single worry, no stress - completely protected for limitless millennia!
* To be **CONNECTED forever** - every relationship harmonious and joyful; no more jealousy, no more betrayal, no more pain or sadness at all - just perfect love, wholehearted service eternally flowing between US as it does between Father, Son and Holy Spirit now!
* And to be **JOYFUL forever** - think of the happiest moments of your life - meeting your husband or wife, getting married, having a child, your child’s graduation or wedding, a major success at work, some personal achievement. Think of those things in which we find happiness and multiply them by infinite. Every relationship is a dim reflection of God. Whenever you feel loved by someone, it is a tiny glimpse of God’s perfect love. Whenever you feel served and supported by someone it is a microscopic sample of God’s infinite grace.

And let’s be clear, the reason we have this confidence and joy forever is ***because Jesus rose from the dead***. The reason Peter quotes Psalm 16 is to show that the hope of God’s people has always been in the Messiah who would rescue us from death. King David saw 1,000 years into the future to when his great-great-great grandson - the ultimate HOLY ONE, the ultimate anointed king - would not see corruption, would not be abandoned to the grave. Because Jesus was not abandoned to the grave, we know we will not be left there.

Death will not have the last word for any of us. Jesus will. In Christ, we will have fullness of joy, pleasures forevermore!

For me, no one has better expressed joy in the Lord than **Jonathan Edwards**. He literally wrote the book on it, titled ***Religious Affections***. So let’s close today with a reflection on the life and message of Jonathan Edwards.

https://banneroftruth.org/us/about/banner-authors/jonathan-edwards/

Jonathan was born in 1703 in a small town in Connecticut. His father was the pastor of a church in that town for fully sixty years! His mother was the daughter of a pastor, for whom Jonathan would one day work, and whose church Edwards would take over and serve for most of his twenty years of pastoral ministry. So Jonathan was raised by godly and spiritually minded parents in a culture of intentionality and discipline..

It is of note that he was the ***middle child of 11 - all girls except him***. Is it any wonder he knew about affections - feelings, passions - and was susceptible to strong emotion himself? The girls were all six feet tall so Timothy Edwards used to say the Lord had given him ***60 feet of girls!***

At the age of ten, during **a time of revival** under his father’s ministry he wrote:

“I used to pray five times a day in secret, and to spend much time in religious conversation with other boys; and used to meet with them to pray together. I experienced I know not what kind of delight in religion.”

But Jonathan lamented that ***his devotional interest and practices eventually wore off*** and he looked back on them, therefore, as being false - just for show.

Exceptional in academics, Edwards went away to college at the age of 12 - to the school that soon after became Yale. Toward the end of his studies at university he had a spiritual experience that changed his life forever:

“The first instance, that I remember, of that sort of inward, sweet delight in God and divine things, that I have lived much in since, was on reading those words, 1 Tim. 1:17. *“Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”*

“As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from anything I ever experienced before. Never any words of Scripture seemed to me as these words did. I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven; and be as it were swallowed up in him forever!”

Before this time Edwards had resisted and detested ***the doctrine of God’s sovereignty in election*** - God’s authority to choose who will be saved. But in seeing the glory and majesty of God - exalted in the fullness of His holy splendor - that doctrine he had previously resisted he came to wholeheartedly embrace, and to joyfully teach.

Filled with joy in the Lord and moved with a vision for the glory of God in all things, Edwards made **a series of resolutions** which he followed for the next twenty-five years. He resolved to use every minute to maximize the glory of God and the purposes of God’s kingdom. Edwards would rise early for prayer and study, spend 13-14 hours DAILY in study and meditation on God’s Word, diligently writing down every thought, every insight. Even if he was on horseback he would jot a note and pin it to his jacket so as not to forget what had occurred to him.

“On January 12, 1723, I made a solemn dedication of myself to God, and wrote it down; giving up myself, and all that I had, to God; to be for the future in no respect my own; to act as one that had no right to himself, in any respect. And solemnly vowed to take God for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness, nor acting as it were; and his law for the constant rule of my obedience.” <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/edwards/works1/works1.i.i.html>

Jonathan Edwards experienced what David expressed in Psalm 16 - security, connection and joy in the Lord. Having experienced this himself, he made it his mission to exhort others to find this same joy in the Lord.

He went to work with his father-in-law in 1726 and took over the church just three years later when the old preacher went home to the Lord. So at the age of 26 Edwards was the **solo pastor** of the only church in a village with a couple thousand people. Increasingly sensing the nominal commitment of most who came for services, Edwards began to call them to repentance and full surrender to the God who deserves our total devotion. Then in 1734 the Lord began to move in power, sparking in his church what later spread throughout the colonies as the first Great Awakening. ‘A great and earnest concern about the great things of religion, and the eternal world, became universal in all parts of the town.’

As Edwards continued to shepherd and lead revivals all along the east coast, he witnessed **true spirituality and false** - which led him to write and plead and correct and explain. Here are a couple of his most helpful insights:

https://kirkmillerblog.com/2019/08/26/quotes-from-jonathan-edwards-religious-affections/

“That religion which God requires, and will accept, does not consist in weak, dull, and lifeless wishes, raising us but a little above a state of indifference. … In nothing is vigour in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious.”

“The more a true saint loves God with a gracious love, the more he desires to love him, and the more uneasy is he at his want of love to him: the more he hates sin, the more he desires to hate it, and laments that he has so much remaining love to it. The more he mourns for sin, the more he longs to mourn; the more his heart is broken, the more he desires it should be broken. The more he thirsts and longs after God and holiness, the more he longs to long, and breathe out his very soul in longings after God.”

Don’t you long for these desires? Let’s listen to men like Jonathan Edwards and drink deeply from the streams that nourished their faith - such as Psalm 16!

Here is the way Peter concluded his sermon in Acts 2.

“Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ And Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you ***in the name of Jesus Christ*** for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’” Acts 2:37-38

Where is salvation found? IN THE NAME of Jesus Christ! Where is security found? In the Lord alone. Where is true connection and fellowship with others found? Only in the Lord Jesus Christ. Where is true and lasting joy found? In the name and person of Jesus Christ.

And the sweet, blessed, wonderful truth of the gospel is that this security, this connection, this joy is not just for a moment - it is our great inheritance FOREVER!

PRAY