

Psalm 16
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Over the last few weeks, many of us have lost things we greatly value. We've lost income. We've lost the opportunity to gather for corporate worship. We've lost time with friends. Some have even lost loved ones to sickness and death. Most of us, however, have yet to experience the same sort of loss as a man named Job.

Job 1:1-3, "There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job, and that man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters. He possessed 7,000 sheep, 3,000 camels, 500 yoke of oxen, and 500 female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east." The Lord allows Satan to test him and in one day, through a variety of means, his oxen, donkeys, sheep, camels, sons, daughters, and nearly all his servants are completely destroyed.

Job's spontaneous response in Job 1:20-21 is stunning. "Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. And he said, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.'" And he continued blessing the name of the Lord even when Satan followed up by striking him with "loathsome sores form the sole of his foot to the crown of his head" (Job 2:7).

How have you responded over the last few weeks as the Lord, in the mystery of his sovereign will, has taken things you love away from you? Job was shattered with grief. God would soon accomplish a significant work of humility in Job's heart in the midst of his grief. Yet he got the most important thing right from the very beginning of his suffering. He continued to rejoice in the Lord, to "bless" the name of the Lord.

What kind of person does that? What kind of person loses practically everything this world has to offer yet continues to bless the Lord? What will enable you to continue to rejoice in the Lord no matter what loss comes your way in this life, whether now or in years to come? Job's worship wasn't a product of denial or some kind of religious insanity. It was a response informed and governed by the surpassing worth of God.

If you have a Bible, open it to Psalm 16. The author, King David, was no stranger to loss. Like Job, he continued to rejoice in the Lord in the midst of it. Psalm 16 tells us why. It shows us how. And it invites us to join David, Job, and all the saints who have gone before us in doing the same. Hear the word of the Lord:

"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."

We don't know the exact situation that prompted David to write these words. We do know he sensed an acute need for protection or refuge. Something was happening in his life that threatened to shake him. He felt vulnerable. Fear lay close at hand.

Whether in David's life, Job's life, or our own life, there are always reasons to fear. But as we've seen the last few weeks, there are always better reasons to trust the Lord. Psalm 16 gives us one of the best. It's a reason we do well to remember every day and especially on Easter Sunday.

The joy and life we find in Jesus endures beyond the grave. No loss in this world, no matter how great, can steal away the joy and delight we find in knowing and following Jesus.

Friend, I don't know what you're living for in this life. I don't know what you're chasing or where you're looking these days to satisfy your soul. All of us are worshipping something. All of us are asking someone or something to give us joy. The Bible says, and our collective experience confirms, we will never find enduring joy and life apart from Jesus. Only Jesus can fully and eternally satisfy your soul.

It's why the Apostle Paul declared in Philippians 3:8 – "I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I



have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." So how do we get there? What can we do to prepare our hearts now so that we are able to say "gain" in the face of tremendous loss?

The first part of Psalm 16 (verse 1-8) describes the necessary step we must take; the second part (verses 9-11) describes the enduring joy and life we experience as a result.

1) WE TAKE REFUGE IN THE LORD BY CHOOSING HIM AS OUR GREATEST TREASURE

As Christians, we know we're supposed to look to the Lord in hard times. But we often have no idea what that actually looks like. Have you ever read something in the Bible like, "In you I take refuge," and thought to yourself, "I sure wish I knew how to do that! I so wish I had a place of comfort and safety for my ragged soul right now."

Verse 2 tells us what it means to "take refuge" in the Lord. It's not an abstract thing. It's not a super-spiritual thing. Even a child can do it. "I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'" Translation? We take refuge in the Lord by choosing him as our greatest treasure. We choose to love him more than anyone or anything else because nothing is better or more satisfying than Him.

David's words in verse 2 can almost seem over the top. No good apart from you? Really? Are you saying the Lord is good and everything else is bad? We know that's not right because of what he immediately says in verse 3. "As for the saints in the land," those who join me in loving you with all their heart, all their mind, and all their strength, "they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight."

So which is it, David? Is the Lord your treasure? Or are his people your treasure? What's the answer? The answer is, "Yes." It's two sides of the same coin. David isn't contradicting himself. He's saying nothing, absolutely nothing, is better than knowing and loving God. Every other good pales in comparison to him and is but an echo of his splendor. And one of the ways we delight in the goodness of God is by delighting in the gifts he graciously gives and in which he too delights.

When we join God in loving his people, we're not just loving them. We're loving God himself. It's the reason parents feel loved when someone loves their kids. Kindness to them is an expression of kindness to him. Jesus made the same point in Matthew

22:39 when he said the second greatest commandment – love your neighbor as yourself – is “like” the first – love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.

God is the ultimate source of every good thing in this life and when we delight in his gifts for his sake, receiving them with glad and grateful hearts, we’re ultimately delighting in him. To sing the praise of a river is to sing the praise of the spring from which it flows. We’re like a child on Christmas morning who unwraps a new bike and with tear-filled eyes lunges into his daddy’s arms, heart bursting with love for the one who demonstrated his love for them.

But what are we prone to do? We receive good gifts from God and make them, instead of him, our greatest treasure. The Bible calls that idolatry. Work, relationships, sports, sex, you name it – they are all good gifts and terrible gods. Why? Verse 4. Because “the sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply.”

Think about it. If success at work is your god, what you live for or value as your greatest treasure, will you ever be satisfied? No. Because you’ll never be able to rest. Your satisfaction is wedded to perpetual achievement. The moment you conquer one project or beat out one competitor, the rat race starts all over again. Your work will never satisfy you. It will simply exploit you until you have nothing left.

What if a romantic relationship is your god, what you live for or value as your greatest treasure? Will you ever be truly satisfied? No. All you’ve done is wed your satisfaction to a fallible human being who will inevitably fail to love you the way you feel like you’ve loved them. You’ll get hurt. You’ll be disappointed. Whenever we demand that another human being satisfy our soul, we eventually crush them under the weight of God-sized expectations. Their sorrows multiply along with our own.

We’re living right now in an extended season of collective loss on multiple levels. And it has the potential, Friend, to be the best thing that ever happened to you. Why? Because it can expose the poverty and futility of all the false gods we worship and treasure more than the Lord. Is it wrong to miss the pleasures of normal life? No. But pay attention to the desires in your heart that feel frustrated right now.



Whenever things you love the most are stripped away, joy will fade and fear will rise. This pandemic is a God-given opportunity to examine our hearts, humble ourselves before the Lord, and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas of our life where we have been running after “another god.”

Verse 5 describes the alternative. If you’re freshly aware of the poverty of the gods of this world, verse 5 shows you how to respond. “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.” That word “chosen” is so important. There are many times, even as Christians, where God and relationship with God doesn’t feel satisfying. It doesn’t feel joyful. God doesn’t feel good. Maybe nothing feels good.

So what do we do? We say things like, “Well, God, if you’re so ‘satisfying’ and all that, you’re going to have to come over here and ‘wow’ me and then maybe I’ll decide to follow you.” Friends, that’s the exact opposite of verse 5. If you say that, even subconsciously, you are not choosing the LORD as your portion. You don’t actually love God. Like a drug addict, you’re trying to use God to get the emotional high you crave.

We don’t bring our love cup to the Lord and ask him to fill it because everyone else has failed. We confess our idolatry. We confess our sin. We confess all the ways we have looked to other people and things to satisfy our soul, ask for his forgiveness, and choose him as our greatest treasure. We look to him as our spiritual food and drink, our portion and cup – not the material or emotional blessings he gives and takes away.

We choose the Lord as our portion on the days it’s easy and we feel like we’re riding in the clouds. We choose the Lord as our portion on the days it’s hard and he seems a million miles away. We don’t will him into being a treasure he would otherwise not be by virtue of choosing him. We choose him because he is infinitely good and glorious even on the days he feels like nothing of the sort.

Do that, my friend, and what will you eventually discover? Verse 6, that “the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.” That verse does not mean the circumstances of your life will be perpetually pleasant and beautiful. It does mean that even in the midst of great loss, joy and life remain.

The language of “portion” and “boundary lines,” for the Israelites who first read and sang this psalm, would have evoked memories of the twelve tribes dividing the land after the conquest of Canaan. In Numbers 18:20, the Lord delivered a special



message to the tribe of Levi through Aaron, the high priest. "You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel."

The other tribes received a landed inheritance. The Levites did not. They were set apart as priests to minister to the Lord. He was their inheritance. The joy and blessing of an intimate relationship with him were their reward. We experience the same gift today when we decide to trust and follow Jesus.

There is pleasure in knowing Jesus even when everything else in this world hurts. There is joy in anticipating eternal life with Jesus even when everything else in this world is stripped away. He is the pearl of great price. He is the treasure hidden in a field. He is infinite in glory, wisdom, power, and majesty. Nothing else satisfies the way he does because no one else will ever love you the way he has.

Remember, every other supposed "god" in this world will eventually exploit you. It will demand more from you than it gives in return – more achievement, more affection, more time – and it will never be enough. In contrast, what does the gospel tell us? The gospel says that God's love and delight in you as his son or daughter can't be earned. It can only be received. It doesn't depend on what you do for him. It depends entirely on what Jesus has done for you through his life, death, and resurrection.

If you choose him as your portion, if you trust and obey Jesus as your Savior, you will find a wellspring of love that does not ebb and flow on the tide of your past, present, or future performance. It pours out abundantly and eternally from a hill called Calvary. The gods of this world say, "Give to me and I will love you," but never keep the promise. Jesus says, "I have freely, completely, and eternally given myself to you and now I invite you to love me in return."

Take refuge in the Lord by choosing him as your greatest treasure and the love of God will define you. The love of God will keep you. The love of God will "hold your lot." The relationship you have with him, all the spiritual blessings that are yours in him – the counsel and instruction in verse 7 included – are secured by his faithfulness, not your own.

You don't hold the keys to your future. Jesus does and our inheritance in him could not be more beautiful. John Calvin captured it this way in a sermon he preached some 400 years ago. Through the finished work of Christ, your bad things will turn

out for good, your good things cannot be taken away from you, and your best things are yet to come.

David knew that, which is why he could confidently say in verse 8, “Because [the LORD] is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.” Take refuge in the Lord by choosing him as your treasure. Verses 9-11 tell us what will happen as a result.

2) WHEN JESUS IS YOUR TREASURE, EVERLASTING JOY IS YOUR REWARD

When the Lord is the one you’re looking to every day to satisfy your soul, when Jesus isn’t just part of your life, but the supreme treasures of your life, guess what happens? Earthly troubles and difficulties can no longer steal your joy. Verse 9, “Therefore,” because I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, “my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices.”

Even if you lose everything this world has to offer, you still have the one thing that not only matters the most but also dwarfs every material pleasure – you still have the Lord. And the joy and life we find in Jesus endures beyond the grave. As David says, “My flesh (my physical body) dwells secure.” Why? Verse 10, “For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.”

David expected he would die. He also knew the God whom he served and to whom he had entrusted his life would not leave him in the grave. He might not have known how or when, but he was confident, in light of the covenant faithfulness of God, that the Lord wouldn’t “abandon” his soul. Physical death would not be the final word over his life. It wasn’t a vain hope. It was a certain prophecy, inspired by the Spirit of God, though Israel had to wait a thousand more years for them to be fulfilled.

In Acts 2:22-32, the Apostle Peter quotes from Psalm in his very first sermon. *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, ‘I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see*



corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

Then he concludes, *“Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with 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, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.”*

Friends, what David anticipated by faith, we remember and celebrate on Easter Sunday with great joy. For Psalm 16:10 isn’t ultimately about David. It’s about Jesus, the Eternal Son of God born into the line of David! Jesus is the “LORD” in verse 8. Jesus is the “Holy One” in verse 10. He lived the perfect life you were supposed to live. He died the death you deserved to die on account of your sins.

And because the Father did not leave him in the grave, Christian, you can rest assured that he will not leave you either. Jesus' resurrection guarantees your own. 1 Corinthians 15:22–23, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” What will we be “made alive” to do? Where does the “path of life” we walk now by faith ultimately end? We will rise from the grave to enjoy eternal life in the presence of God.

We experience the joy of his presence in part even now through the gift of the Holy Spirit. On that day, however, we’ll get to see Jesus face to face. We’ll no longer have to fight for joy in Him through tears of sorrow. When we see him, we will finally experience “fullness of joy.” We experience the pleasure of reigning with Jesus in part even now for the Father has already (Ephesians 2:6) “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” On that day, when we are at his right hand in a physical sense and every one of his enemies is a footstool for his feet, we will discover “pleasures forevermore.”

Banish the terrible and impoverished notion from your mind, Christian, that the best things, the greatest joys, the deepest pleasures, are found in this life. They are not. They are still waiting for you in heaven, the “beautiful inheritance” of those who love God and are called according to his purpose. The resurrection of Christ ensures the best is yet to come.



So what does that mean as we walk the path of life – the path of obedient trust in Jesus – here and now? It means all who cling to him by faith are “secure.” We have reason to be “glad,” even in the midst of a pandemic. We have reason to rejoice – body and soul – because the joy and life we have in Jesus endures beyond the grave. When Jesus is your treasure, you can lose everything this world has to offer, and everlasting joy will STILL be your reward.

CONCLUSION

Even in great sorrow and loss, Job knew the Lord would vindicate him, even if he had to wait for the resurrection to experience it. Job 19:25–27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!”

Does your heart faint within you, friend? Do you long for that day, secure in God’s love for you, because Jesus is your treasure? Or are you frantically scurrying around this world, trying to have your best life now? If you want to experience the path of life, if you want to discover true joy, a joy that no pandemic, market crash, or break-up text can ever take away from you, you need not wait for heaven. You can know the joy of trusting and obeying Jesus right now.

Confident in the future, David’s heart was glad right now. His whole being rejoiced right now. His flesh dwelt secure right now. So I urge you. Take refuge in the Lord by choosing him as your treasure and you will find everlasting joy – now and for all eternity.