

## The Weekly Word

Feb 7-13, 2022

Hello Bible readers. This week we continue Luke's account of the early church reading Ps 13-16. I hope you are blessed as you join me. Happy reading...

Before we read this week... Amy Julia (Truesdell) Becker has a blog I often follow (<https://amyjuliabecker.com>). This week, January 13, she posted "A Better Way to Read the Bible." It is worth a read; I encourage you to check it out. You will find she advocates three questions similar to the ones I ask. Then she adds a fourth question. I hope it is ok for me to quote from her blog:

*"For a better way to read the Bible, here's the crucial question I needed to learn to ask: **What does the Bible mean for us?***

*I learned to read the Bible as a spiritual guide for my own individual life rather than one that would both connect me to others and challenge me to become far more aware of the needs and hopes and dreams and pain of others.*

*The Bible was written to us (to y'all!) and for us (throughout history and across the world). Not to me or for me.*

*It still has individual implications, and God's Spirit still uses the words of Scripture to care for, convict, challenge, and comfort us personally. But if we read the Bible only through the lens of individualism, we will distort the message of God for our own lives and for our world.*

I found her words filled with truth, so beginning this week I will add a 4<sup>th</sup> question to my previous three... Let's see where God takes us.

Amy Julia also offers a free eBook 12 Tips: How to start reading the Bible. It is basic information for someone who does not have a pattern of Bible reading.

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

### Monday, February 7: Psalm 14:1-3 NIV2011

<sup>1</sup> *The fool says in his heart,*

*"There is no God."*

*They are corrupt, their deeds are vile;*

*there is no one who does good.*

<sup>2</sup> *The LORD looks down from heaven*

*on all mankind*

*to see if there are any who understand,*

*any who seek God.*

<sup>3</sup> *All have turned away, all have become corrupt;*

*there is no one who does good,*

*not even one.*

**What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

With the Psalms I constantly remind myself that I am reading prayers; today's Psalm is David praying to the Lord.

David begins this prayer with an honest and bleak assessment of the state of humanity. He opens with a statement about the 'fool,' the person who is not following the ways of God. The fool does not believe there is a God. With that as an anchor for life, they are 'vile' and do no good. (Quite an inditement).

The Psalm grows even darker...

David pictures God looking down from this heavenly throne. What does God see? All of humanity... and no one understands; no one seeks God. All have turned away. People are corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one. (This bleak assessment includes David himself; still, he is praying to the Lord.)

**What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

Every one of us is in big trouble when it comes to the Lord. We don't measure up. The fool doesn't want to measure up since he/she doesn't believe in God. But even the best of us is fundamentally opposed to God. Sin has a tight grip on everyone. Not even one of us is good in God's sight.

Here we have the doctrine of total depravity laid out for us as David prays.

**What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

Yikes, I am not good! So much truth... when I am honest with myself even when I am 'seeking' God there is generally an angle regarding myself... so I am never fully pure!

Oh, how much I need a savior...

**What does this passage mean and say to us?**

So much of our world is built on the premise of human goodness. "Oh, there are bad apples," someone might say, "but people are basically good." We hear this in the discourse about education... we can teach the bad out of people. Ha, that has never happened.

When news reporters interview family members and neighbors after someone has committed some terrible crime, we often hear, "but he was a good neighbor, person, etc."

Education, government, philosophy, etc. will never help us be good people, only Jesus giving us a new heart can do this. And even then, we remain imperfect people (read Romans 7).

**Tuesday, February 8: Psalm 14:4-7 NIV2011**

<sup>4</sup> *Do all these evildoers know nothing?*

*They devour my people as though eating bread;  
they never call on the LORD.*

<sup>5</sup> *But there they are, overwhelmed with dread,  
for God is present in the company of the righteous.*

<sup>6</sup> *You evildoers frustrate the plans of the poor,  
but the LORD is their refuge.*

<sup>7</sup> *Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!  
When the LORD restores his people,  
let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad!*

**What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

David continues to wonder out loud in prayer, *do all these evil doers know nothing?*

Next, he laments that his people are being devoured by these evil doers; they devour his people as if they are devouring bread at mealtime. And they never reach out to God. For all their devouring and blustering they still have this dread overhanging their lives. (They may not even know why this dread overhangs them.) It is because God is present with the righteous.

And even though these evil doers frustrate the plans of the poor the Lord God is the refuge of the poor.

David closes by crying out with longing that salvation will come from Zion (from the Lord). For when the Lord restores his people they will rejoice and be glad.

**What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

The second portion of this Psalm concludes with salvation coming from the Lord just as I anticipated reading the first portion of the Psalm. God alone is the author of salvation; Salvation comes from Zion, the throne of God. When salvation comes, God's people will rejoice and be glad.

Evil doers may wreak havoc on God's people, but contentment is denied to the evil people. Dread overhangs them. (In our world we have all met people who seemed to have everything and yet there is no peace; they cannot find contentment.) God is the author of peace and gladness, and God gives this to His people.

The Psalmist also reminds us that God is the refuge for those who are poor.

Salvation comes from God; it always has and always will.

**What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

I find my heart welling up with Thanksgiving for the salvation Jesus has brought into my life. Thank you, Lord, bless you, Lord.

**What does this passage mean and say to us?**

There seems to be an implicit message in this prayer... a warning to treat people equitably, to not allow people to devour other people. Yes, God will bring salvation, but it seems that we who are the Lord's, need to stand up for people who are being taken advantage of by the system or people with power. This prayer marks one aspect of David not standing idly by while watching the poor or others be oppressed.

**Wednesday, February 9: Psalm 15: 1-5 NIV2011**

<sup>1</sup> *LORD, who may dwell in your sacred tent?  
Who may live on your holy mountain?*

<sup>2</sup> *The one whose walk is blameless,  
who does what is righteous,  
who speaks the truth from their heart;*  
<sup>3</sup> *whose tongue utters no slander,  
who does no wrong to a neighbor,  
and casts no slur on others;*  
<sup>4</sup> *who despises a vile person  
but honors those who fear the LORD;  
who keeps an oath even when it hurts,  
and does not change their mind;*  
<sup>5</sup> *who lends money to the poor without interest;  
who does not accept a bribe against the innocent.*

*Whoever does these things  
will never be shaken.*

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

This prayer opens with David asking a profound question, *Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?* David yearns to know who gets to live with God.

God answers David. The person whose walk is pure and righteous. The person who speaks truth from their heart and doesn't utter lies about other people. The person who doesn't wrong others or tarnish the reputation of others. The person who rejects an evil person but honors those who are good, who love the Lord. The person who keeps her or his word and does not change their mind (the person who doesn't go back on their word after it's been given to someone else). The person who lends money without interest to those in need and who never accepts a bribe to do injustice.

God says, "The person who does these things will have a firm life foundation."

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

God's response to David describes the person who can live with God. In essence it is the person who is perfect in how she or he lives. They do no wrongs; they do not speak with ill intent. They help those in need. This is what it takes to dwell with God almighty.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

This Psalm paints the picture of an unattainably high bar for a living. What person can truly do all of this as described without ever failing? Looking at my own life, I have fallen short almost even before I began.

It is helpful to have a definition of what God requires, but it is deflating to realize the standard is beyond my reach. I fall short as soon as I begin. The requirements for godly living are exacting and unattainable.

### **What does this passage mean and say to us?**

When I hold God's description of what is required to live with Him up against my life and the lives of others, we all fall short. These few words undercut the foundation of most human living, which is built on the falsehood that we are good, and humanity as a whole is getting better. The idea that we are basically good simply does not square with what God has said. We all fall short and this truth, if it does nothing else, levels the playing field. None of us are better than others. And none of us are truly "good". This passage rattles the presumption of most of humanity.

Accepting God's judgment of things opens the door, however, to finding God's grace and God's salvation.

#### **Thursday, February 10: Psalm 16: 1-4 NIV2011**

<sup>1</sup> *Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.*

<sup>2</sup> *I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."*

<sup>3</sup> *I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
"They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*

<sup>4</sup> *Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.*

#### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

David prays and asks the Lord to keep him safe. This is not an isolated request, instead it grows from the heart of one who seeks his refuge in the Lord.

David continues to pray declaring the fact that apart from God he has no good thing. God alone is his source and his supply.

David then declares to the Lord that "holy people" are the people in whom he takes delight. (In other words, it's those people who have set their lives apart for God that he listens to, sits around and associates with.) He then flips this declaration on its head declaring that he will not seek other gods or pour out offerings to other gods or even speak the name of other gods. (David's fidelity to the Lord and to the Lord's people is declared.)

#### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

The question for those of us who follow God today is, Can we pray a similar prayer? Can we declare our trust in God and back that up with a life that takes refuge in God? A life that trusts and connects with others who hope and trust and follow in the Lord? Secondly, will we show our fidelity to the Lord by not entertaining thought of or worship of any other false gods?

#### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

Am I faithful to the Lord, truly faithful to the Lord? Do I put my trust in the Lord or do I trust in something else? And will my life testify to my fidelity to God? For example, if one were to

look at those who are models for my life, who guide my life, who speak into my life, will they meet people who also profess fidelity to the Lord? Do I avoid and reject any other god but the Lord?

### **What does this passage mean and say to us?**

This passage calls us to consider who are the people in whom we confide, the people who are our life examples. If they are not people who trust in and honor God, then we are deluding ourselves into thinking that we are faithful to the Lord.

### **Friday, February 11: Psalm 16: 5-8 NIV2011**

<sup>5</sup> *LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.*

<sup>6</sup> *The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.*

<sup>7</sup> *I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.*

<sup>8</sup> *I keep my eyes always on the LORD.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

David continues to declare his fidelity to the Lord God. He prays that the Lord is his portion and cup and the one who makes his life secure. Next, David makes an astounding admission, God has given David a pleasant life and a delightful inheritance. (God has provided good for David and David admits this. David recognizes that it is the Lord who is the reason for his successes. David understands he is not a self-made man, rather he is a God-made man.)

David then reminds himself to continue to praise the Lord who is the one who gives him counsel and wisdom. David pledges fidelity to the Lord... *To keep his eyes always on the Lord.* David understands that as he stands with the Lord he will not be shaken.

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

We need to continually remind ourselves we are listening to someone else pray. So much of my own personal prayer life has been learned as I listen to wise saints pray. This is a blessing of the Psalms; in them we hear inspired prayers.

David's prayer recognizes at a deep level that what he has is due to God's goodness in his life. God planted him in *pleasant places*. This was not so much the work of his hands as it was God's gift to him, and David acknowledges this. David's willingness to acknowledge God's goodness and benefits to him is one aspect of prayer I can learn.

Gratefulness and honesty...

David words, *I will praise the Lord*, stand as a reminder that we need to choose and will ourselves to give honor to God with our lips. As a sinful human being this will likely not come as a natural inclination of our heart. Hopefully reflecting on the way God has blessed our lives will

help draw us to praise God. But even when it is not “naturally” drawn from within we can tap into the “God-reserves” of our life in order to will ourselves to bless and praise the Lord.

Listening to wise saints pray and praying the psalms can teach us these things.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

David prays that the Lord is his portion and cup and the one who makes his life secure... can I pray this with integrity? Do I truly believe that it is Lord who has provided for me, or am I seduced by our world into thinking I earned what I have; I merit what I have, I am the captain of my ship? Without eliminating my need and responsibility to work and apply myself to my work, I cannot delude myself into thinking the blessings I have are because I am good or I am special. God's grace gave me any intellect I have. God's grace gave me the opportunities I have had. God's grace opened doors to schooling that I have enjoyed in my life. God's hand has been with me every moment of my life and I must never forget this.

With David I gladly declare the Lord is my portion and cup. The Lord is my security.

### **What does this passage mean and say to us?**

To pray like this is antithetical to the thinking of most of the world. Drilled into us from a young age, at least in our western culture, is the world is yours for the taking. Grab what you can, make the most of your abilities, try hard and good things will come. And when those good things come, we break our arms patting ourselves on the back. The belief in God embedded in this prayer runs counter to the refrain sung over and over and over by our culture and our world.

Trust in the Lord is the prime ingredient of prayer.

### **Saturday, February 12, 2022: Psalm 16:9-11 NIV2011**

<sup>9</sup> *Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;*

*my body also will rest secure,*

<sup>10</sup> *because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.*

<sup>11</sup> *You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

### **What does the passage say? (What is this passage about?)**

David's prayer concludes with David continuing to express his trust in the Lord... *Oh good great awesome my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure.*

David prays from a place of belief that God will lead him in his life-path. And David finds joy in his connection and presence with the Lord. He believes with all his heart that eternal pleasures await him.

### **What does the passage mean for all Christians? (The meaning of the passage needs to fit believers everywhere in the world.)**

We as believers can trust God. We can close our eyes at night knowing God is in control. When I arrived at my present pastoral call my secretary at the time gave me a plaque that reads: *It's your church Lord, I'm going to bed...* This was part of Pope John XXIII's nightly prayer. As leader of the largest Christian denomination in the world and one of the most well-known religious figures in the world, John XXIII was able to close his eyes at night and release the burdens of his office knowing that the Lord was in charge. That is the blessing David understood. And we too can know this blessing as we grow in our trust in the Lord.

### **What is the Holy Spirit saying to me through this passage?**

I am not the master of my own fate, I am God's child, surrendered to Jesus who charts the course of my life. I will trust Him. And I will, to the best of my ability, follow and obey Him.

Reading this psalm filled with David's full-hearted trust in the Lord only confirms that I made the right decision when I put my trust in Jesus 40+ years ago. I have not always been faithful; but God -the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit- has always been faithful.

### **What does this passage mean and say to us?**

Trust in the Lord truly does have life impact this side of eternity. David is able to rest securely in his belief that God is for him, and that God will not abandon him, as he says, *"to the realm of the dead"*.

So many in our world are crying out for security, for a sense of wholeness or being held and cared for. David has found this in his connection and relationship with God Almighty. What David found is open to all of us who put our faith and trust in Jesus. This does not mean we will no longer have times of insecurity or doubt. Some Christians suffer from clinical depression. Despite this, there is a firmness to our life foundation for people who can take that step of faith and trust in God.

### **Sunday, February 13, 2022 - Sunday Worship**

*If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.*

*If you are reading along with me from the Living Hope website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at [office@LivingHopeCT.org](mailto:office@LivingHopeCT.org).*

Click here for an audio link to my sermons, <https://livinghopect.org/resources/audio-sermons>. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days. We also livestream our full services which are up on our YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKURRsbX92qqIFgDF1iRWA>