

Songs to Sing #10: A Song of Joy (Psalm 16)

INTRODUCTION [make sure recordings are going]

PRAY

I don't need to tell any of you that there are some hard times going on right now
And these hard times are happening on both a global scale and a personal scale
Yes, there is the pandemic, political turmoil, racial unrest, and natural disasters
But there are also just a lot of hurting, suffering people... including many of us
So it might seem surprising to you that I would choose to preach on a song of joy today
Why, at this time, would I want to speak about joy? ... Well, because we need joy
Even in hard times—or even especially in hard times, we desire to have joy
And so we're all actively trying to find it in something or other
Whether in relationships or friendships or pleasure or food or drink
or intellectual pursuits or hard work or mindless entertainment or
social media or rest or leisure or wealth or family or faith
Every day that we wake up, it's like we're on a daily search for joy

So we need to know where and how to find true joy... And I believe the Bible has these answers
I believe we *can* have deep, authentic joy, despite our difficult life circumstances
King David, who wrote many of the psalms in the Bible, didn't have what we'd call an easy life
He suffered a lot... And many of the songs he wrote were written out of hardship
And yet his songs also contain some of the greatest expressions of deep joy
I believe that's because of where David found his joy
His songs don't tend to rejoice much in amazing life circumstances
Like a prosperous kingdom, beautiful family, great wealth... life is good!
Sometimes those things may've been true, but often they were not
So he doesn't rejoice in what's going on around him
And yet he has joy, and his songs express it, because he finds joy in the Lord

But now I'm getting ahead of myself... I want to show this to you in one of his songs
And hopefully it can become the song of our hearts today as well
So please **TURN** with me to Psalm 16
We committed for the year of 2020 to learn to sing the psalms together
So once a month, we go to a psalm, preach it, and learn a song based on it
We've taught you songs of hope in turmoil, waiting, trust, protection, and lament so far
But if we're gonna get a good balance of what the psalms contain, we need joy as well
And that's certainly what we have here in Psalm 16

Right off the bat, we get a hint that not all was well in David's life: **READ v.1**
He prays for preservation and refuge... We don't know when David wrote this in his life
Was it before he approached Goliath, feeling small and powerless?
Was it when he was on the run from Saul, hiding out in caves?
Was it when someone he loved died, like his unborn child or his friend Jonathan?
Was it during his reign and when own his son led a coup against his throne?
We don't know, but there's a beauty in the ambiguity: it can thus apply to any situation
You may feel that you are facing certain risks or dangers these days

You may be anxious about what life has in store for you
You may even feel that your life hangs in the balance
So if you feel the need for preservation and refuge, make this your prayer: **READ v.1**
Now, someone who needs refuge is called what? A refugee
We might picture people fleeing from somewhere they are in danger
From warfare, famine, persecution, or instability
To find safety and protection in another place in the world
That's how David sees himself here: fleeing from danger to find safety in God
Do you see yourself as a refugee? Because in many ways, that is what we all are

[tr] And once we find refuge in God, it leads to having confidence in him

Author David Mathis comments that *"Real confidence is in rare supply. Playing it cool is one thing. It's easy to straighten your shoulders, arch your back, stick out your chest, and talk tough. But actual, deep, emotional confidence and security of soul is hard to find. And it should not surprise us—when we are sinners, surrounded by other sinners, in a fallen and fragile world. How can any of us truly experience the deep peace and joy of authentic confidence in a world awash with facades of security?"*

In Psalm 16, I think we can see it starts with admitting our need
Because David's plea in distress quickly transforms into declarations of faith
[David] Mathis asks, *"How does such a change of heart happen? Theology. Rehearsing who God is for us can transform everything... What we believe about God can be life and death for us today. It will make all the difference."* ...That's what David does here

He rehearses who God is... And that leads him to unshakeable joy... Because:

The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy (v.1-4)

That's the big idea of this whole psalm: [r] The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy

David is very clear on this: **READ v.2**

So he's speaking to "the LORD", or *Yahweh*, the Creator and Ruler of everything
But he makes it personal: "You are *my* Lord," or *Adonai*, my Master—the one I serve
Like, "You're not just King over the Cosmos, you're King over me"

But if *the* LORD is *your* Lord, you should realize how everything good comes from him

READ v.2b (or besides you)... You might be skeptical, thinking, 'Really? No good? *None?*'"

Well, yes... Try to name one good thing in your life that *didn't* come from God
Go ahead, I'll wait... Actually I won't wait, so as not to waste your time
We may think that we earned or achieved or gained certain things in our lives

But who gave you the skills or abilities or opportunities to do so?
Behind every single blessing in life stands a good and generous God: **READ v.2**
Anything "good" we enjoy apart from God will eventually leave us empty

Jump down to v.4 (we'll come back to v.3): **READ v.4...**

If we don't run to God for our every good thing, we will run after other things
That's human nature for you... Idolatrous by instinct

If there's one helpful effect of an event that turns our worlds upside-down, like this pandemic,
It does a great job of exposing our idols... exposing what we care about most

If our idols are taken away, we miss them dearly or fight hard to get them back
So we'll break laws in order to still see our friends or families

Or we'll push for returns to normal, like reopening schools or gyms
So we can get back to our work, our workouts, or our hobbies
And if there's an idol that's not taken away, we tend to run to it for refuge
Hence why substance abuse has gone through the roof these days
Or why some of us are consumed by video games or streaming videos
Or why we can't stop staring at our phones or scrolling through them
Maybe we're just numbing the pain or escaping hard things
Maybe we're addicted... But we're all looking for something
Some kind of fulfillment, peace, goodness, and joy
Pay attention to how you've reacted over the last 8 months... It might be revealing...

But a thing like this doesn't just expose what our idols are... It also exposes our idols as frauds
As David observes here: **READ v.4a**... Other gods will always fall short as gods
If your sorrows seem to be multiplying, that doesn't necessarily mean you're in sin
There is plenty of innocent suffering in this broken world
But, take this as an opportunity to examine your heart and examine your sorrows
Are you sorrowful because something you love or run to is disappointing you?
Are troubles multiplying because your hope or joy are in an inferior god?
Does binge-watching a show ultimately fill you up? Does being apart from
your friends crush you? Does getting wasted or stoned really make you
happy, or just make things worse? Is getting back to work really all that?
Is hitting the gym really the answer to this life's problems? I could go on...
But when we run after other gods,
We just end up exhausted, sad, disillusioned, or depressed
Especially when life inevitably takes them away from us
READ v.4... Essentially, David declares, "I won't worship them... They're not worth it"
And maybe you need to do the same, renouncing your other gods and returning to the Lord

[tr] For the Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy... He's our only hope here
However, just admitting he needs to be our refuge and exposing poor substitutes
Doesn't tell us *how* to find deep and lasting joy in him
That's what I think the rest of this psalm can do... David sings about how he finds joy in God
First of all, v.3, which we skipped over earlier, provides the positive contrast to v.4
v.4 tells us idolaters end up suffering as idolatry isn't worth it
On the other hand, those who worship God are worthwhile company: **READ v.3**
The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy, and we can find some in his people...

... So **delight in his people (v.3)**

[r] One way to find joy in God is to delight in his people

READ v.2b-3... Essentially, God's people are one of God's good blessings... **READ v.3**
'Saints' can also be translated as 'holy people' or 'godly people'
And 'excellent ones' can be put as 'noble' or 'majestic' ones
This doesn't imply that we're so amazing on our own... not at all!
We must not be prideful... It's a sign of God's mercy that anyone is a saint
But because of his mercy, God says we've actually become a 'holy people'
Has anyone ever called you an 'excellent one' or 'majestic one' before? No?

Turn to your neighbour and say, 'Why hello, excellent one!'
If you have received God's mercy in Jesus, that is what you are!

READ v.3... We might think this sounds like high praise, like, almost too high of praise...

For God's people to be "*all my delight*"... Is *this* idolatrous?

David Mathis explains well that: "*David does not say that he delights in God's people rather than God... Because he treasures God as his supreme treasure, he also takes delight in those who treasure God as supreme as well. His love for God spills over in love for those who love God.*"

It's a good thing to delight in loving, serving, worshiping with, or fellowshiping with the saints
And it's natural to find a level of joy in this... It's the way God designed us

Some of you may object and say that this hasn't been your experience

Maybe God's people have really hurt you at times

And that is sometimes a sad reality on this side of glory... We hurt each other

But in a healthy body, healing from those hurts can also be a glorious thing

As we pursue confession, repentance, reconciliation, and forgiveness

If you've ever experienced this, you know that restored relationships can be all the sweeter

I mean, that's the reality in our relationship with God, isn't it?

We hurt him, he pursued reconciliation, and now our relationship is even more delightful

But whether our relationship with other saints has needed healing, or has never been hurt,

When we unite our lives under Jesus' goodness, it can bring us much delight and joy

This is one reason why we as a church have prioritized re-gathering in this season

We're trying to take all the safety precautions we can

But we believe (and know from experience) that God's people being together is essential

Sure, we can forego certain things for a season, but not for long and not indefinitely

We can get creative, we can use technology, we can gather in *small* groups

But God's made it so we find joy and encouragement and confidence in his people

And the more we keep ourselves apart, we rob ourselves of a source of joy

A research study done by a Harvard prof found that people who regularly attend church services

are more optimistic, have lower rates of depression, are less likely to commit suicide,

have a greater purpose in life, are less likely to divorce, and are more self-controlled

And, we don't just find delight in God's people because they love, serve, or give to us

We find delight when we love, serve, or give to them!

Sometimes we think we'd be more comfortable or happier if we're on our own

But ironically, we often find far greater delight in putting other people first

Rebecca McLaughlin explains: "*The claim that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35) cuts against the grain of our individualized, success-focused mind-set. But a growing body of research suggests that giving is good for us. Volunteering has a positive impact on our mental and physical health. Actively caring for others often yields greater physical and psychological benefits than being cared for. And financial generosity has psychological payoffs.*"

So, do you find delight in the excellent ones God has placed around you?

If not, put your comfort aside and find a way to serve them and see if that changes

[tr] We can find joy in the Lord as we find joy in his people... But that's only one verse here!

As David continues in v.5, his focus is on the Lord himself: **READ v.5-6**

What I believe we can see here is that: The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy...

... So marvel at his grace (v.5-6)

[r] If you want to find joy and goodness in the Lord, marvel at his grace

David does this when he says: **READ v.5a...** God himself is his greatest, supreme treasure

When David says the Lord is his 'chosen portion' this is speaking of receiving an inheritance

You might picture your parents preparing a will for when they pass away

And them asking you, 'When I die, is there anything of mine you want to inherit?'

You might choose something with sentimental value: a piece of art or furniture

Maybe you'd ask for their house, or you'd just be happy with money

Here, David tells God, "All I want from you is *you*... I choose you... You're what I want"

When he calls God 'my cup,' that's a metaphor for pleasure, like from drinking wine

So calling God our portion and our cup is like calling him our treasure and our pleasure

He's our truest wealth... He's our truest enjoyment... He's our ultimate good

Do we deserve to receive God himself? Of course not... This is God's amazing grace

And not only do we choose God; he chooses us first

David finishes v.5 with: **READ v.5b...** Think of the saying, "It's my lot in life..."

It's talking about everything that happens to you in life... That's your lot

Here, we learn that God holds our lot... He gives it, supports it, and guards it

Whatever happens to us is from God... That might sound concerning at first

But as you get to know God as your God, it becomes a very stabilizing truth

As David considers his life and counts his blessings, he marvels: **READ v.6**

'The lines' refers to boundary lines, like on a property

A few years back, when we had a fence built along our property line in our backyard,

We had to make sure that it was built completely on our land

But imagine if we had gotten into a dispute over where our property line was

We could go to the city and find out exactly what we own and don't own

But then imagine if the city came back and told us, 'Your property line goes way

beyond what you think... Actually, your neighbour's entire backyard is within

your land... And the next neighbour's... That big tree over there is yours... The

nice pond there... That play structure... Actually, the whole block is yours'

We could say, 'Wow, the lines have fallen for us in pleasant places!'

Now, that wouldn't happen in our neighbourhoods... Yet that has happened in our spiritual lives

If the Lord is ours, we have received *way* beyond what we think

1 Corinthians 3 says that *all things* are ours in Christ:

The world, life, death, the present, the future—all is ours, and we are Christ's

God's grace to us is boundless... It's hard to even describe it as having boundary lines

What have you received from the Lord? Life and breath? Friends and family? Providence and

provision? Love, joy, and peace? Forgiveness and adoption? Salvation in Jesus? Hope? All

manner of earthly blessings, and even greater heavenly blessings to come?

Truly: **READ v.6...** Because God *is* our beautiful, wonderful inheritance

[tr] And when we recognize him as our greatest treasure, we see his grace everywhere
As David continues, he rejoices over at least two clear expressions of this grace
Here's how I decided to describe this: The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy...

... So **rejoice in his guidance and security (v.7-10)**

[r] We should rejoice in his guidance and security

First, his guidance: **READ v.7**... David praises God for the way he counsels and instructs him
Probably the clearest way God counsels us today is through his Word, the Bible

How many times has God's Word guided us in our lives?

Reminding us of God's instructions and commands, revealing God's character to us, encouraging us with his love and grace, reorienting us to the gospel, helping us trust him and love him and follow him more

And as we meditate on his Word, the Spirit can often recall it to our minds

Even as we lie in bed at night, he could be teaching us his wisdom

Now, the question is: How often do we rejoice in this fact or praise him for his guidance?

Without him, we'd be so lost... But with his wisdom, we have a lamp to light our path

And second, his security: **READ v.8**

Sometimes life can really seem to shake us up, can't it? But with God, we don't need to be
But notice: the reason David feels so unshakeable is because, he says: **READ v.8**

To be at someone's right hand is to be either an advocate in court or a companion for a journey

Both of which happen to be true for believers in Christ!

But David trusts the Lord is there because he's intentionally set his attention there: **READ v.8a**

If you have a picture of some of loved ones on your desk at work or as your phone wallpaper

Those pictures are meant to continually remind you of those people in your life

How blessed you've been by them, and how much you want to love them

Maybe they remind you to think of them, pray for them, or give them a call

It's kind of that idea here: We should have ways to keep the Lord always before us

So we can be continually aware of his love for us and our love for him

You can be creative in how to do this... Putting up Scriptures in your home to meditate on, setting alarms or reminders to read or pray, subscribing to pages, channels, or podcasts that draw your attention to the Lord, listening to edifying music, and so on

But how are we setting the Lord always before us?

I might also add for your consideration: If you haven't been setting the Lord always before you,

What *are* you setting before yourself instead? What constantly draws your attention?

Because if we set our hearts and minds on things of God, we won't be shaken

But on the other hand, if we set your minds and hearts on other things, we will be shaken

When *God* is set before us, it is the way to joy, as we realize our security in him:

READ v.9... We are souls and bodies... Spiritual and physical... God blesses both sides of us
So what does David mean by *'my flesh also dwells secure'*?

Did this mean he was totally safe, physically? Did David think he couldn't die?

No, I don't believe so... I think he was more just saying he didn't have to worry about it

Either God would protect him from physical harm or death

Or he would protect him through harm or death, to the other side

But either way, he could rest secure, knowing that God was in control and that God cared for him

If he saw himself as invincible now, he wouldn't have written v.10, which talks about him dying

Why could he rest secure in the Lord? **READ v.10a** (Hebrew for the realm of the dead)

READ v.10b (or 'decay')... In other words: '*You won't let me rot in the grave.*'

David did not say God would keep him from dying... He said God would save him from death

He would die... But God wouldn't abandon him, even then...

However, we may wonder: Didn't David's body rot?

When I visited Israel a number of years ago, I visited David's tomb

Presumably, his decaying corpse is there to this day

But is David there? Or is David's soul before the throne of God above?

God never abandoned David's soul to the grave, and one day his body will be resurrected

On one level, I believe David was speaking of hope beyond the grave for himself

But on another level, David was actually speaking about *someone* beyond himself

I'm not making this up... God's Word makes this connection for us

In Acts 2, as Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost, he quotes at length from Psalm 16

And he applies it directly to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ... Listen:

READ Acts 2:22-29... In other words, he died and rotted! So what gives? **READ 2:30-32**

Do you get what they were saying? This passage is most truly about David's son, Jesus!

Death and decay come for us all...

But decay didn't come for Jesus... He wasn't dead long enough!

And it's because *Jesus* died and rose again that we have hope beyond the grave as well

If you've never run to Jesus before, you need to... Without him, death and hell are your destiny

You really have no reason or hope for your heart to be truly glad and rejoice

But if you put your trust in him to save you, he'll become your portion and your cup

You'll have endless and eternal reasons to rejoice in the goodness of God

And you'll have a living hope for true life beyond this short life... Let us help you here

Aren't you tired of trying to manufacture short-lived joy on your own? Come to Christ

Aren't you tired of worrying about—or ignoring—your death? Come to Christ

Some of you who already love the Lord are also grappling with your possible death these days

Some of you may have no idea that your death is right around the corner

This psalm is for you today... Put your hope in this... You can rejoice *today* and *tomorrow*

The joy that this hope can instill in you is better than any happiness you will find in this world

Let's marvel at this grace!

[tr] When you reach your final day, he will not leave you in the grave... He'll call you home

And then, we will dwell in his presence... Which is how David finishes this song

To find our joy in God, he gives us his people, his grace, his guidance, and his security

But there is perhaps no greater place to find joy than in God's presence...

... So enjoy his presence (v.11)

[r] The Lord is the only source of true goodness and joy, so enjoy his presence

READ v.11... Anything we can experience here pales in comparison to there

For now, God reveals to us *'the path of life'*—how to live an abundant life now

But even more so, how to find true, eternal, perfect life with him one day
Did you know that Scripture describes our death day as the day of our greatest joy?

It does! In 2 Corinthians 5:4, it says the *'mortal [will] be swallowed up by life'*

That doesn't mean it's easy by any means... But it will result in beauty and life
Tim Counts says, *"The beauty in Christian death is that death is when we begin to really live, with the One we were made to live with, our Saviour... In Jesus, it is not death to die. This is why King David can sing, "in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." It's like arriving home to the family you love after a long trip—only a billion times better."*

READ v.11b... Fullness of joy... Complete, wholly-satisfying joy... Joy without a hint of sorrow
God is not a kill-joy, wanting us to just endure life, and then eternity... He wants us to enjoy it
Sometimes we imagine that God wants us miserable

That following him means a life of drudgery and probable sorrow

We may indeed have sorrow now, as we do have trouble in this world

But he has overcome the world, and joy comes with the morning!

Like, do you get that this is what God wants for us: life, joy, and pleasure? **READ v.11**

We can experience shades of the joy of the Lord's presence now

As his Spirit lives inside us, and he promises he'll be with us until the end of the age
But the joy we feel now will be dwarfed by the joy of being with him forever

In v.8, David reassured himself that God was at his right hand

But in v.11, he's brought to God's right hand... That will be so much better

Tim Keller says, *"If God is our greatest good, we get what can't be lost and will only increase—infinitely... Someday we will not just sense him at our side but see him face to face. In our resurrected bodies that will be endless, unimaginable pleasure. Now we have nothing to fear."*

CONCLUSION

Remember the blessings of God's eternal presence that we saw last week in Revelation 7?

"Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." (7:15-17)

READ v.11b-c... So if it's hard for you to find much joy these days, where are you looking?

Make the Lord your chosen portion today... Choose him!

He is our very path of life... He is our fullness of joy

PRAY

COMMUNION

BENEDICTION: