

"Golden Psalm"

Psalm 16

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Four Lakes Church of Christ



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Introduction:

»PPT» Over the past year or so, perhaps some of you have noticed that there has been an increased interest in panning for gold. With the price of gold being up, and with the economy not doing very well, a number of people have gone back to prospecting. This past Friday afternoon, for example, the price of gold was \$913 per ounce—a lot more than just a few years ago. And so we find that as people have been laid off, some have turned to looking for gold. In fact, several gold prospecting equipment stores have sprouted up in California, and with the price of gold so high right now, it has been said that on a good day you can find maybe \$30 worth of gold in half an hour or so. It is a lot of work, the people who sell the pans make a lot more than those who find the gold, and yet nevertheless it is an interesting sign of the times in which we are now living.

With this in mind, this morning I would invite you to turn with me to the book of Psalms—Psalm 16—a Psalm with a rather interesting title. »PPT» In our pew Bibles, Psalm 16 is found on page 867. As we look at the heading, we find that this particular Psalm is described as, "A Mikhtam of David." What in the world is a Mikhtam? Well, there are only five other Psalms that are described in this way (Psalms 56-60). Scholars are divided, but some translate the word "mikhtam" as something that is "golden" or "precious." The term was translated into the Greek version of the Old Testament by a word meaning "tablet inscription." The word refers to stamping or engraving something, and so it refers to a song so precious as to be worthy of being engraved on a durable tablet—a song too important to merely be written on paper, but a song so precious that it needs to be stamped or inscribed in gold. Psalm 16, therefore, has been referred to as the "Golden Psalm."

It is a Psalm that is worthy of our study, and like those tiny flakes of gold in the rivers of California, it is a Psalm that is worth the effort. It is a golden nugget. It is worth digging into. If you will, then, please look with me at all 11 verses of Psalm 16...

- ¹ *Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in You.*
- ² *I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good besides You."*
- ³ *As for the saints who are in the earth,
They are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.*
- ⁴ *The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god will be multiplied;*

- I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood,
Nor will I take their names upon my lips.*
- ⁵ *The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup;
You support my lot.*
- ⁶ *The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places;
Indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me.*
- ⁷ *I will bless the LORD who has counseled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.*
- ⁸ *I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*
- ⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.*
- ¹⁰ *For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*
- ¹¹ *You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

As we look back over these **11 verses**, I would like for us to apply what David wrote here to our lives today—Even here in the opening years of the 21st Century, how can we be as happy and as confident as King David was nearly 3,000 years ago?

I. One of the first things we notice is that **DAVID PUT HIS TRUST IN GOD AS HE PRAISED GOD SIMPLY FOR BEING GOD. ▶PPT▶**

With great confidence, David starts out in **verse 1** by saying, ***“Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in you.”*** He does not start out with a whimper, ***“Dear God, I’m so sorry to bother you again, but it’s me, David, again.”*** No! He starts out with boldness, ***“Preserve me, O God, for I take refuge in you”***—the words of a man who had made the firm decision that God will be #1 in his life—no matter what. God was David’s refuge. The word ***“refuge”*** refers to a shelter, to a safe place where we can go during a storm. In our house, the safe place during a tornado is in the basement over in the corner behind the furnace—underground, concrete on two sides, furnace on one side and water heater on the other—it is a safe place. In the Bible, God is described as a shield, as a rock, as a fortress, as a stronghold, and in the same way, David was saying to God, ***“You are my shelter. You are the safe place where I can always go, and I praise you for that!”***

In **verse 2**, he goes on to praise God with a stunning revelation, ***“You are my Lord; I have no good besides You.”*** King David understands that God is everything and that without God there is no good thing. We learn in the New Testament book of James that, ***“Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow”*** (**James 1:17**). David understood that all good things come from God.

Down in **verse 4**, he goes on to make a contrast—the good things from God as opposed to, ***“The sorrows of those who have bartered for another god.”*** He says that those sorrows, ***“...will be multiplied,”*** and so he makes a pledge concerning the false gods, ***“I shall not pour out their drink offerings of blood, nor will I take their names upon my lips.”***

David, therefore, is committed to the one true God of heaven, and this is a valuable truth—a golden nugget that is still valuable even 3,000 years after it was first written. King David put his trust in God and praised God simply for being God. Let us do the same thing today!

II. There is a second valuable truth we can emphasize in this brief Psalm, and that is: Not only did David treasure God, but we find in verse 3 that KING DAVID ALSO TREASURED GOD’S PEOPLE. »PPT»

“As for the saints who are in the earth, they are the majestic ones in whom is all my delight.” Of all of the things that David could have been thankful for, we find here that King David praised God for the great blessing of associating with the saints. In the New Testament, a saint is simply a Christian—someone who has been set apart, someone who is different from the world. And so the question for us this morning is this: Are we as wise as King David? Do we appreciate the blessing of spending time with God’s people? David looked at God’s people as being ***“majestic”*** or ***“glorious.”*** Perhaps we do not look at each other in the church as being ***“majestic,”*** or ***“glorious,”*** and yet we are! We can thank God that we do not live the Christian life on our own, but we live it together with other Christians. We eat together, we study together, we pray together, we do things together, we laugh together, we cry together, we serve together, and we praise God for the Christian fellowship. If we love God, then we will love our Christian family, and we will look forward to spending time together. As the Bible says in **Hebrews 10:24-25**, ***“...let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”*** King David treasured God’s people.

III. There is a third nugget of valuable truth in this golden psalm (we see it in verses 5-6), and that is, KING DAVID PRAISED GOD FOR HIS PORTION, HIS HERITAGE, AND HIS INHERITANCE. »PPT»

We know that a person’s inheritance was so important back then. Back in ancient times, a person’s whole place in life was determined by his inheritance. You might remember that the inheritance was so important to Jacob that he tricked his father Isaac—he wanted it that bad—to him, it was worth losing that relationship. And then, years later, when the nation of Israel moved into the Promised Land, each tribe was given a piece of land as an inheritance, as a portion. We read about the boundary lines being drawn between the various tribes, but as the land was being divided, the tribe of the Levites was left out. We think, ***“Well surely there must have been***

some kind of mistake. After all, the Levites were the priests, and the priests were to serve in the temple." But please listen to what happened in **Numbers 18:20**, *"Then the LORD said to Aaron, 'You shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel.'"* In other words, the joy of serving the Lord was going to be the inheritance of the Levites, and they were to live off of the 10% that was to be collected from the other tribes.

And so perhaps in a similar way, even though he was not a Levite, King David said, *"The LORD is the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You support my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; indeed, my heritage is beautiful to me."* David, then, was not thinking in terms of gold or land, but David understood (in a spiritual sense) that God was his portion—God was his inheritance. God was everything King David ever wanted.

Over in the New Testament, we see a similar attitude in the life of the apostle Paul. Paul apparently came from a wealthy background, highly educated, well-respected, and yet when he became a Christian, he gave it all up. As Paul said in **Philippians 3:7-9**, *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him..."* Like Paul, King David was also satisfied having God as his inheritance.

IV. There is something else that made David happy—another nugget of truth we can apply to our situation today, and that is, KING DAVID TREASURED THE WORD OF GOD. »PPT»

As David says in **verses 7-8**, *"I will bless the LORD who has counseled me; indeed, my mind instructs me in the night. I have set the LORD continually before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken."* And so in **verse 7**, the Lord was King David's counselor. The Lord was David's attorney, the Lord gave him advice. And with that advice in his heart, King David says that his mind instructs him in the night. As I see it, then, David is referring here to his conscience, and his conscience was properly trained to make decisions in the right direction. Or, as the Bible goes on to say in **Psalms 119:105**, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* Not that we necessarily read the Bible as we make every single decision in life, but we know the Scriptures to the point where God is our counselor—God is our constant advisor. And so we find that King David treasured the word of God, just as we can also do today.

V. As we come to the end of this Psalm, we find another little chunk of truth as we discover that KING DAVID HAD HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. »PPT»

Because he has followed the word of God, King David says (in **verses 9-11**),

- ⁹ *Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.*
- ¹⁰ *For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol;
Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.*
- ¹¹ *You will make known to me the path of life;
In Your presence is fullness of joy;
In Your right hand there are pleasures forever.*

We find, then, that God wants to bless us—He causes us to *“dwell securely,”* He will not *“abandon”* us, He makes known to us the *“path of life,”* He gives us the *“fullness of joy,”* and He blesses us with *“pleasures forever.”* The Lord’s blessings are permanent. He gives us hope for the future. The alternative, of course, is found in **Proverbs 14:12**, *“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”* The end of godly living, though, is permanent joy. Death is not the end, but as David also said in **Psalm 23**, *“I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”* David understood that physical death was not the end.

And here at the end (in **verse 10**), we have a strange little statement—a statement that was never fully understood and appreciated until we see it again in **Acts 2**, just a few weeks after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. As it was read for is in the scripture reading for this morning, Peter used this passage to point people to Jesus. He made the point that David’s body had decayed—it was still right there in Jerusalem—but that the body of Jesus was gone, that the Lord had been raised from the dead. And the apostle Peter went on to use this golden nugget from **Psalm 16** to encourage people to turn to the Lord, to demand that they repent of their sins, and to order people to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins. Whether he knew it at the time or not, I do not know, but King David made a prophecy about the resurrection of Christ.

As Christians, we have hope for the future because of the resurrection of Jesus. You know, in the catacombs just outside of Rome, the contrast between the inscriptions of Christians and those who were not is dramatic. Among the pagans, the inscriptions describe death as an eternal sleep, the grave as a final home; there is a sense of great sadness—this is it. But among the tombs of the Christians, we see words like peace, we see the anchor as a symbol of hope, we see inscriptions like, **“Weep not, my child, death is not eternal,”** and, **“Alexander is not dead but lives above the stars, and his body rests in the tomb.”** We see statements and symbols of great hope. What a contrast! As Christians, we have hope for the future.

Conclusion:

So here we are nearly 3,000 years later, and we discover that this Psalm is not so much about King David as it is about Jesus! And so it applies to us as Christians—we have discovered a Golden Psalm—a **Psalm** so important that it needed to be

engraved or inscribed on something permanent—a **Psalm** for all of us to study and appreciate. We have discovered some of the blessings that made King David so happy.

- He put his trust in God.
- He enjoyed spending time with God's people.
- He took pleasure in his inheritance.
- He treasured God's word.
- And he had at least some level of hope that this life was not all there is—that something better is on the way.

This morning, then, let us apply this **Psalm** as Peter applied it in **Acts 2**—a **Psalm** that points us to the Lord—a **Psalm** that encourages us as Christians. As Christians, we have hope that is worth more than all of the gold in this world!

If you are not yet a Christian, you need to go to God and work it out. The Bible says that God sent His only Son as a sacrifice for our sins. We respond to that sacrifice with awe—we are amazed at what the Lord has done. We turn to God in faithful, loving obedience. We turn away from sin. We tell those around us about our belief in Jesus as the Son of God. And then the Bible describes baptism as our appeal to God for a good conscience. Our obedience to Christ in baptism is almost like a prayer to God—baptism is our *"appeal"* to have our sins forgiven. If you have any questions, we would love to talk with you sometime soon. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

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