

*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.*

Psalms 16:1-11

This past week, in researching for my sermon for today, I came to learn that the body of Dr. David Livingstone, the renowned medical missionary, is buried in London, England at Westminster Abbey, in the country where he was born - but his heart is buried in Africa, the country he loved. After Livingstone passed away from malaria, dysentery and internal bleeding - the natives in a small village in Zambia removed his heart and dug a hole under a tree near the spot where he died, where they then placed the heart of the man who dearly loved them and whom they loved and respected. And so, the question for those of us here today is: “If our hearts were to be buried in the place we loved the most during our lives here on earth, where would it be?” Our answer to that question is not so much about separating our hearts from our bodies, as it is about what we treasure in our hearts.

In Matthew 6:21 Jesus said: “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” Our Lord said this because he knew of the constant temptations we all face as his followers that will distract us and direct us away from the power and joy and the fulfillment that we can have in our relationship with God when we make Him the supreme treasure of our lives. Spoken in the context of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was warning us of the temptations of getting distracted from what truly matters by seeking treasures of the world that we live in, rather treasures of the Kingdom of God. “*Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” is the battle cry to make war against the overabundance of treasures that are constantly and continually vying to be the greatest treasure of our hearts.

The Bible tells us that the “*heart*” of our lives is the control center of our lives, which means our “real” life, our inner life as well as our outer life, is a reflection of the yearnings of our hearts. Proverbs 4:23 says: “*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.*” And so, we must guard and watch over our hearts so that our hearts would passionately follow hard after the things of God - by joyfully embracing Jesus Christ the most supreme treasure of our hearts and lives. Today we ask ourselves: “What is the greatest treasure of our hearts?” In an entitlement-minded, customer-service, rights-oriented world that is filled with so many choices - even those of us who claim Jesus Christ can get confused as to what treasures capture our hearts. Most people treasure their families, spouses, children, relatives, and friends. Society tells us we should treasure *ourselves* - our needs, our wants, our desires. And the retail market accommodates that by supplying our needs, our wants, our desires with products and possessions and position and power. We are given the choice to choose how much, how many, how far, how high, how deep, and what kind – and what size, color, weight, brand name, manufacturer, and what kind of guarantee or warranty can be provided.

Today we continue in our series of messages on the Psalms – and today we are looking at Psalm 16 which is a prayer of worship written by King David. David is a significant character in the Bible. He was the young shepherd who became a great king; the young boy who slew a giant with a single stone; the man who went into hiding out of fear for his life - from numerous Kings and countless armies and King Saul and from his own son Absalom. David was the King whose descendants would bring forth the long-promised Messiah in the human form of Jesus Christ, in spite of the fact that David committed adultery and murder and fearfully tried in vain to hide what he had done. We look at King David today because in the midst of his victories and his defeats and his own struggles with his own sin - David yearned, longed for, desperately sought to have an intimate relationship with the most sovereign God of the universe. In spite of his own personal failings, he treasured God more than anything or anyone else. God was King David's *supreme treasure*. So much so that God Himself declared: "*I have found in David . . . a man after my own heart*" (Acts 13:22). In our text for this morning, as David worships God in prayer, he tells us why we also should supremely treasure God,

*"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge"* (Psalms 16:1). We should treasure God because He is our *Gracious Protector*. David speaks of this by describing God as a home, a haven, a refuge, a place where we can go and be safe. David knew his share of danger. He was a veteran of many struggles, battles, and wars. Most often he was on the run, in fear of his own life. David was a veteran of: "*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.*" We don't know whether David wrote this at a time when his life was in imminent danger or if he was reflecting on the general course of his life. But the fact is, we all need a place of refuge and protection, both in this life and for all eternity. Temporally, we instinctively try to protect ourselves from harm and danger. We avoid risks that could cause us harm. We wear seat belts when we drive. We avoid smoking and doing things that can cause harm us. While these are prudent measures, the bottom line is that our eternal God, who spoke the universe into existence by His power, is our gracious protector. Colossians 1:17 tells us in Christ, God holds "*all things hold together.*" If God didn't protect us, we would disintegrate. We need the Lord's protection constantly. But even more than temporal refuge, we need an eternal place of refuge from the frightening wrath of God that is coming on the whole world because of sin. In this Jesus is our safest refuge. His death on a cross for our sin in our place forgives us and preserves us.

*"I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you'"* (Psalms 16:2). We should treasure God because He is our *Sovereign Presence*. Regardless of what dangers/fears we face in life, the only true safe place we have *is in the presence of the sovereign God of all the Universe*. The refuge that God provides is *our personal relationship with Him*. David knew that his personal well being - the well-being of his soul, his refuge every day and for all eternity - depended on his personal relationship with the living God. Sadly, we look security in so many places other than God. Many of those places are artificial; some we even make up for ourselves. Often our places of refuge are geographical or social. But throughout his life David learned the only true safe place on earth is in the Sovereign Presence of our Supreme God. "*I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.'*"

The story is told of a Christian woman in her senior years whose age began to show in her memory. She had once known much of the Bible by heart. Eventually the only verse that stayed with her was 2 Timothy 1:12: "*I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I committed unto him against that day.*" As time went on, she lost more of that verse, and she only remembered: "*That which I have committed unto him.*" Toward the end of her life, as she lay on her death bed, her family noticed her lips moving – and all they could hear was the one word she still remembered from her favourite verse, which she kept repeating over and over again: "*Him . . . Him . . . Him.*" When we come to the end of life all that will matter is "*Him.*" But that should also true while we are still alive here on earth. Our ultimate delight should always be in God. The only true safe place in this life and in the life to come is in the presence of our joyful relationship with God.

*“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”* (Psalms 16:3-4). We should treasure God because He the foundation of *Righteous Relationships*. While David speaks of the joy of treasuring God through our relationship with God – he takes a moment to mention how we should live out our lives with one another as God’s people through Jesus Christ. David teaches us how we are to do so by means of *contrast*. First he calls God’s people “*saints*” which literally means “those set apart for God” – and he says they are “*the excellent ones*” – which means they are to be a people who exhibit highly distinguished spiritual and moral qualities. In contrast he then speaks of “*those who run after another god*” – those who will struggle with multiple “*sorrows*” because they find their joy in treasuring other gods and trusting in other gods for security. David refuses to endorse what they do; he will not even lower himself to naming their gods: “*their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.*”

1 Corinthians 15:33 the apostle Paul writes: “*Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company ruins good morals.’*” The meaning here is a warning against being associated with people who will draw us away from God. The implications here are vast for us. In our world today *unrighteous relationships – as well as recreation, technology and media* – predominately draw us away from God. Regardless of how we might all try to defend any of these in our lives – they most often easily become our treasure, our joy, our security, our refuge. This is why the Bible is full of “*one another*” texts. If we are “*saints*” who are the “*excellent ones*” we need “*one another*” to keep “*one another*” from trusting in the gods of relationships, recreation, technology, and media; reminding “*one another*” there is “*no good apart*” from God; exhorting “*one another*” to find our greatest treasure in God. God’s Word tell us that we are to care for one another, love one another, accept one another, bear one another’s burdens, serve one another, pray for one another, forgive one another, and live in harmony with one another.

David is telling us that when we joyfully find our most supreme treasure in God – we will have a common communion of heart with others who are also faithfully trying to do so. In essence David is saying: “As I take refuge in the joyful sovereign presence of my safest refuge in God, I will find myself in the company of others who are tucked safely under the shadows of God’s wings. We are commonly linked at the heart by our commitment to trust in God and live for God. Our confidence is in Him, not in the things of this world. We are citizens of heaven and fellow pilgrims on this earth.

*“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”* (Psalms 16:5-6). We should treasure God because He is our *Beautiful Inheritance*. David continues to proclaim God as his most supreme treasure. By using the words “*portion*” and “*cup*” he is signifying that God was all he needed to satisfy the *hunger* of his heart and soul. Besides his “*portion*” and his “*cup*” the Lord has also assigned him “*a beautiful inheritance*” which God Himself has measured out for him: “*The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.*” This harkens back to the nation of Israel who came out 40 years of wandering in wilderness into the promised land; as Joshua divided the land up, the people of God who had been freed from the bondage of slavery joyfully received their own property for the first time in many generations. Imagine the joy: “*The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance!*” This is the “*beautiful inheritance*” we receive when, by God’s sovereign grace, we are freed from the bondage of sin and death and are given the “*beautiful inheritance*” of eternal life through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In Ephesians 1:3-4 the apostle Paul writes: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*” This is the “*beautiful inheritance*” we will share with the people of God. Jesus said: “*Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19:28).

*“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.”* David was at war much of his life. For many years he was also a fugitive with no home; he slept on the ground and often caves were his shelter. But despite his struggles and fears David was not only *survived* but he also *thrived* – because God had promised him *“a beautiful inheritance.”* While that was not yet his when he wrote this psalm, he was secure in knowing God would do so. In treasuring God, David possessed all that God promised and everything he needed. This is why David could write: *“Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever”* (Psalm 73:25-26). In God we have everything our hearts could ever want or need!

The story is told that before becoming king, George VI (Bertie), was a committed follower of Jesus Christ, who often attended a Brethren assembly in London. But he had to discontinue the practice once he became the King of the United Kingdom, who was also the sovereign King of the church of England. In the course of his duties King George came to Canada and his official visit brought him to British Columbia. The Canadian officials thought King George might like to meet a native born chief. The one chosen for the honour was a well known and influential native chief. On the day they met the chief was told to sing something for the king; the officials supposed he would sing a native war song. But the native chief was a Christian; he had something else in mind. The officials were surprised when the chief began to sing: *“I’d rather have Jesus than silver or gold, I’d rather be His than have riches untold, I’d rather be led by His nail pierced hand- than to be the king of a vast domain. Or be held in sin’s dread sway; I’d rather have Jesus than anything this world affords today.”* The stunned officials waited to see what King George would do. The king went over, took the Chief by the hand and said: *“I’d rather have Jesus, too.”* This is the same treasure of the heart we hear when King David prays: *“The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup . . . 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”* (Psalms 16:7-8). We should treasure God because He is our *Wonderful Counselor*. David again declares God to be his supreme treasure: *“I bless the LORD!”* Whether it be in the darkness of *“night”* or the light of day, God *“instructs”* (guides) hearts that treasure Him into the safest refuge of His will and His purpose. This is the deep transformative work of God’s sovereign grace deep within our hearts and souls when we come to faith in Christ. By a providential work of the Holy Spirit we are drastically and dramatically changed - worked upon, given a different heart, a new spirit. Because God is the One who gives us His *“counsel”* - even in the darkest of nights God instructs our hearts to treasure and follow Jesus.

But we are also reading here that if we are to walk with God in the fullness of the new life He has sovereignly given us through Jesus Christ – we will be *“shaken”* by struggles and fears when *we do not make God the supreme treasure* of our hearts and lives. David says: *“I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”* God *“gives counsel”* spiritually, emotionally, vocationally, socially, morally, physically, and intellectually. When we *“set the LORD always before”* us – we will *“not be shaken”* spiritually, emotionally, vocationally, socially, morally, physically, and intellectually. When God is *first* in our hearts and lives, we will be secure and stable.

*“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”* (Psalms 16:9-11). We should treasure God because He is our *Eternal Joy*. The safest refuge of supremely treasuring God’s sovereign presence is the assurance that God will eternally and joyfully preserve our lives and souls even when we are faced with death. David could *“dwell secure”* in his *“flesh”* trusting God would *“not abandon”* him *“to Sheol”* (the grave) *“or let his holy one (Jesus) “see corruption.”*

David took comfort in the fact that God would not, at that time, allow his body to die and decay in the grave. Because God was David's "refuge" and "portion" and "cup"; because God had promised him a "beautiful inheritance"; because God had given him "counsel" and "instructed" his heart; because he had "set" God before anything else - David was not "shaken" and he rejoiced because with God his "flesh" could "dwell secure" even when confronted with death. Death posed no threat to David because David was already experiencing the supreme treasure of the sovereign presence of God. But even when that day came, David could proclaim: "My heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure" because the "path of life" he had already walked in God's presence in this life caused him to know the joyful anticipation living in God's presence in the future: "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore"

David wrote these words about a thousand years before the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus; he lived in the hope of the cross and the empty tomb. By faith David believed God would fulfill His promise in sending a Savior; he prayed that the gracious protection of God would save him from sin and death. God fulfilled that promise; on this side of the cross we no longer just hope in that promise. Jesus Christ *has* come; he *did* die on a cross for our sins; he *has* risen from the dead – and he *has* given us the same promise he gave David. In John 11:25-26 Jesus said: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" Well, if we do believe this, we should live out our lives like that.

In Philippians 1:21 the apostle Paul said: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." A few verses later he then proclaims: "But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, 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 and be found in him" (Philippians 3:7-9). What Paul is saying here is the person whose supreme treasure is God through Jesus Christ – is a person who knows overwhelming joy because they know they really have nothing to lose in this life because Jesus Christ (who is God) is *everything!* Augustine once prayerfully wrote: "You have made us for Yourself O God, and the heart of man is restless until it finds its rest in You." We were made by God in the image of God to live with God, so we might treasure God for the glory of God in the presence of God where there is the "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore."

We will struggle in life, when don't see our lives that way. We have no problem recognizing the distress of a fish out of water. It gasps, it twitches, it convulses until you put it back into the water because fish were made to live in water. Well, we aren't fish, we are people, and we weren't created to live in water, but - we are human beings created by God in the image of God to live for the glory of God, and we were created to treasure God and live in the presence of God. Our struggle is that because of our sin, we were cast out of the living presence of God – we are now like fish out of water. We gasp, twitch and convulse because we are out of our created element of treasuring God and in the living presence of God. We are no longer in the environment for which we were made. And so here on earth we are always going to be distressed until we acknowledge and embrace the reality that true struggle in life is the struggle of not treasuring God and living out of the presence of God. While it is true, in one sense, that we are always living in God's presence - the "presence" David spoke of here is the deep, joyful, intimate, sovereign presence of God within our hearts and souls we were created for.

It is my understanding that ever since Canadian Confederation was formed in 1867 each generation of Canadians has been (on average) twice as wealthy as the preceding generation. In spite of our current economy, it is also my understanding our generation's income is, on average, is twice as much as our parents. The truth is, we have more disposable income and time than generations before us. And if you look at how we spend our disposable income and time – things such as relationships, recreation, , technology, and media - it's clear we are clearly pursuing our own joy and pleasure.

The problem now is, there is always something new or improved that is being put before us in every area of life – which causes us to become unsatisfied with what we have, or maybe just interested at looking what is new and improved. But there is a great danger in this. In reality we in North America are the most affluent culture in all of history. And because our free market culture is also built on a foundation of individual rights and personal entitlements – we have failed to understand something that is essentially crucial to the human soul, and that is this: *To pursue joy and pleasure is always to be deprived of joy and pleasure. To look for joy and pleasure is always to overlook joy and pleasure. To set out to get joy and pleasure is to think that joy and pleasure is "gettable" - something that can be acquired.* But God's Word tells us that true joy and true pleasure can only be found *in God alone*. True joy and true pleasure cannot be detached from God. Joy and pleasure characterizes God. Because God is God He profoundly finds joy and pleasure in being God. When we surrender our hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, we then enter the true joy and true pleasure of God, where God Himself rejoices – with great and glorious pleasure forever and ever. Joy and pleasure are found in the intimacy of the Person of Jesus Christ. They cannot be got or bought; they are gifts of God.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that Jesus: *"For the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."* The *"joy that was set before"* Jesus was the joy of going back home and living forever in the presence of God. And in also being God Himself, no doubt being back home gave Jesus great and glorious pleasure. But to get back to glory, Christ had to go to the cross; it was there where he struggled and he suffered outside of the presence of God. As he hung there in pain and torment, Jesus cried out: *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Mark 15:34). Jesus words here reflect the horrific agony of life outside the presence of God.

Sometimes life can seem like that for us too - whether it's about what is going on in the world or what's going on in our own lives. Sin has painfully cast the long dark shadow across our lives on this earth. Our struggles reveal we are no longer in the environment for which we were made. In Romans 8:19-24 we read: *"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."*

Ever since the fall of humanity of being separated from God for not truly treasuring God in the Garden of Eden, all of creation has been experiencing the *"groaning"* of the deadly weight of sin. We all share in that same struggle. Yet, we in Christ *"groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoptions as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved."* Jesus is our safest refuge, our portion, our cup our *"beautiful inheritance."* Jesus counsels us and instructs us; When he is at our right hand, we cannot be shaken! The only true safe place in this life and in the life to come is in the presence of God through a joyful relationship of supremely treasuring Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. He is the greatest, most valuable, worthy, glorious, eternal treasure that our hearts could ever know. King David declared the eternal joy of treasuring God's presence when he proclaimed to God: *"In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* David affirmed that also affirmed in Psalm 107:9 when he wrote of God: *"He satisfies the longing soul, and the hungry soul he fills with good things."* Jesus also affirmed this in Matthew 5:6 when he said: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."* When God is the most glorious treasure of our hearts we will see God not for who we think He is, but for who He truly is – and our hearts will be glad, and our souls will rejoice and our flesh will know peace, because we will be on the path of eternal joy in presence with the One who is the greatest and most glorious treasure in all the universe, forever and ever. Jesus said: *"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."* Amen! 2018-08-05 Pastor Leland Botzet Arrowsmith Baptist Church