

Joy for the New Year

Please open your Bible to the 16th Psalm, or turn to page _____ in the Bible under the chair in front of you. Next week, Lord willing, we will jump back into our normal practice of walking through books of the Bible. And we'll be back in Matthew chapter 13 and the parables of Jesus about the kingdom of God.

I don't know if you're in the habit of making New Year's Resolutions. Every year, I see some helpful lists of questions to ask yourself and commitments that people make. And then there are also those who push back on that and call us to live with simple faithfulness or work on small lifestyle changes rather than large lofty goals. But wherever you find yourself – eager for a new challenge or just wanting to simplify things in your life – my desire is that all of us would find our joy in the Lord in 2026. I'm praying that as a church, we would learn to find our joy and contentment and satisfaction in God this year. And to that end, I have been praying Psalm 16 over myself and you.

So to that end, let's start this year by studying this song of David, written many years ago, but inspired by the Spirit of God for you and for me to apply to our lives today.

Read **Psalm 16**

Intro

How do you find joy? Where is it found in your life? What brings you joy?

A woman named Ingrid Fetell Lee did a TED talk in 2018 entitled, "Where joy hides and where to find it." (show picture) She had been in design school, and at the end of the semester, she had to display all of her projects that she had made. And all the professors would come by and give their unfiltered opinions. This was, of course, very intimidating. But then one of her professors looked at her projects and told her, "Your work gives me the feeling of joy."



And that was a puzzling response for her. It was so curious that it caused her to change the direction of her career. She became obsessed with the question, "How can material objects – things like buildings or furniture and décor or utensils and everyday objects – how can *they* bring joy?"

So she went on a world-wide search. And she found a theme through the wide range of answers, things like balloons or fireworks or swimming pools or confetti or ice cream with sprinkles or cherry blossoms or googly eyes. Things that are bright and signify abundance and life. And so she put her findings in a book, which then became her brand and a whole industry like these things sometimes do. This became her thing.

She basically advocates for brighter colors and soft, rounded lines in places that may otherwise default to being monotone and lifeless – think of many office buildings or hospitals or nursing homes. She argues that people ought to integrate these objects and colors that provoke joy in our every day lives.

She concluded her TED talk by saying, “Each moment of joy is small, but over time, they add up to more than the sum of their parts. And so maybe instead of chasing after happiness, what we should be doing is embracing joy and finding ways to put ourselves in the path of it more often. Deep within us, we all have this impulse to seek out joy in our surroundings. And we have it for a reason. Joy isn't some superfluous extra. It's directly connected to our fundamental instinct for survival. On the most basic level, the drive toward joy is the drive toward life.”¹

Now, I don't think she was trying to be philosophical or religious, but she was being both, wasn't she? She was tapping into one of the grand themes of the Bible, which is joy. In her TED talk, she talks about joy hiding in our world. And she had to become like the detective Nancy Drew to find it.

But when we read the Bible, we see that God isn't hiding joy. He is saying, “Here it is! It's Me! I am where joy is found.” And that's what David expresses here in Psalm 16.

As we study the Psalms, we want to get into the mind of the author and what he's feeling and how he's thinking. We don't just want to parse out what the specific words mean. We want to trace the flow of thought. And just briefly, the flow of thought in this Psalm moves from David's request in verse 1 that God would preserve him, to the praise of God for who He is for David, and then the expression of joy because God will indeed preserve Him from what he fears most, and we'll get to what that is more specifically,

¹ https://www.ted.com/talks/ingrid_fetell_lee_where_joy_hides_and_how_to_find_it

later. So it goes from a request to God for preservation -> to the praise of God -> to joy in God because He will indeed answer the prayer for protection. And the conclusion is found in verse 11...

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

This is where David lands and where he invites us to rest ourselves. He declares his conviction that God has made known the path to true life. And that path leads to the very presence of God where there are pleasures forevermore, starting now and extending on into eternity. That's why this whole Psalm is sometimes classified as a 'confidence psalm' because it speaks of David's confidence and joy in the Lord.

So we don't need a TED talk to find joy, we have this ancient path to finding joy. Here we see the example of David expressing for us and really inviting us to also share in the joy He has found in the Lord. So he's not just talking about his own unique experience, he's calling us to join Him in finding our joy in God.

So let's learn from David about joy. And we'll see that joy is found only in God. That joy is found truly in God. And finally, that joy is found securely in God.

Joy is only in God

We'll look first at verses 1-4. In the inscription or the heading, this psalm is called a 'Miktam' of David, and we don't exactly know what that means. We also see that superscription over Psalms 56-60, and those psalms have to do with times when David is in trouble or danger. So maybe it has to do with that? This could be another time when David is in danger. Or it may be some sort of musical notation or something like that, but we don't know for sure.

In verse one, David opens by making a request of God. Look there...

Psalm 16:1

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

So David will eventually get to the place of confidence and joy in God, but that's not where he starts. He begins by pleading with God that He would protect and deliver Him.

David's pursuit of joy in God isn't naïve. He's not just closing his eyes to the troubles we face in this life. Just like us, David had his share of troubles. He had enemies. He battled with temptation and sin. He faced loss and sorrow and grief. He lived in the real world, just like us.

And here he's crying out to God. God, I need you to preserve me! I am taking refuge in you! I'm hiding in you!

There are a lot of new babies around here, and praise God for that. What a blessing children are. But I've had this experience numerous times – a baby or a toddler is being held by mom or dad, and I'll say hi or try to wave or interact with the child. And they will sort of shy away from me and snuggle into mom or dad. It's like – that's someone I don't know, that seems scary, I want to be protected by my parents. I'm taking refuge in them.

I think that's the idea here. I want you to protect me, God, because I am hiding in you.

The idea of taking refuge is used many times in the psalms, often with this idea of being protected by God or on the flip side – as a rebuke against those who try to take refuge in other things. God's people sometimes seek refuge in other nations like Egypt or Assyria because they don't trust in the Lord alone.

And what does it look like to take refuge in the Lord alone? Look at verse 2...

Psalm 16:2

I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."

So notice this expression of faith – I say to the LORD. Notice how it's all capitalized, that's the translators way of letting us know that the word here is Yahweh, God's covenant name. David says to Yahweh, you are my 'Lord' and the word there is 'Adonia' or master. David is saying, "I belong to you, my Lord. You're the one in charge. You get to tell me how to live. I submit to you."

And this isn't a bitter truth that he's reluctant about. No, he's delighted that Yahweh is His Lord, so he says, "I have no good apart from you." You are the source of all that is good. Every good and perfect gift comes to us from the Father of Lights as the book of James tells us.

I'm not looking to anyone else as my Lord because you are the one who is behind everything good in my life.

So David looks up and expresses his gratitude to God for all the good that he enjoys. And then he also looks around. Look at verse 3...

Psalm 16:3

As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.

Now, David isn't putting his delight in the people of God in opposition to his joy in God Himself. No, he's saying, "I delight in your people – those who have trusted in you as Lord and recognized you as the source of all that is good." Your people help me find my joy in you, God.

Sometimes, people think that they can somehow love God and hate His people. But that's just not possible. 1st John clearly teaches that if you hate His people, you do not love God. And we know how hard that can be, right? People can be difficult.

A lot of the Purdue students have been away on Christmas break. And I'll admit, I've said this before - campus is great if it weren't for the students. Now, I do love people themselves. I love the students that I know. But it is a lot nicer to drive and park and enjoy campus without so many students there. But that's not really how it works, is it? You wouldn't have a great campus if it wasn't for the students who attend and pay tuition and all of that to make it possible.

So yes, people can be difficult. That's true even in the church, maybe especially so. We may be tempted to think – church is great except for the people. Because loving people involves inconvenience and sacrifice and forgiveness and patience. That's true. But it's also true that the people of God are a great source of delight for your soul. They are the excellent ones.

So let me encourage you not to shrink away from investing in relationships with other believers. Go to a grow group even when it's inconvenient. Get to know someone else. Have them over to your home. Let them get to know you. Be vulnerable and honest. When we're with other Christians, we are to stir one another up for love and good works. We remind each other what's really true and important in life.

So David says, my Lord is behind all the good in my life. And I delight in His people. But there are others who are not submitted to God. And they are not headed for joy but for sorrow. Verse 4...

Psalm 16:4

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.

In contrast to the people of God, those who seek other gods will experience sorrow after sorrow. They're offering drink offerings of blood, making sacrifices to these false gods. And he says, I won't even say the names of these false gods.

There were plenty of false gods in that day, just like there are today. And let's not look down on those people as though they were less sophisticated than we are today because they worshipped pagan idols and make sacrifices to statues or things carved out of stone. Think about it – why did people worship these false gods? What were they after? Security, safety, money, power, children, successful business – all the same things people clamor for today. Only today, our idols may look a little different.

People still sacrifice time and money and energy to pursue those same things, it just looks like neglecting your family to advance in your career or compromising what God calls you to do in order to pursue a relationship you want or taking shortcuts at work so that you can climb the ladder a little higher. It's still running after other gods.

And David says, that way leads to sorrow upon sorrow. It won't lead to joy, so I won't go that way.

So the point of verses 1-4 is pretty simple. Joy is found only in God. It's not found in pursuing the false gods of this world and all of their empty promises. The Lord is our master and He alone is the source of all the good that we enjoy.

So how do we get this joy found in God? It's found by turning away from the false gods and idols of this world and turning toward the Lord and pursuing Him as the one who is my Adonia, my Lord.

Joy is found only in the Lord. And then secondly, Joy is found truly in God.

Joy is truly in God

What do I mean by that? Well, when David expresses his delight in God, it's not a false joy or just something that he feels like he needs to express because it's good for him.

It's not like eating salad with no dressing. Or getting up early in the morning to exercise, or worse – run. Or like doing a cold plunge, you know? Getting in ice cold water for all the benefits that come after. And it may be worth it for some people. But I think – at what cost? Can it really be worth it?

Finding joy in the Lord is not like that. It's not like, "I hate this, but it's good for me." That's not what he's saying. He's saying, my joy is truly in God. So look at verses 5-7...

Psalm 16:5-7

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.

6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

7 I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

So notice David says, the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. It's as though David is seated at a great feast or a banquet. And there's all these drink offerings being offered to him, but he says, "Here, the Lord is my chosen portion and my cup." He's the one I want.

And He's the one who holds my lot. And He has determined where the lines fall for me and what I will inherit. What's going on there?

Well, if you think about the history of God's people. They were to go into the land of promise and drive out those who were practicing evil and idolatry and child sacrifice and all of that. And once they had done that, they were to portion out the land among the eleven tribes.

And maybe you'd say – I thought there were twelve tribes? And yes, there were. But the Levites, the sons of Aaron, weren't included. They were to serve as the priests. Listen to what God tells them...

Numbers 18:20

And the Lord said to Aaron, "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.

They wouldn't have any land allotted to them. They would have other privileges in the tabernacle and then later in the temple. They would have the Lord as their portion.

And so David is picking up this idea and applying it to himself. He's saying, the Lord is my portion and my lot. My desire is God Himself. I want you, Lord.

And from you I have received all that is good. The lines for me have fallen in pleasant places. I have a beautiful inheritance. David is rejoicing in the providence of God.

Now, to translate that to our world today, we wouldn't say that we have been promised a portion of land in the middle east. But God is still working in our lives to providentially order and apportion out the blessings we enjoy.

He gives to each one of us various talents and abilities. He's given you your particular brain, as unique and divergent as your neuros may be. He's given you an individual and unique body, which is good and for His glory. He's given you a distinct personality.

He's given you a particular family. The fact that you're in your family and not another one is part of God's providence in your life. He's put you in a particular job or career. And He's put you in this location and this time in history. All of this is God's providence in your life.

But maybe you'd say, I don't know if I like that. My body or my brain doesn't always do what I'd like it to do. I don't understand why God would put me in this family or allow this thing into my life.

And to that, I would say, yes, God's providence is not always easy for us to understand. He hasn't promised that His ways will always make sense to us. Sometimes, we may struggle to feel what David expresses here – the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places.

But friend, I want to tell you, the Lord has your good in mind. The hymnwriter William Cowper wrote the hymn, "God Moves in a Mysterious Way" and it contains this line, 'Behind a frowning providence, He hides a smiling face.' I don't know why God's providence feels so hard at times, but I know that He is good all the time. "Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say, 'It is well with my soul.'"

The Lord gives and the Lord takes away, blessed be the name of the Lord. And so here, David says what we should all say, "The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places." He's helping us see and interpret the world rightly, that God is working all things for my good and eternal joy as He conforms me to the image of His Son.

So the Lord gives us Himself, and that is for our good. He orders the details of our lives through His good providence. And then He also gives us good counsel or guidance. Look at verse 7...

Psalm 16:7

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.

David is saying that the Lord is His source of guidance. He has taught David. Even in the night, David's heart, probably referring to his conscience, is instructing him. Night is usually a time when anxiety creeps in and joy is hard to find. But David is blessing the Lord because even at night, he is being guided by God. He's found joy in God, even at night.

C.S. Lewis has a great book on the Psalms. And in it, he has this section on joy. And he's arguing that we need the psalms to help teach and guide us to know what true joy is.

"I want to stress what I think that we (or at least I) need more: the joy and delight in God which meet us in the Psalms... This is the living center of Judaism. These poets knew far less reason than we for loving God. They did not know that He offered them eternal joy; still less that He would die to win it for them. Yet they express a longing for Him, for His mere presence, which comes only to the best Christians or to Christians in their best moments...They crave to be "satisfied with the pleasures" of His house (65:4)... One day of those "pleasures" is better than a lifetime spent elsewhere."²

Lewis is saying that the Psalms, like Psalm 16 here, show us what it means to long for God. And we have far more reason today to find our joy in Him. We know that God has sent Jesus to die so that we might live. We know that God has sent His Spirit to live within us. We know how God calls us to live through His Word.

This should bring delight to our souls. Joy is truly in God. It's not a false promise or just something that is good for us that we have to endure. God is where true joy is found.

And then finally, number three...

Joy is securely in God

Look at verses 8 and 9...

Psalm 16:8-9

I have set the Lord always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.

So David says, I have fixed my eyes on the Lord. I'm not looking around at my circumstances and the troubles in my life; I have set you before me. You're my focus. There's a quote attributed to the NASCAR racer Jeff Gordon who said, "Either you focus, or you hit something really hard."

² C.S. Lewis, Reflections on the Psalms (NY: Harvest, 1958), 50–51

David says, God you're my focus. I've set you before me. And because of that, because the Lord is with me, at my right hand, I will not be shaken. I will not be moved. I won't be knocked off course. I am secure.

And then we read his conclusion – 'therefore' or 'as a result' – my heart is glad. I have a deep and abiding joy. My whole being, my body and soul rejoice.

Why does David rejoice like this? Because the security he longs for, the preservation and protection that he was pleading with God to provide has been given. He is confident that his joy is secure in God. It's not going to be taken away or lost.

What good is joy if it is immediately lost? You know, I could give you a million dollars, and you would probably rejoice. But if a thief came in the next moment and stole it, would you still be happy? Probably not. A joy that is fleeting is not really a joy worth pursuing.

But the joy of having God Himself is not like that. It's secure. It's not vulnerable to being taken. There is no enemy or circumstance that will rob David of what the presence of God offers. Nothing can overcome God, not even death itself.

So David's heart is glad, his whole being rejoices. He is secure. Why? What gives Him this kind of security? Look at verse 10...

Psalm 16:10

For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.

The reason is that God will not abandon David, even when he's threatened with death. And even if death should come, he will not be left to be corrupted or see decay in Sheol or the realm of the dead.

This is, I think, the specific thing that David was asking God to preserve him from in verse 1. I need you to preserve me, Lord! I need your help or I will be overcome in death. I don't want to die. I don't want to perish forever. That's his fear. But then... after he considers the providence of the Lord in His life, he sets the Lord before Him, and then His whole being rejoices.

Now, he can make an assertion like this one in verse 10. You won't abandon me. You won't let me see corruption.

And the question becomes – how can David say this? How can this be true that David will not be left to decay in the grave after his death? We see David's faith here. Is it justified? Or is this just wishful thinking?

And for the answer, we turn over to the New Testament. After the life and death and resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the Spirit comes on the day of Pentecost. And the apostle Peter gets up and preaches a sermon about the resurrection of Jesus.

And where does Peter go to prove to His fellow Jews that the resurrection of Jesus fits the prophecies of the Old Testament? He looks to Psalm 16. And he quotes this verse. And listen to how he explains it...

Acts 2:29-32

“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. **30** 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, **31** he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. **32** This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.

So Peter says, David did die. And his body did decay in the grave. But what he spoke about in Psalm 16 has been fulfilled by the resurrection of Jesus. He has been raised up. He was not abandoned in the grave.

And because Jesus conquered the grave and defeated death, He now offers eternal life to those who would put their faith in Him. Because Jesus has been resurrected, we can be forgiven of our sin and justified or declared righteous before God.

And so for David, because he trusted in the Lord, he has not been abandoned in the grave. His faith in God and the future promise of a Savior means that he also will experience eternal life in the presence of the Lord. Because of the resurrection of Jesus, David too will not be left alone, even in death. And because Jesus was raised in

fulfillment of Psalm 16:10, all who put their faith in Him will also be reconciled to God and receive the free gift of eternal life.

So this is why Paul can say in...

Romans 4:25-5:1

[Jesus] was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification. Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus was delivered up or crucified and killed for our trespasses, and He was raised so that we might be justified. We are declared to be innocent, justified through our faith in the risen Jesus. And because we have been justified, we have peace with God. We are now reconciled to Him and can freely and forever enjoy His presence where there is fullness of joy forevermore.

And that's how the Psalm concludes. Look at the last verse...

Psalm 16:11

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

This is sort of a summary statement for the whole psalm. You, Lord, have revealed the path of life – and it's you. Your presence is where joy is found. It's the only place – all joy has its source in you. And it's true joy. It's where joy is full and complete. And because of the resurrection of Christ, this joy is forever secure, even through death.

This joy and all of its fullness awaits all who have put their faith in Jesus. We talked some about this last week. In the end, when Jesus returns and the kingdom of God arrives in all its fullness, on that day there will be no more sadness or pain or crying anymore. That is wonderfully true.

But this joy is not just reserved for the future. It starts right now. That's what David is inviting us to see and experience now on the journey.

In one of the commentaries on this passage, the author told the story of a dad who had organized this grand hiking trip for fathers and sons. And on this trip, there were going to be some really skilled hikers, some eagle scouts and some former military guys – people who just really knew their stuff. And so the guy does what many of us guys would probably do. He studies the map in advance, he plans his route so that he can win. He wants to get there first.

And in this case, he actually does it. He gets there first. And when the other guys show up, again, he does what most of us guys would probably do – he starts gloating. What took you guys so long? Was it too hard for you? That kind of thing.

But the other guys started to ask him. Yea, but did you see those bald eagles? Did you see that guy who caught that massive trout? Did you see those awesome redwood trees? They were just beautiful.

And the guy was like, “uhh..no.”³

You know, as Christians, we know that our destination is amazing. It’s hard to describe how incredible that day will be. But passages like this remind us that along the way, there are true joys that we need to acknowledge and celebrate. There are glorious ways that God has revealed His goodness to us right now in this life.

To take one example, even now, God has given us His Spirit. I saw this week in my study how the Spirit of God is often connected with our joy. For instance,

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

The Spirit brings joy in His kingdom now. Paul also commends the Thessalonians because they received the word in much affliction with the joy of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess 1:6). Or think of the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, and so on... The joy of the Lord is for you both now and in the future through the Spirit.

³ C. Hassell Bullock, Psalms Volume 1: Psalms 1–72, TTCS (Baker, 2015)

So, in her TED talk, Ingrid Fetell Lee asked, where do we find joy? And Psalm 16 has an answer. This is where it's found, five things:

1. By turning away from false gods and to the true Lord

What are the lesser joys you need to forsake so that you can pursue joy in God?

2. By spending time with the saints in the land, with God's people

How can you invest time in God's people this year?

3. By learning about the Lord and contemplating His providence in your life.

Are you committed to meditating on who God is and noticing how He is at work in your life?

4. By talking to Him, calling out for His protection and presence

Is prayer to God an area in which you need to grow this year? Learning how to lean on God for everything in your life?

5. By listening to Him, submitting yourself to His guidance and instruction

David says, I've put the Lord before me and my heart instructs me in the night. Maybe you need to learn to listen and really hear what the Lord is telling you in His Word.

So this year, what is God calling you to do to find your joy in Him?

Brothers and sisters, Psalm 16 teaches us that because of the resurrection of Jesus, our joy is forever secure in God, both now in this life and into eternity where in the presence of God there are pleasures forevermore.

Let's pray together...