

The Eternal Joy of Jesus and His People (Psalm 16)
Psalms: Pour Out Your Heart to Him
Zionsville Fellowship | August 24, 2025 | Drew Hunter

Psalm 16

1 Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
2 I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."

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

5 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.
8 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.
10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.
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 Psalm is marked by a tone of joyful assurance, even in the face of life-threatening hardship.

This tone contrasts with how many people live today. At the heart of our fallen human condition is the inclination to look for protection apart from God. To look for joy apart from God. And to think that this life is all we have—and therefore the prospect of death takes away our joy.

But David lived with a settled contentment, and he anticipated an eternal future of joy. David trusts God because he preserves his life and gives him joy forever.

Yet while Psalm 16 looks at first to be a Psalm about David, David is ultimately writing about Christ.

He is writing about how the Messiah would trust God to preserve his life, raise him from the dead, and give him joy forever. This Psalm is not just about David; it is ultimately about Jesus. As Charles Spurgeon said, there is "in very many... Psalms, far more of David's Lord than of David himself."ⁱ One way we know this is because both Peter and Paul made this point about this Psalm.ⁱⁱ Peter said in his speech to thousands on Pentecost. He said David was not speaking about himself in this Psalm. He was a prophet and he knew God promised to send the savior and king through his line. And so he spoke not ultimately about himself, but about Jesus.

Here's my best sense of what's going on with this Psalm.

Many of David's psalms were written about himself; he even wrote in first person in this Psalm. However, he often wrote about himself in ways that went far beyond his actual experience. He seemed to have understood his own life as a prophetic pattern of the coming messiah's life.

God promised him that an eternal king would come through his line. And so David wrote of this future descendent. But he didn't just directly say, "The Messiah will be like this and like this." Instead, he spoke of his own life, but in a way that created an anticipatory picture of the coming Christ.

Think of it like this: Imagine one of my sons comes in from playing basketball in the driveway. I ask him how it went and he says, *"Let me tell you: the crowds were going wild. I was taking off from the freethrow line, hanging in midair. I was doing turnaround fadaway jumpers. The clock was ticking down, and I hit the clutch, game winning shot."* Who is he talking about, standing there in his Jordans and with a Jordan jersey on? At one level, he is talking about himself. If you were watching him play, you would see that he played in a way that kind of matched his description; you can see what he was saying. But you know he is really talking about himself in a way that makes it clear he's ultimately speaking of Jordan.

David does this with a lot of his Psalms. And Peter tells us he's doing this here. He's writing in the first person about himself, but he's prophetically speaking about Christ.

David wrote this Psalm, then, for God's people to anticipate the coming of King Jesus.

David first lived-out the trust and joy we see in this Psalm. But then Jesus lived it out more, and he did it for us perfectly, so that now we can, too.

So, as we move through this Psalm, we'll be thinking about three people here: David, Jesus, and us—in that order. David writes about himself as the king, in a way that ultimately points to Jesus as the true king, and then also applies to us in Christ.

Here's the point of this Psalm: Look to Jesus, who trusted the Father with complete contentment, and who secured our eternal joy through his resurrection.

We'll move through this in four parts: We'll see the king's prayerful trust, his wholehearted delight, his settled contentment, and his joyful assurance.

1. The King's Prayerful Trust (v. 1–2)

First, we see the king's prayerful trust in verses 1–2.

Listen to how he trusts the Lord here: "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.'" When he says, "preserve me," he is asking God to guard him, keep him, and watch over him. He knows his life is filled with vulnerabilities. So he looks to God as his refuge and shelter.

And then he says he loves God above all things. He says, "I have no good apart from you." He is not an idolator. He has put nothing above God in his heart and ambitions. All the loves in his heart are rightly ordered. This is like Psalm 73, where Asaph prayed, "[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](#)" (Psa. 73:25–26).

These are ultimately the words and prayers of Christ. When he lived among us, he trusted in the Father with this kind of single-mindedness. He was tempted as we are, but relied on the Father in prayer for strength. He depend on his Father to preserve and protect him. And even through the cross, he continued to trust the Father's protection. He lost his life, but he knew he would get it back again in the resurrection.

This Psalm shows us David's trust, and Jesus's trust—and it is also about *our* trust. We are now called use this Psalm to express our confidence in God's preservation of us.

Maybe you're going through something right now, and you need refuge. You need a shelter from the storm. This invites you to look to God alone to be your refuge. And look to him alone to be your greatest good. Isn't it the nature to of suffering to remove the things we love? We have certain things we love and need, and suffering removes them. These moments create an opportunity to declare to God, as David does here, that he is your greatest good.

2. The King's Wholehearted Delight (v. 3–4)

Second, we see the king's wholehearted delight in verses 3–4.

He says his whole delight is in the people of God. Look at verse 3: "As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." The saints here refer to those who truly trust and know God. The word "saint" just means "holy one." To be holy is to be set apart and devoted to God. This is not referring to a special class of Christians; but to all true believers. The New Testament repeatedly uses this word to refer to all Christians. And the emphasis here is that the king delights in God's people. He says "all my delight" is in them.

This contrasts with verse 4, where he says he hates idolatry. He wrote, “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.” He is referring to people who commit idolatry, and devote themselves to other gods. He is probably saying he refuses to take the names of the false gods on his lips.ⁱⁱⁱ

The king loves God, and so he delights in God’s people, and he hates idolatry.

David is expressing his own heart, but he is ultimately pointing forward to Jesus.

Do you realize that if you are united to Christ by faith, that Jesus *delights* in you. He did not come here to rescue us reluctantly. And if he has welcomed you by faith, he does not regret getting involved with you. He doesn’t just forgive your sins; he delights to do it.

Jesus prayed for all his people on the night before he died. He prayed for every Christian, including all whom the Father would one day bring to faith. And listen to how he ended his prayer—listen to his final words, the final note that was on his heart as he prayed before he died. This is John 17:24–26, “*Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them.*” Do you hear the desire language here? And now that he has risen and ascended to heaven, the New Testament says he is interceding for us. He is praying for us. He is maintaining our acceptance before the Father. And he is eager for you to be with him forever. He delights in you.

In Acts 20, Paul said Jesus obtained the church with his own blood. That’s how important you are to him. He obtained you at the cost of his own life. He obtained you at the cost of enduring the judgments of hell on the cross for you. The Bible says he calls you his brother or sister and his friend. He delights in you—even though you are still weak and even though you still sin.

If Jesus delights in us like this, and if he delights in all his people like this, then now we can, too.

The church is Christ’s body, it is his spouse, it is the temple of the Spirit’s presence. We should look at every Christian as a part of this. We should never undervalue another Christian. We can learn to look at one another as Jesus does, and even delight in other Christians. This may not be your default disposition; it’s something we have to cultivate.

Christian community and friendship should be marked by deep joy. Not just showing up to events and talking superficially—but with deep joy in our hearts. Christian brothers and sisters are one of God’s greatest gifts to us.

I remember reading through the journals of an 18th century missionary named David Brainard.

He was a friend of Johnathan Edwards and a missionary to Native Americans. If you're familiar with the prayer book, *The Valley of Vision*, some of those prayers were adapted from Brainard's journey. One reason why his journals have remained in print is because how honest they are. I remember when I read through them, the theme of delighting in God's people stood out.

So much of his life was sad. He was often lonely, depressed, and prone to melancholy. He would go weeks feeling sad and depressed. He was alone in his mission work. He went many days without talking to anyone who knew his language. He went weeks without talking to another believer.

Jonathan Edwards was the one who compiled and published Brainard's journals. And he sometimes summarized a stretch of several days in Brainard's life. At one point, because Brainard was so often depressed, Edwards thought it was noteworthy to describe a few days when he *wasn't*.

Why? What was the difference? He was traveling, and he was with other believers. And Edwards summarized his journal entries like this: *"from time to time he speaks of soul-refreshment and comfort in conversation with the ministers that travelled with him; and seems to have little or nothing of melancholy, till he came to the west end of Long Island, in his return. After that he was oppressed with dejection and gloominess of mind, for several days together."*^{iv}

Christian friends were the joy of his life—and he often had to live without them. But on the rare occasions that he was able to enjoy them, they were all his delight. Here is one of his journal entries. This expresses the heart of this Psalm: *"Spent the day mainly in conversation with dear Christian friends; and enjoyed some sweet sense of divine things. Oh, how desirable it is to keep company with God's dear children! These are the "excellent ones of the earth, in whom," I can truly say, "is all my delight" Oh, what delight will it afford to meet them all in a state of perfection! Lord, prepare me for that state!"*^v

This delight is first in the heart of Christ, and then he cultivates it in us. He delights in us, and so we delight in his people.

The Apostle Paul is the best example of this we have.

He knew he was the chief of sinners, and he deserved God to disdain him. But he said God overflowed toward him with mercy and love. He previously hated Christians and was hunting them down to throw them in prison. But once he came to Christ, this completely changed. He started to love and delight in other Christians. So much so that he wrote this to his Christian friends in Philippi: *"For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:8).

Can you say that about other Christians? If not, this can be cultivated.
It starts by recognizing that Christ delights in you, and yearns for you with affection.
And that will only surprise and change you if you realize how you deserve the opposite.
And yet there he is: rather than disdaining you, he died for you;
rather than burning you, he yearns for you.
Once you grasp this, once you let this seep into your heart, you will love him back.
And you will love the other sinners he loves.
You will delight in them as Jesus does.

We can all take steps to cultivate this kind of delight.
Refuse to slander and gossip about one another.
Refuse to assume the worse about people.
Stop the sarcastic, critical thoughts in your mind before they come out of your mouth.
Think about how Christ delights in you and every other believer.
Give them your attention and curiosity.
Find those believers who can especially be your closest friends, and receive them as a gift.

This is the king's delight in God's people.

3. The King's Settled Contentment (v. 5–8)

Now, third, the king's settled contentment. This is verses 5–8.

Do you often feel discontent? I do. We live in a culture that feeds off of this and cultivates it.

Marketing can be good and important work. But like any vocation in a fallen world, some aspects become problematic. One of them in our culture is how much of marketing is devoted to cultivating discontentment. If you can make someone discontent with what they own, then you can get them to buy what you offer. We want better clothes, a better home, a better car, a better job, bigger investments, and so forth.

In ancient Israel, so much of their well-being was wrapped up in the land they owned. God gave allotments to all the tribes of Israel. The various tribes and families split up the land. The land that belonged to them was called their lot and their inheritance.

Their land and inheritance marked their standing in society. It was the way they produced their prosperity. It was the foundation of their reputation. It was how they secured the well-being of future generations. It was the inheritance they passed along.^{vi} This is what they might struggle to be content with.

Now, in light of that, look at what David says in verses 5–6:

“The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot [or, allotment]. The lines [allotments] have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.”

This is all language drawn from the land allotments and inheritances. He says *God* is his portion. God is his land allotment. God his inheritance. God is the pleasant place around which his border-lines have fallen.

And since he views God this way, he lives with a settled contentment. He doesn’t need more of this and more of that, or a better this and better that. He has God, and that is enough for him.

And as David writes this, he is describing the contentment of the coming Messiah, Jesus.

This is the contented heart of Christ. He said he had nowhere to lay his home. The leaders disowned him. His friend betrayed him. His disciples fled in his time of deepest need. And yet through it all, he was content with the Father.

And in verses 7 David describes dependence on God for instruction. And then verse 8 describes his non-anxious calm in the midst of the world. He wrote, “I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.” You cannot read through the gospel accounts without this becoming obvious: Jesus always set the Father before him. He was not shaken, because he knew God was with him.

Jesus came to live this perfect life of contentment. Then he died and rose for us, and he poured out his Spirit on us.

If you are trusting in Christ, he has given you his Spirit to be with you.

You always have the Lord with you. He is always before you. He is always in you. He is always at your right hand.

Therefore, you do not need to be shaken by anything. You can take the criticism your coworker gives you. You can get through the shame and guilt of your own sin. You can endure a financial collapse. Because God is always with you; you shall not be shaken.

4. The King’s Joyful Assurance (v. 9–11)

Finally, we see the king’s joyful assurance in verses 9–11.

This is the most surprising part of the Psalm, and the part that Peter picks up to prove David is talking about Jesus. David is not just confident in his life; he expresses a confidence that his very body will not be abandoned to the grave.

Let's read verses 9–10 first: "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."

He is not just talking about deliverance from some kind of near-death experience.

He is talking about his very body not rotting in the grave.

He says his "flesh dwells secure," which is his physical body.

He says God will not abandon his soul to Sheol, which refers to the place of the dead.

And "soul" just means his whole life—mind, spirit, body, everything.

He is saying, "God, you will not abandon me to the grave."

And then he says, "or let your holy one see corruption." He's still talking about himself here; he is confident God will not let him rot in the ground.

So, it sure sounds like David is saying that God will not abandon him to the grave.

But he did die. And his body is still in the ground, and it's been corrupted for 3,000 years. So, what is he talking about?

Peter and Paul, in the New Testament, drew attention to this. They said David did die. And his bones did go in the ground. And he has not risen from the dead. And their point is that David wasn't ultimately talking about himself. He was ultimately writing this Psalm about the Messiah, who would not be abandoned to the grave.

Peter gives the fullest explanation of this on the day of Pentecost. Jesus had just died weeks before. And then he rose from the dead and ascended to heaven. Now Peter is standing in front of a few thousand people in Jerusalem—many of whom saw Jesus crucified. And Peter makes the case that Jesus rose from the dead in fulfillment of Psalm 16.

So he recites this last portion of this Psalm. And then he said, "[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. 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, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses](#)" (Acts 2:29–32).

Here's what it seems Peter is saying:

David spoke in the first person and of his own experiences in Psalm 16. But we was also talking beyond his experience. He spoke about not being abandoned to decay in the grave; but he was. He and the Israelites who read this knew he wasn't just talking about himself. He was talking beyond himself. He was talking about the better David to come.^{vii} He understood his life as a prophetic pattern of the coming Messiah from his line.

And now come to the final verse, which speaks of Jesus's joy beyond the resurrection.

He rose, and then he ascended to the Father, and he experienced fullness of joy. This is verse 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." Jesus is the happiest person who ever lived. He is now experiencing the fullness of joy with the Father.

But this Psalm doesn't just point to Jesus. We've seen that Jesus blazes the trail ahead of us so we can follow him. He opened the way to the Father for us. *He* is the path of life; he is the way to fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore.

And so we are waiting for our own future resurrection from the dead. On the day Jesus returns, David will rise and his body will be renewed. And all who trust in Christ will be given a new body, and be with Christ on a new earth forever. This is the fullness of joy forever.

Listen to how the puritan Thomas Brooks described our eternal future in light of this. "Mark, for quality, there are *pleasures*; for quantity, *fullness*; for dignity, *at God's right hand*; for eternity, *forevermore*. And millions of years multiplied by millions, make not up one minute to this eternity of joy that the saints shall have in heaven [and by heaven, he also includes our eternal life on the new earth to come]. In heaven there shall be no sin to take away your joy, nor no devil to take away your joy; nor no man to take away your joy... The joys of heaven never fade, never wither, never die, nor never are lessened nor interrupted. The joy of the saints in heaven is a constant joy, an everlasting joy."^{viii} This is our eternal future.

We do not need to wait until that coming day in order to experience some of its joy now.

Notice how David described how this future joy already reaches back to us in the present. He said in verses 9–10, "Therefore my heart is glad [right now], and my whole being rejoices [right now]; my flesh also dwells secure. *For* you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." He rejoiced *because* God would not abandon him and he would give him joy forever more. The confident assurance of future joy created a present joy in his heart. The more you cultivate a longing for this future joy, the more you will already experience some of it today.

And David is experiencing this joy in the midst of suffering. This is an undercurrent of the whole Psalm. He is needing to take refuge in God. He is needing to declare that he will not be shaken. This assumes there's a storm that threatens to shake him. Yet in the midst of this suffering, he is deeply content and filled with joy. As was Jesus. And now we can be.

Implications

Many of us are transitioning to a new season of the year right now.

Some of you just started a new school year. Some of you are in a line of work that is getting very busy. Some of you just started teaching in school, or homeschooling your kids. And very soon, we're going to feel the kind of pressures and anxieties that come in this time. Some of you may be transitioning to retirement and you feel discontent or a sense of purposelessness. Some of you are carrying very heavy burdens right now. You know if you don't find a refuge, you'll be knocked over and overwhelmed by the storm.

This Psalm shows us how to get through all of this—all the good and all the bad, all the joys and all the sorrows, all the pressures and all the suffering—with trust, contentment, and deep joy.

You get it by seeing Jesus's trust, contentment and joy. That he came to live this life for you, and he died for your sins, and he rose again to open the way to eternal joy. He prayed this Psalm, so that you can now join him in making it your prayer as well.

So, how do we make this Psalm our reality?

1. First, get a clear view of Jesus. Don't get bored with him. Don't go too long without reading and meditating on the gospel stories. See him as the one who trusted the Father. See him as the one who delights in you and all his people. See him as the one who is perfectly content with the Father as his portion. And see him as the one who was not abandoned to the grave; but rose, ascended, and is filled with joy.
1. Second, follow his path of trust and contentment.
He now invites us to trust him and the Father. He invites us to delight in all his people. He invites us to cultivate joy in other believers and the local church. He invites us to yearn for other believers with something of his very affection. He invites us to receive him as our portion, our inheritance, and our lot. We can be content in him this year.
2. Finally, follow him on all the way to eternal joy.

We would never have this eternal joy if he come to us and blaze the path for us. Our future would be eternal misery because of our sin and discontentment. But he went through the grave for us, and he came out the other side. And now he opens the path of life for us. So we trust him, and we follow him there. No matter how hard and painful and anxious you feel now or later this year—your future is eternal pleasure in God's presence. And the more you set your hope in this, the more that joy will reach back and fill you up even right now.

No matter what you go through, you can rest in the reality of verse 11: "In your presence there is *fullness* of joy, and at your right hand are pleasures *forevermore*."

ⁱ Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 2 vols., 1:23

ⁱⁱ See Richard Belcher, *The Messiah and the Psalms*, 164–166.

ⁱⁱⁱ James Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:213.

^{iv} Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Banner of Truth), 2:362.

^v Edwards, *Works*, vol. 2.

^{vi} See Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:215.

^{vii} Jim Hamilton notes that David probably understood that he was a pattern of the future messiah from his line. He was reflecting on 2 Sam 7, speaking about himself, but ultimately speaking about the coming messiah who would come from his body and fulfill the pattern of his life. Thus, he “could have been consciously describing his own experience as well as the pattern of experience he expected to be fulfilled in the life of the one to come” (Hamilton, *Psalms*, 1:218). Thus, he speaks in the first person, but he is also speaking of the coming Messiah, Jesus

^{viii} Thomas Brooks, quoted in Charles Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David*, 1:212.