

In God we are secure * Psalm 16

March 26, 2017 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

On Friday morning, Anna looked at me and said ‘Daddy, I wish I was a grown up.’

‘Is that so?’ I said. ‘Why’s that?’ I was expecting a profound insight into the nature of maturity.

Her reply? Why she wanted to be a grown up? ‘Because they’re cute.’

I decided to take it as a compliment.

Now it’s ironic that she would say she wanted to be a grown up, because as I studied this psalm this week, I found myself longing to be a child. And here’s why.

When I was a kid, I always felt secure around my parents. I felt safe with them and when they were around, nothing could harm me. They could handle anything. It was like there was a protective wall around me, shielding me from trouble, and in their presence I always felt secure.

Now though I’m the one trying to provide that protective wall – I’m the one trying to keep Ben and Anna safe and secure. And I think I’m succeeding - while we were away, we went to Disney’s Hollywood Studios and they had Stormtroopers walking around in costume – all very exciting for Star Wars fans, but for Anna, scary, and so she ran to me and clung to me and I carried her from the ‘danger’ so she would feel safe.

In my life though, there are bigger issues than Stormtroopers – and issues well beyond what my parents could handle and I know that that’s true in your life too. We are each facing different threats – some of us illness, some of us family conflicts, all of us tax returns. I find myself longing to have that feeling again – of being taken care of, of being secure. The feeling of knowing that somebody bigger than me, who loves me, is taking care of me.

That’s where this psalm comes in. It tells us that in relationship with God, we can feel the same sense of confident security that a beloved child experiences with a responsible parent.

In God, we are secure, both now and forever.

Now don’t miss it, the psalmist is no ostrich with his head in the sand, refusing to admit the difficulties of life – he is painfully aware of the trials of this world, and yet he is absolutely confident that in God, we are secure both now and forever.

Let’s look together at this psalm, see where this confidence comes from, and learn how we can experience that same sense of security.

The psalm itself is a short one, but a powerful one. If you look at who David is talking to in the psalm, it breaks down into five parts – prayer, where he’s talking to God; reflection, where he’s talking to himself, prayer, reflection and prayer. So that’s the psalm’s outline – prayer, reflection, prayer, reflection, prayer – and let’s see what David is praying and reflecting on and we’ll gather it into a big idea later on.

So verse 1 – a prayer.

Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Have you ever prayed like that? I know I have.

I've told you before about having my tonsils out in third year university – the scab came off a few days later, uncovering a blood vessel in my throat and I remember hanging over the back room sink, losing blood, praying 'Keep me safe, o God, for in you I take refuge.'

I'm sure that many of you have prayed like that. Many of you have lost a spouse, been in an accident, received a cancer diagnosis – and I know that many of you have prayed – keep me safe, o God, for in you I take refuge.

Whenever you pray along those lines, you take two very important steps – one, you acknowledge that God is capable of protecting you and two, you invite Him to shelter you. "You alone are a refuge God; keep me safe."

David certainly knew that from his experience. Think about his life – there was no shortage of life-threatening crises in his life. And given that fact, I think it's important to recognize that this psalm was written in light of one of those crises.

And that's important, because it sets the context for the rest of the psalm. The psalm as a whole shines with confidence and joy – so much so that you might think it was written in a time of great peace and the confidence and joy would go out the window when trouble comes – but verse 1 establishes a. that this is happening in the midst of trouble and b. that God provides confidence and joy even in the midst of trouble. David calls on God for security and God provides.

That's the prayer and then verses 2-4 make up a reflection. David stops talking to God and starts talking to himself.

Verse 2

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

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

4 The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips (Psa 16:2-4 NIV).

David's reflection begins to unpack the implications of taking refuge in God.

It means trusting God, seeing Him as the source of every good and perfect gift in your life. You see that in David's language – 'apart from you I have no good thing' – but the flip side of that is amazing – *in* God we have *everything*! This is really relevant because it means that God is the answer to trials – apart from God I have no good thing – ok – then the good things that are security and deliverance from this trial are to be found in God.

Verse 3 celebrates people who look for security in God but then verse 4 explores the futility of the alternative. Let's look at it – 'The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.'

David recognizes that since God is the giver of all good things, security included, then to look for security in anything else is a losing cause. Far from finding relief, sorrows actually increase when we look to anything less than God and so David commits himself to be ever true to God.

All these reflections have moved David back to prayer and so verse 5 and 6, David speaks to God again. Just listen to the gratitude in his voice -

Verse 5 - LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure (my wellbeing, my circumstances).

6 The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance (Psa 16:2-6 NIV).

David prays with thanksgiving for all that God has provided. He has said 'apart from You I have no good thing' but boy look at all the 'good things' he has in God. He piles up ALL the good things that he has with God - You are my portion and my cup – my lot is secure, the boundary lines are pleasant; I have a delightful inheritance. Scholars are quick to point out that David is using the language of Israel inheriting the promised land here – 'my lot, my portion.' The reference recognizes that God's provision is not some arbitrary, whimsical generosity that He stumbles into from time to time, but it is in fact how He has always acted towards His people.

And David draws strength from that – it's as if he counts his blessings one by one, realizes how good God has been to him and feels re-energized by God's faithfulness to him. In God, he is secure.

Now in verse 7, David moves back to reflection and again, security in God is front and centre -

7 I will praise the LORD, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.

8 I have set the LORD always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, (Psa 16:7-9 NIV).

Do you hear the confidence in that? The Lord always counsels me, always guides me. He is with me every step of the way and so I will not be shaken. And remember, this is not pie in the sky abstraction – he's saying this in the face of a crisis that made him cry out – God keep me safe for in you I find my refuge!

David reflects on God's constant care and it leads him seamlessly back into prayer - Verse 9 again –

9 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

10 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

11 You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand (Psa 16:9-11 NIV).

David realizes that he is utterly blessed in this life and what's more, the end of this life is not the end of those blessings. You will not abandon me to the grave. You will not let your holy one see decay – this is the OT anticipating resurrection, promising of life after death and what a life it is! Joy in the presence of God! Eternal pleasures at his right hand! The feeling of being on vacation every day for eternity!

You know, for fourteen weeks Taylor Swift and Zane Malik have had a song in the top ten billboard charts saying 'I don't wanna live forever' – but I would say, 'who wouldn't want to live forever?' especially when it means being in the center of all that is good and just and beautiful for eternity – in the presence of God.

And notice that David's hope for eternity has real-world implications – look at verse 9 – my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices because you will not abandon me to the grave. Do you see? David's hope in God for the future, gives him confidence and security in the here and now. Eternal life is not an philosophical concept, but a promise that strengthens us for this life.

In God, we are secure both now and forever.

I've been sprinkling that statement in here and there and I think I might as well just nail that down as the big idea for this whole psalm – in God, we are secure both now and forever.

Think about that. In the face of trials, David prays and reflects and prays and reflects and prays and what's the force of it all? God, you are taking care of me – my portion is good, my lot is secure. David realizes that there is no question – God will take care of him now. God is taking care of you now.

And what's more, God's care doesn't end with this life. God will take care of David, of us, into eternity. David clearly anticipates a glorious life after death – God will not leave His people in the grave.

In God we are secure both now and forever.

Knowing that gives David confidence to push on in the face of trials.

Now it's striking to me that David could have such utter confidence, such unshakeable security even in the OT. He knew from experience that God was taking care of him and that God would take care of Him forever.

And if David could be that confident in his time, we can be even more confident in ours.

And here's why – all that talk about eternity and not decaying in the grace – it's not just empty talk. Jesus has fulfilled it. Did you recognize those words – 'you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay'?

When Peter got up to preach his Pentecost sermon, he took his people straight to Psalm 16.

He unpacked the hope that David had in gone, but pointed out that David did indeed die – you could go visit his tomb. So he reasons then that Psalm 16 is not simply about David, but about God's way of providing eternal life. Let me read to you from Acts 2, Peter says-

25 David said about him: " 'I saw the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope,

27 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

28 You have made known to me the paths of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence.'

29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.

31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

(Act 2:25-31 NIV).

Psalm 16 is not just about David; it's about God's plan to care for His people forever.

When Jesus died, for our sin, God did not leave Him dead. God raised Him back to life, just as Psalm 16 anticipated, as the first fruits of many who would rise again. Do you see that? The apostles say over and over that since Jesus was raised from the dead, so too will His followers be raised to life and so we know that Psalm 16 is not an empty promise. In God, we are secure now and In God we are secure forever, because Jesus has defeated death and opened for us the path to eternal life.

And so David's words in Psalm 16 become very important to us – 'You have made know to me the path of life' – what's the path of life? Relationship with Jesus. He is the way, the truth, and the life. When we trust Him, take refuge in Him, claim Him as our Lord, He commits Himself to us, to care for us, now and forever. He was abandoned by God to pay for our sin so that we will never be abandoned to the grave. In God we are secure now and forever.

As we think about how to apply this in our lives, I think we can learn not just from the message of this psalm, but also its structure. Remember how David's troubles lead him to reflection which then lead him to prayer. You know, in the midst of trials, it can be tremendously easy for us to fixate on the problems, to rehearse over and over in our minds that thing that person said, or the unknown health outcome that we can't know – and yet David models for us another way. In time of trial, David reflects on the goodness of God, he reflects on the security that God provides in the face of that trial and it drives him to prayer. It drives him to thanksgiving, knowing that God is taking care of him. Rather than being overwhelmed by what he doesn't know, David is encouraged by what he DOES know – that in God he is secure.

How would that change the way you deal with trials now? To focus on God's provision, rather than the trouble you face. I realize that it can be easier said than done, but Psalm 16 invites us to lay our burdens with our Lord and to draw confidence from the knowledge that in God we are secure now and forever.

As I held Anna in my arms, protecting her from the Storm Troopers, I had a variety of thoughts in my mind – she's in no real danger, I wish she would understand that, nonetheless I will keep her safe – this is one princess who will not be harmed by Stormtroopers.

And it strikes me that that's God's heart for us, too. He delights to take care of us. He is 'someone bigger than us who loves us who delights to take care of us' and so a feeling of confident security can be ours.

In our Heavenly Father, we are secure, now and forever.

That sense of security that Anna feels with me can be ours too – our Heavenly Father delights to hold us firm.

2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.