

# Looking to my LORD

Psalm 16

---

Pastor Jim Rademaker

*And as he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what wonderful stones and what wonderful buildings!" And Jesus said to him, "Do you see these great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." (Mark 13:1-2)*

As Jesus tells us about the world coming to an end, it's quite the horrifying picture. The Temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed, with *"not one stone left upon another."* False saviors, political upheavals, and natural catastrophes will mark this period. Christians will be persecuted by members of their own families and hated by non-Christians. We hear from Daniel that it will be a time of trouble *"such as never has been"* before. (Dan 12:1-3) If you're like me, you hear these things and hope you're not alive when all this takes place.

But we have here in these words, not just a glimpse of a certain time and place in the future, but a picture of the church of *all* time - past, present, and future. For persecution, hatred, trials, and troubles is the lot of the church in an evil and sin-filled world. As Jesus answered when He was on trial before Pilot, *"My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world."* (John 18:36)

There never has been a "golden age" of the church, and there never will be. The church on earth is ever and always the church militant. The church of the cross.

Yet Jesus tells us, that *in* this period of trouble and mass confusion, the Holy Spirit will cause the Good News about Jesus for sinners, to be preached everywhere. And He's actually going to *use* the troubles we face to do so. What satan intends for evil, for your destruction, God uses for good. As Joseph says to his brothers who had mistreated him, *"You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."* (Gen 50:20)

And Jesus also concludes with the promise that the one who endures to the end will be saved. There's salvation at the end of this road! The question is: How? How do we endure to the end, especially in the midst of all this trouble? Where do we turn in times of trouble? (James Douthwaite)

What does King David say? *"Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge."* David faced his troubles, and likely wrote Psalm 16 in response to some kind of hardship in his life. And there were many to choose from. As a result, in this Psalm we learn what it means to trust God in all things.

*Keep me safe, my God, for in You I take refuge.*

Security. It's a big deal for most of us. To feel secure. To feel safe. To not live in constant fear. How do we do that? What makes us feel safe and secure? Security forces – army, navy, air force, marines, local police. What makes us feel safe and secure? Our money. What we've saved up. Our family. Our friends. Our home. Our abilities. Our achievements.

David expresses that trusting in any of these things is setting yourself up for disappointment. Sooner or later, they'll all let you down. Therefore, David declares that he will find his security where? In God alone. *God* is his refuge, a place of safety in time of trouble. *God* is his guide. His counselor. His wisdom. His inheritance. His future. His hope. His joy. The fact is, we all need a place of refuge and protection - both now and in the future and for eternity.

What does David do in times of trouble? Where does he go? David flees to God's protection, with cheerful, believing confidence. Bible scholar Franz Delitzsch puts it this way, "There reigns in the whole Psalm, a settled calm, an inward joy, and a joyous confidence, which is certain that everything that it can desire for the present and for the future, it possesses in its God." In this world, sorrow, is often our lot. But in heaven, there is joy, a fullness of joy; our pleasures here are momentary, temporary, but those at *God's* right hand, *are pleasures for evermore.*

In his book *Heaven*, Randy Alcorn details these many pleasures. But first, he points out this *universal* sense of something *beyond*; of heaven. "The sense that we will live forever *somewhere* has shaped every civilization in human history. Australian aborigines, pictured heaven as a distant island, beyond the western horizon. The early Finns, thought heaven was an island in the far away East.

Mexicans, Peruvians, and Polynesians, believed that they went to the sun, or to the moon, after death. Native Americans, believed that in the afterlife, their spirits would hunt the spirits of buffalo. The Gilgamesh epic, an ancient Babylonian legend, refers to a resting place of heroes, and hints at a tree of life. In the pyramids of Egypt, the embalmed bodies had maps placed beside them as *guides* to the future world."

All of these descriptions, portray a *place*. A wonderful *place*. A *place* to look forward to. But David longs for what? He longs for something more! *Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." I say of the holy people who are in the land, "They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight."*

*Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more. I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods or take up their names on my lips. Lord, you alone are my portion and my cup; you make my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance. I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; even at night my heart instructs me.*

*I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

In his book *The Christian Faith*, in describing heaven, Robert Kolb echoes David's words: "Heaven is beyond description, even though John tried (Rev. 19-21 – A new heaven and a new earth, a city with streets of gold, praise and rejoicing in the Lord); it fulfills our humanity because there our relationship with God is restored to Eden-[like] fullness and perfection. Yet care should be taken that heaven not be overemphasized. Heaven can be an essentially selfish concern, the expression of a desire for self-gratification. **'Heaven' is not the important matter for God's children. GOD is.**

... At the same time, we dare not underemphasize heaven. Life at best in the earthly realm of existence is tattered and torn, at worst, much worse than merely tattered and torn. People plagued by evil need to hear the promise of life beyond its pale shadow under sin."

But God is the center of the biblical message; heaven is not. Signs point to his coming, Jesus also promised. But no sign should command the attention of Christ's people; He should (Lk 17:22-37). Again, "*Heaven*" is not the important matter for God's children. *God is.* David's primary joy is not in God's gifts, but in the Lord Himself!

King David expresses this idea well in Psalm 16, as also does the apostle Paul. How does he put it? *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ... I desire to depart and be with Christ ... (Phil 1:21) Therefore, we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ... We ... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.* (2 Cor 5:6)

*I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay. You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

And all of God's promises of eternal pleasure are secured, how? Both Peter (Pentecost sermon) and Paul (1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey) (Acts 2:25-28; 13:35-37) cite these verses, and assert that they didn't find ultimate fulfillment in David, for what happened to him? He died and his body underwent decay.

Instead, David was writing prophetically of a future son, God's Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. "*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*" (Is. 53:6) All of God's promises of eternal pleasure are secured for us through Jesus – His life for us, His death for us, His resurrection for us.

There's only One person in all of human history who could ever say this Psalm with absolute confidence. If you read it as a prayer of Jesus, where was Jesus' security? In His relationship with the Father. Where was Jesus' well-

being? It was in His relationship with the Father. What did Jesus have as His inheritance? He had nothing - no earthly possession. And yet, He could look at life and say what? *"The lines have fallen for Me in pleasant places."*

*And Jesus began to say to them, "See that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. This must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. These are but the beginning of the birth pains." (Mark 13:5-8)*

Does it seem to you that the world is coming unglued? That's what Jesus tells His disciples. Civilization coming unglued, creation coming unglued, religion coming unglued, and even families coming unglued. All kinds of troubles, disasters, conflicts, and persecution. Pretty frightening stuff.

But we have here in these words of Jesus in Mark 13, not just a glimpse of a certain time and place in the future, but a picture of the church of *all* time - past, present, and future. There never has been a "golden age" of the church, and there never will be. The church on earth is ever and always the church militant.

In the midst of a world coming unglued, and which will continue to come unglued, there is hope. Hope in the Lord. Hope because of the cross. Life after death. The church triumphant. Joy evermore! (Douthwaite)

*Keep me safe, my God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing." "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing 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)*