

Our Loyal King

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Date: 26 June 2016

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[0 : 00] Well, we're going to turn to our Bibles and to our reading for this evening, which, as I've said, is in Psalm number 16. If you have one of our blue church visitors' Bibles, that's page, I think, 453.

If not, it's sort of near the middle of your Bible, and it's Psalm 16. And I'm sure certainly some of the verses will feel very familiar to you.

In Psalm 16, we're told, at the beginning of verse 1, is a miktam of David, probably some kind of musical designation.

A miktam of David. 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.

[1 : 13] 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. And 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.

[2 : 15] At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Amen. And may God bless to us his word.

Well, I don't know how you've arrived in church this evening. Perhaps concerned and worried in the wake of the referendum results. Unsure of how things are going to pan out.

But our psalm puts all that in perspective for us this evening. So let me pray. And then we'll get stuck into the psalm. Father, would you please shape and fashion us in your likeness?

Would your truth shape our minds, our attitudes, that we may with confidence stand on the promises of your word?

So feed us this evening now. Speak, O Lord, as we come to your words. For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, please do have Psalm 16 open there in front of you.

[3 : 33] Now, this is a joyful, confident psalm. And yet, the subject at the core is about as serious as you can get.

It's a subject that you perhaps wish wasn't on the agenda this evening. And the subject, the thing in view, is death.

Steve Jobs once famously said in a speech, No one wants to die. Even people who want to go to heaven don't want to have to die in order to get there.

And yet, death is the fate we all share. No one has ever escaped it. Now, you and I don't really like thinking about it.

If you're like me, you tend to push it to the outer reaches of your conscience. Death is something over there. But deep down, we know that it cannot be avoided.

[4 : 36] It is always there. And even though it's something that happens at the end of life, whenever that might be, the reality is that death casts its long shadow on every area of life.

Every illness we face. Every morning we wake up feeling tired. Death is casting its shadow. And we push it back as hard as we can.

We try and push it back. But every so often, we are forced to face reality and look it square in the face. Perhaps it's an accident.

Perhaps your health takes a serious turn for the worse. A close relative dies. We're faced with the reality that no matter how many precautions we take, how many diets we go on, no matter how many early morning jogs you inflict upon yourself, you must face up to your own mortality. Questions arise. Will I be okay? Am I secure? What hope is there for us in the face of trials, difficulties, national and political uncertainty, and ultimately, death?

[6 : 03] What hope is there? Well, here's one answer. It's a poem by Mary Fry. Do not stand at my grave and weep.

I am not there. I do not sleep. I am a thousand winds that blow. I am the diamond glints on snow. I am the sunlight on ripened grain.

I am the gentle autumn rain. When you awaken in the morning hush, I am the swift, uplifting rush of quiet birds in circled flight.

I am the soft stars that shine at night. Do not stand at my grave and cry. I am the best. I am the best. I am the best. I am the best. I am the best. I did not die. Does that give you hope?

I trust not. That's just wishful thinking. Plain denial of reality. I did not die. When you're there stood over the grave. What hope is there for you in the face of trials, difficulties, and ultimately death?

[7 : 12] Well, this psalm contains the answer, as we'll see this evening. You see, King David, who wrote this psalm, fears for his safety. He fears for his life even.

Look at verse 1. Preserve me, O God. The NIV has, Keep me safe, my God. Guard me. Keep me. Protect me.

For he fears for his life. Just cast your eye down to verse 10, what he has in view. You will not abandon my soul to shale. Or let your holy ones see corruption. Death is a great thing hovering in the background in this psalm.

And David is seeking security, safety. And although the basic issue in the psalm is deadly serious, there is real joy and confidence in this psalm.

There is great confidence that in the Lord, David has refuge and safety. Just look at his utter confidence towards the end of the psalm.

[8 : 14] Verse 11 finishes the psalm with words of abundant, eternal, full life. How is David, God's anointed king, able to say such things with such confidence?

How can he be so sure that at your right hand, verse 11, are pleasures forevermore? How can David be so sure? Well, the psalm sets out the answer.

God's anointed king can be sure of eternal security because he expresses decisive loyalty to God. He can be sure of eternal security because he expresses decisive loyalty to the God who is able to provide eternal security in life.

Now, before we take a closer look at the psalm, just a quick step back. And this will hopefully help us to understand how we apply the psalm to us. You see, the psalms were Israel's songbook.

[9 : 22] The people of God would sing these psalms in worship to the Lord. How would they have understood this psalm? A friend of mine, some years ago, played a song.

She played it to me. And it's a song by Carly Simon, released in 1972. You may know it. It goes like this. You're so vain.

You probably think this song is about you. Now, when it was played, I laughed. But then I quickly stopped, realizing the joke was on me.

Perhaps, as you had this psalm read out to you earlier, you thought it was all about you. Well, as I said, the people of God would sing these psalms in worship to the Lord.

How would they have understood it? Well, you see, this psalm was not about Joey Bloggs' Israelites. But it was certainly applied to them because it was a psalm about their king.

[10 : 27] This was a psalm written by and about King David, God's anointed king. He was Israel's king. And to quote one author, as it fares with the Messianic king, so it fares with the Messianic people.

Whatever is true of the king is true of the people because he's their king. If things are well with the king, things are well with the people.

A faithful king meant a faithful Israel. A faithless king meant a faithless people. A loyal king meant a loyal people.

So this is a good new psalm, not just for David, but also for his people. As it goes with the king, so it goes with each member of the kingdom.

So then, two points in the psalm. Firstly, because God's anointed king expresses decisive loyalty, point one, he enjoys and his people enjoy definite life.

[11 : 39] Because God's anointed king expresses decisive loyalty, verses one to eight. He enjoys and his people enjoy definite life, verses nine to eleven.

Decisive loyalty and definite life. Decisive loyalty leads to definite life. So firstly then, God's anointed king expresses decisive loyalty.

It's really quite striking to notice the single-minded loyalty that David has here towards his God. Just notice all the eyes and mys through the psalm.

It is intensely personal. And he, David, the anointed king, is expressing his single-minded decisive loyalty.

What David wants more than anything else is the Lord. He wants him. Look at verse one. Preserve me, for in you I take refuge.

[12 : 40] Verse two. You are my God. I have no good apart from you. Verse five. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup. Verse seven.

I bless the Lord who gives me counsel. Verse eight. I have set the Lord always before me. In every area of life, David throws his lot in with the Lord.

In all these areas of life, David demonstrates his single-minded loyalty. He's saying, I align myself with the Lord. The Lord and the Lord alone is all I need.

Crystal clear, decisive loyalty. In all sorts of area of life, his security, his welfare, his associations. Look at verse one.

He expresses his security. David is in fear of his life. He needs preservation. And he seeks it from the Lord. It is in the Lord that David seeks refuge.

[13 : 41] No hedging bets. No backup. No cozying up to other kings in case the Lord doesn't pull through. No, in you I take refuge.

His welfare, verse two, it's quite a stunning thing to say, isn't it? That I have no good apart from you. All the good things that David has in life, everything good is found in the Lord.

The Lord is the source of all good things that David enjoys. verses three and four speak of David's associations. You see, loyalty to God is not just expressed in the vertical relationship between David and the Lord.

It bears out on the horizontal. Notice how David speaks about how he relates to two different groups of people. Verse three, as for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom I delight.

But on the other hand, verse four, the sorrows of those who run after another God shall multiply. Their drink offerings or blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.

[14 : 57] David is clear that he delights in God's people, but for those who run after other gods, he won't even take their name on his lips. Loyalty to God is demonstrated in associations with people.

It's not just pious utterances. It has actual implications in day-to-day life for David. David's heritage, verses five and six, David is trusting that his inheritance, his portion, his cup, his lot is secure in the Lord.

It is because of David's settled determination to be loyal to the Lord, to throw his lot in with him, to stand with him, that he is assured of his security.

Notice the link between his loyalty and his safety, verse eight. I have set the Lord always before me because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

For David, God's anointed king, loyalty led to safety. That's the logic of the psalm. Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

[16 : 24] God has all of his affections and loyalties. peace. And because David is locked tight to God, he knows that he is secure.

He knows safety because he has sided with, thrown his lot in with the almighty God of all creation. David is loyal to God.

That's our first point. Secondly, God's anointed king enjoys definite life. David sets out the reality of life with God, a life he is confident in because of his loyalty to God.

And verses eight, nine, ten, and eleven are just overflowing with abundant life. Verse eight, we've already looked at. Here's security.

He will not be shaken. He's not going to be moved. Verse nine, therefore my heart is glad and my whole being rejoices. My flesh also dwells secure.

[17 : 31] Verse ten, you will not abandon my soul to shale or let your holy one see corruption. David knows fullness of knife. Look at verse six, the lions have fallen for me in pleasant places. Indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance. presence. And then verse eleven, you make known to me the path of life.

In your presence there is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Astonishing certainty of life, definite life, everlasting life.

And there's the hope of resurrection. Verse ten, you will not abandon my soul to shale.

That is the place of the dead. Or let your holy one see corruption. Literally, my body won't rot in the ground. But how?

[18 : 41] It's all very well to read this psalm to see that David says that loyalty to God leads to security in life. But it doesn't quite add up. We know that David wasn't ultimately loyal.

One word throws up a whole heap of doubt on that. Bathsheba, the woman he saw bathing, who he took for his own and had her husband killed on the front line.

David wasn't utterly loyal. And yet, on top of that, he died. David died. His body did see corruption. There's no record of his resurrection. How can this psalm be true? Well, remember who David was. Peter, he was the king of Israel. He was God's anointed king. And he is pointing us forward here to another king, a king who was ultimately loyal, and whose body did not see corruption.

[19 : 58] Now, don't take my word for that. I'm not somehow pulling a magic rabbit out of a hat. Listen to Peter as he applies this psalm in the New Testament situation.

Acts chapter 2, he says this, Men of Israel, hear these words. Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst.

As you yourselves know, this Jesus delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says, and he quotes from Psalm 16, David says concerning him, I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken.

Therefore my heart was glad and my tongue rejoiced. My flesh also will dwell in hope, for you will not abandon my soul to Hades or let your holy one see corruption. You have made known to me the powers of life.

[21 : 13] You will make me full of gladness with your presence. 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 there for 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.

According to Peter, David was in Psalm 16 speaking about Jesus Christ, a greater David, the promised king, the one who was perfectly loyal to God and whose body did not see corruption. Jesus Christ was raised to life as we've been singing about this evening. He now lives, reigning at the right hand of God. he was ultimately loyal.

He knows definite life. And because of the decisive loyalty of Christ, because of his definite life, you and I can be sure of these things too, as we seek refuge in our king.

[22 : 45] And that is simply wonderful, joyful news. Because Christ, the ultimate king, the greater David, has defeated death, all who are united to him can have confidence of life beyond death.

All that is true of David here is true of you who are in Christ and all who take refuge in God. God, if you do not take refuge in Christ, if you do not take refuge in him and you're here tonight, then none of these promises of security, of refuge, of life, of pleasures forevermore, none of them are yours, none of them.

how do you take refuge? Well, let me read on from Peter's speech in Acts chapter 2.

The very next verses tell us how. Now, when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, brothers, what shall we do?

And Peter said to them, repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[24 : 20] And so the same question is put to you. Will you repent? That is, will you turn away from your sinful rejection of the king of the universe?

And will you turn to him in obedience and faith, trusting him for the forgiveness of your sins?

There is a simple choice to be made. Are you with the king or are you against him? There is no alternative. There is no other place in which the sort of safety that David speaks about here can be found.

No place where eternal security is to be held. There is no other place where death, the penalty for our sins, is fully dealt with.

Will you seek refuge in Jesus Christ? He was the loyal king. king. If you're a follower of Jesus, if you are in Christ here this evening, then all that is true of our anointed king here is true of you.

[25 : 38] As it fares with the messianic king, so it fares with each member of the messianic kingdom. if you are part of the people of the king, if you are one of Jesus' people, then your hope beyond death rests in his perfect obedience.

That is your great and only hope. It does not depend on your perfect loyalty. security. Nothing and no one can shake the security that you have in Christ.

Nothing can take away the certainty of eternity with our God in the new creation. Nothing can take that away. Now that sort of refuge, that sort of eternal security is a great giver of perspective, isn't it?

Particularly this week as a nation, we've been thrown into all sorts of political economic uncertainty. This psalm sets those sort of concerns against eternal concerns.

And as we see here, the security doors are unbreakable. Because Jesus is at God's right hand, he shall not be shaken, and neither will you.

[27 : 04] Are you worried about your pension pot after Thursday's referendum? Are you concerned about your children's future? Wondering how it's all going to pan out for Britain?

Well, this psalm tells you that you are safe in Christ. You are safe in him when it comes to the ultimate matters. Safe from life's greatest leveler.

You are safe beyond death. death. This psalm promises for us who are in Christ eternal life, safety from God's wrath.

You can be 100% secure and safe in life's biggest questions. And that is a wonderful thing, isn't it? all of us must face up to death in the end. This is our security, this is our safety, this is our refuge.

[28 : 07] As we think about that day we all face. But more than that, more than our ultimate safety in Christ as a follower of Jesus, you will be becoming more and more like him.

as his spirit works in you, you are changed and changing. And so, although these words of decisive loyalty are ultimately true of Jesus, as his follower, you will perhaps find yourself wanting to echo these words yourself, beginning to feel the same way and wanting to utter similar words of loyalty to your king, to your father in heaven.

Might you be able to say, as David does, you are my God, I have no good apart from you. Do you find yourself wanting to say, as for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones in whom is all my delight.

Each of us will be faced on a regular basis with the choices to make, either to affirm our loyalty to God or to follow our own desires.

Tempted to join in with those who run after other gods. Verse four. Are you tempted to run after those gods too? It is tempting.

[29 : 46] Ten seconds on Facebook shows me what my contemporaries are able to enjoy. And it looks like fun. But tempted to join with them, will I say, as a psalmist does, those things ultimately lead to sorrow?

Will I, will you, choose loyalty to God? By God's grace and work in our lives and hearts, you will be able to do that imperfectly but with integrity.

You will be able to utter similar words of loyalty, expressing decisive commitment to him. And as you do that, as you express decisive loyalty to God, you will know with ever greater confidence the certainty of definite life.

self. But even if we fail, even if we falter, and we will, we have ultimate confidence, not because of ourselves, but because of our king, the Lord Jesus Christ, because of his decisive loyalty, because of his definite life.

You and I can be sure of ultimate beyond death security, because we find our refuge in Jesus Christ.

[31 : 18] He is our king. Our only hope in the face of inevitable death is that we have a king who is unflinchingly loyal and who overcame death, whose body did not see corruption.

as one of his people, you will not be shaken. Let me pray. The apostle Paul in the letter to the Romans writes this, for if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Heavenly Father, we thank you for the great hope that this psalm gives us, because it is a psalm about our great and loyal king, the Lord Jesus Christ, who perfectly obeyed, who was perfectly loyal, and whose body did not see corruption.

But he has been raised from the dead and reigns now at your right hand. What hope that gives us, as we inevitably will one day die.

We have a hope beyond death, and we thank you so much that it is rock solid, that in you we shall not be shaken. And so for our loyal king, we give you thanks.

[33 : 06] In his name, Amen.