

PSALM 16 || THE PATH TO JOY

Memorial Day

Good morning, Mercy Church, and Happy Memorial Day Weekend! Tomorrow is a day we set aside each year as a country to honor, celebrate, and thank those who have served our country in the Armed Forces, and particularly those who have given their lives in doing so. I imagine most of us have friends or family who have served in the Armed Forces. A couple of our members are serving currently. So, while there are few words to express our gratefulness for you, today we simply say, “thank you”.

INTRODUCTION

In addition to honoring those who serve in our Armed Forces, Memorial Day Weekend is also the unofficial beginning to summer. Pools are opened, the lake is finally getting warm enough to jump in, school is wrapping up, and everybody’s getting excited for summer vacations. There’s just an excitement in the air and I love it!

The beginning of summer has become an extra special season for my family recently because it was this time four years ago that we moved to Charlotte. My wife and I had been married for 2 years, I’d only been out of school for a year, and I could barely grow a mustache, but we were so compelled by the vision of Mercy Church that we packed up our lives and moved here from Raleigh, alongside many of you, to see a gospel awakening in the city of Charlotte that

was carried to the ends of the earth. And that vision that was compelling enough to move my young family to a new city to plant a new church with no guarantee of a job or a paycheck is just as compelling today as it was then.

The Lord has given our young church so much favor and so much fruit over these last several years. We’ve seen new believers baptized, marriages reconciled, disciples made and sent out all over our country and world, and, just in the last year alone, 21 of you have come up to me to tell me you sense the Lord is calling you to the nations long-term.

Y’all, the Lord has given our young church so much favor and fruit. But even in the midst of this season when I’ve seen the Lord move the most clearly, even in the midst of this season that I have grown more than any other in my life, much of the last 4 years I have been fatigued and worn out. Because I fell into a “hard-hat identity”. I’m sure many of you can relate. I thought if I am obedient enough, if I sacrifice enough, if I work hard enough, then I will earn the favor and approval of others, and, even though I would never say it out loud, I was thinking and acting as if I would also earn God’s favor, God’s approval, and, ultimately, God’s love. The problem is I got to the point where I realized I couldn’t do enough to earn other’s favor and especially God’s. And it led me to a place where all I could say is “I’m just tired.”

So, rather than feeling this overwhelming, unshakable sense of joy the Bible says I can have, I felt exhausted and I just felt sad.

So, I tried to find my happiness and pleasure in other places. I pulled my boot straps up during the day and worked as hard as I could, but at night I'd come home and try to escape reality by veging on Netflix. Or I'd go to the gym to play basketball because it made me feel good about myself, because I wasn't feeling good about much else.

And y'all, one of the scariest parts is, very few of you would've ever known anything was wrong if you looked at me. If you interacted with me. Because I was just clever enough, I had been around church long enough, that I knew how to play the church game. And I didn't just know how to play it, I could play better than anybody. Y'all, I was like the LeBron of the church game. Listen, my earliest memories in life are of climbing underneath church pews, ladies with blue hair giving me big kisses and leaving lipstick all over my face, and eating casseroles at potluck dinners. My family went to the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting every summer as one of our vacations. I surrendered my life to the Lord when I was pastored by the future President of one SBC entity and then, because he wasn't available, I was baptized by an SBC seminary President. My dad has been in vocational ministry for his entire career and now I am a *pastor*. Y'all, believe me, I can walk the walk and talk the talk with the best of 'em.

But can I tell you something today? I got so tired of living my life in this way. Of walking the walk and talking the talk and playing the church game, but my life really not being marked by the overwhelming, unshakable joy that the Bible says I can have.

So, this last year of my life, the hardest year I have ever experienced, the Lord has been growing in me this burden to have true joy, not only for myself but for my family and for our church. And by God's grace alone, he was with me through the hardest season of my life and he brought me through it by showing me the only way I could find true joy was by being most satisfied in him.

And so today, I want to give you a glimpse of the joy I have begun to find and the path we all need to take to find it. My main point for us today, if you leave with just one thing, leave with this, is that: God will, not can, God will bring you to joy if you are most satisfied in him.

God will bring you to joy if you are most satisfied in him.

The way I'm going to show you this today is by walking through one of the most beautiful passages in all of the Scripture where we see so clearly God's heart for us. If you have your Bibles with you today, you can turn to Psalm 16.

As we walk through our passage today, I'm going to ask two really simple questions for us: 1. How can you have satisfaction? 2. Why can you have joy? Two simple

questions: how can you have satisfaction and why can you have joy?

BODY

First question:

How can you have satisfaction?

Read with me verse 1-2. The words will be on the screens.

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord..."

Alright, we need a little context. The author of this Psalm is none other than David himself. You know David. The shepherd boy who defeated Goliath with a slingshot and became king. David was a pretty big deal, and yet things didn't always come easy for him. When God said David was going to become king, the current king, Saul, wasn't feelin' it. So he chased him around with an army and tried to kill him. That seems appropriate. But it didn't stop after Saul. Much of David's life was marked by battles, enemy attacks, and people trying to kill him. So, it's very likely that this Psalm was written in one of the many times when David was in danger and even fearful for his life.

And so, in this moment, David goes to the only one he can. He goes to God, his Lord, and asks him to preserve him. To watch over him, to keep him safe. And then he connects his ask for preservation with who God is. He says, God preserve

me, because you are my refuge, you are my shelter, you are my safety, you are worthy for me to surrender my life to.

Tornado

As many of you know, I grew up in Kentucky. A state that's so great they call it a commonwealth. In addition to being a commonwealth, Kentucky brings a lot of great things to our lives. Horse racing, bourbon for those of who you like it, Corvettes, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and, of course, Kentucky Basketball. The greatest, most winningest basketball team in the history of the world. I had to get that line in with Pastor Spence off the stage this week.

While KY brings a lot of great things to the table, many of you might be surprised that Kentucky is also a place with some pretty serious tornados. Especially during this time of the year, KY has a few tornado concerns every year.

Nightmare story

You see, in my dream, I kept running around trying to find a refuge, but I could never could find it as hard as I searched. As hard as I tried. And what I know to be true today is that many of you have been doing the exact same thing. You've been trying to find your shelter, your place of rest and comfort, in all the wrong places.

If you're like me, it's in your job. As long as things are going well in my job, I'm performing well and the people on my team are flourishing, I feel stable and at peace. If things at

work aren't going well, though, I sacrifice everything else in my life to make it stable.

Maybe for you, it's your family. You all know the term "helicopter parents", right? The parents that are always around their kids trying to protect them, making sure everything is okay in their lives, because if things aren't stable in their family, their life is a mess.

Some of you, it's your bank account. You check the stock market, you check your retirement account 3 times a day because as long as you have that "safety net" set up, everything is good. But as soon as your accounts start dropping a little, you drop everything, sacrifice everything in your life to make it stable.

What we're all doing, whether we're trying to find our refuge in our job, our family, our bank account, or something else, is that we're placing the weight of our souls on them.

The problem is, these things, while some of them are good, were never meant to carry the weight of your soul. They were never meant to be your refuge. What David opens his Psalm telling us is that only God is meant to be our refuge.

The first way you need to find satisfaction is simple:

Surrender your life to the Lord.

Because true satisfaction in life can only come when we see the way to gain our life is by laying it down. By giving, by surrendering it to someone who can make it more fulfilling, more comforting, more peaceful, and more joyful than anyone or anything else could ever dream.

I know there are many of you in this room who need to surrender your life to Lord for the first time today. You've been running after things you weren't meant to run after, you've been chasing after things you weren't meant to chase after, and like me, you come here today and you're just tired. You're worn out.

Desert

It's like you've been wondering through the desert thinking if you keep drinking sand you'll be satisfied. But it just keeps making you more thirsty and thirsty.

Can I tell you something I learned the hard way? Surrender your life to Jesus. Fully. Because he is the true living water that will satisfy.

For others in the room, you are a Christ follower. You surrendered your life to the Lord and have been walking with him. But, there are still parts of your lives that you hold on to with a tight fist. For me, it's my job. For you, it's your family or bank account or relationships. When God calls us to surrender to him, he's not just calling us to surrender parts of our lives and keep others to ourselves.

He wants ALL of us. And the awesome thing is, that is for our good.

In these first couple verses, David calls out to the Lord, asking him to preserve him. He surrenders the weight of his soul, he surrenders even his life, all of himself, to the Lord. Because he knows he is the only one who can carry him, bring him true rest, true peace, true satisfaction, no matter what this world throws at him. And then his ask leads him to praise God for who he is. You are my refuge, you are my Lord.

That's the second way you need to find satisfaction:

Praise God for who he is to you, not just what he can do for you.

Check out the second half of verse 2:

I have no good apart from you.

Alright, hold up. David, come on bro, you're King David. You're a master military strategist, you've got riches and fame for days. Really?! You have no good apart from God?! You must be exaggerating.

David, here, isn't exaggerating. He's saying, sure, the Lord has given me a lot of good things. James in the New Testament says every good gift is from the Lord. The Lord is gracious to give me and all of you incredible gifts. What

David is saying, though, is that nothing, nothing, can compare to God's goodness. God and God alone are his supreme treasure.

That's an easy thing for me to say. It's an easy thing for you say "hmmmm" to, but really think about that. When you think about God, do you think more about who he is or what he can do for you?

Marriage

It's like in my marriage. Do you think my marriage is more healthy when I'm looking at what Jess can do for me or who she is to me? Sure, Jess does so much good for me. But when I focus on the good things she does for me, I'm only happy for a moment or I get disappointed. That's not healthy. That's why we fought most of the first year of our marriage. What is healthy is when I look, when I focus on, when I celebrate who she is.

The same thing exists with us and God. We so often pursue him because the things he can do for us. I'm going to obey you, I'm going to sacrifice for you, I'm going to do good things for you just to get the real things I get joy out of.

David says we need to switch our mindset. We don't need to be running after things and doing God. We need to be running after God and doing things. Because God is the joy, God is the meaning, God is the only thing we can't lose. Not all the good things we can get from him.

David keeps building on this idea that God is his supreme treasure in the next couple verses. Check out verse 3:

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

This is hitting at one of the good things we receive from the Lord: brothers and sisters in Christ. And David doesn't mean that he has delight in God's people *instead of* God or *above* God. He's talking about the others who have surrendered to God in the way he has. And because they have this common bond, he can find great delight in them because they, too, find their greatest treasure in the Lord. They are a good gift. Not something that he has to begrudgingly convince himself he needs, not something he would isolate himself from in times of trouble. But his brothers and sisters in Christ are something he can delight in as they surrender to and worship the Lord together.

There is much more I could say about our need for community, but, sadly, that's for another day. Let's move on to verse 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.

David keeps dropping *fire*. So much I could get into with this verse. Pastor Spence actually focused on this verse in a sermon he preached a couple months ago on Counterfeit

Gods. You can check it out at mercycharlotte.com for a more thorough explanation, but let me just hit the main thing this verse is getting at for the sake of time: God gives us good gifts, yes. But our problem is when we elevate the good things God gives us to ultimate things. And because they're ultimate things, we worship the gifts rather than the giver of gifts. And when we run to anything else other than God to worship, to treasure, it just multiplies our sorrows. Because they will never satisfy, they will never nourish, they will never sustain us the way God can. So David says, I'm not even going to take their names on my lips.

David keeps on going in verse 5:

The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup.

God, if there were hundreds of portions of food and drink on the table. If I could choose between a medium rare bone-in ribeye and the Lord, no question, I'm choosing my Lord. Because he is my greatest treasure and my greatest satisfaction.

Second half of verse 5:

You hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

What on earth is going on here? With all these lots and lines and places, it sounds like David is playing a game of Settlers of Catan. Yes, I am a dweeb. And, yes I've got some serious

Settlers game. Let me explain what's going on here. David is using descriptive language that reminds us of when the Israelites entered Canaan. In the book of Numbers, God gave each tribe a specific area with specific boundary lines and the way everything was decided was by casting lots. So, everyone got their inheritance, *until* he got to the Levites. You see, the Levites were intended to be priests and rather than giving them land, God says *I am your portion and your inheritance.*

In the same way, David is saying God, you are my inheritance. Land would be insufficient. Money would be insufficient. If I don't have you, they would all be worthless.

Because satisfaction is not based on what God can do for me. It is based on who he is to me.

David isn't done praising God yet, though. He keeps on going. Verse 7:

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

God is not only worthy to be praised because he is David's refuge, his Lord, his treasure, and his inheritance. David goes one step further. He says God is his trusted counselor. Even in the night. Even when I'm all alone and my thoughts are racing. Anybody been there? I know I have. I was last night thinking about this sermon. But, even when my mind

is racing, even when I'm asleep, the Lord is right there with me. Instructing me, pointing me to good, restoring my soul.

David has spent the last 7 verses praising God for who he is. Likely while he is in the midst of a battle or running for his life. It seems like in the middle of a tornado, David is having a party.

And many of you, I believe, need to hear this today. Because you're in the middle of a tornado, too. You or a family member has cancer, or you and your spouse are seriously considering a divorce, or you and your best friend are in the middle of a huge fight. Even in the midst of suffering and trials, David is telling us that God can not only be trusted, but he can be worshipped. And you, too, like David can find satisfaction in God if you surrender your life to him and praise him for who he is to you, not just what he can do for you.

But why is it that we can have satisfaction? What can we have joy? Let's see.

Second question:

Why can you have joy?

Read with me verse 8:

I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

Alright, we've seen already that David's ask for preservation led to praising God for who he is. He's praised God for 7 verses and now what does he have? He has confidence. Did you notice what he said? I shall, whoa, shall...doesn't that communicate so much more confidence than will?! I shall not be shaken. There's no way I'm gonna be moved, even in hard times. There's no way I'm gonna be moved, even in the midst of trouble. Why?

Because the Lord is always before him. He's at his right hand. The same one who is my refuge, my treasure, my inheritance, my counselor, he's always with me. He will never leave me.

As we are on the other side of the cross now, we know what David had an idea about here in Psalm 16. And that's that when we surrender our lives to the Lord, he gives us his Holy Spirit to guide us, to instruct us, to counsel us, to restore our souls by pointing us to the Gospel.

Listen, I know whenever the Holy Spirit comes up, some of you start getting sweaty and squirmy because you don't really know what to do with him. You don't even know what to call him (*or it?*). Let me try to make you feel better.

Genie

I lot of times, I feel like we think about the Holy Spirit like the Genie in Aladdin. The live-action movie just came out this weekend, so don't spoil for it for me if you've seen it.

But, in the original cartoon version I grew up on, Aladdin, the main character, finds this ancient lamp while he's trapped in a cave. He's trying to read the lamp and accidentally rubs it, and, all of a sudden, this big blue Genie comes out. So, for the remainder of the movie, Aladdin summons the Genie by rubbing the lamp whenever he needs something. He then asks for his wishes, and the Genie goes back in the lamp until he summons him again.

A lot of us think about the Holy Spirit just like this. He's this influence, this power, this thing that comes around every-once-in-a-while when you need something. And the only way you can get him to come around is if you do all the right things. If you have a really good devotional in the morning. Or if you go to church on Sunday.

Y'all, the Holy Spirit is not a Genie that comes and goes to primarily give us things. He is God who is with us always to give us, primarily, God. And for those of us who are Christ followers, our problem is not if we have the presence of the Spirit. Our problem is if we experience the presence of the Spirit.

Because he's always there. Like with David, he's always at our right hand.

Can you imagine the confidence you would have in your life if you really believed that God was with you always?

You go into your devotional time in the morning. God, I know you are with me now as you are with me always. I believe you can speak to me today. I trust you.

You're going into the big presentation at work or school and you're feeling anxious. God, I know you are with me now as you are with me always. Give me peace, give me comfort. I trust you.

Misscarriages

For my wife and I, this simple truth that God is always with us is one we've had to hold on to a lot over the last year. In the midst of me working through burnout, last spring we got the news that we were pregnant. We were so happy. We loved parenting our daughter, Claire, and had prayed the Lord would give us the gift of more children. But then Jess started experiencing some pain and so, as we were going into the doctor to get everything checked out, we prayed this prayer. God, you are with us now as you are always. Give us joy, no matter the outcome of this appointment. We prayed it again as we got in our car after learning that we were having a miscarriage. We rested in it over the coming months as we grieved. We prayed it as we found out just a couple months later that we were pregnant again, just to learn a few weeks later that we'd had another miscarriage. We rested in it as we learned we were pregnant again a few months later, as we walked into the appointment we had received bad news twice before, and as we now prepare to have our baby girl any day in the next week or so.

That simple truth that God is with you always will absolutely transform your life, bringing you so much confidence no matter what this world throws at you.

But confidence isn't the end for the Christ follower. Check out verse 9:

Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

I not only have confidence, I have gladness, I have security, I have joy because of the presence of your Spirit. The first reason you can have joy as a Christ-follower is this:

The presence of the Spirit is with you.

And because he is with you always, and because he is never changing, that joy is unshakable. It's overwhelming. It's heart, body, and soul. Look how David continues to describe it in verse 10 and 11. Listen to the beauty and splendor here:

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; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

David is sure that all God has been to him, his refuge, his Lord, his treasure, his inheritance, his counselor, will not

end with death. It'll actually get better as he will experience joy fully and forevermore.

Do you get the beauty and the splendor David is talking about here? He started asking the Lord to preserve him. And what he found was a refuge. But he fell into so much more. Because he got joy in the presence, in the very face of God. And that joy is described as fullness. Y'all, there is no fuller he can experience joy. And that joy is not just full. It is forevermore. There is no longer time he could experience joy. This is awesome! And it's for you and it's for me if we find our greatest satisfaction in Christ!

But something very important has been left out so far in our time together. Before he wrote this Psalm, David had been given a promise. The prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7 told him:

When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

You see, David knew from God's word that he would die and lie in the grave like his fathers. But, at the same time, he knew God would raise up one of his descendants who would establish a kingdom with no end. Who would defeat death and evil. David believed this promise that God had

given him through Nathan, but he wasn't really sure how it was going to come true.

What we know today is that verse 10, the promise to David that his soul wouldn't be abandoned to Sheol, to Hell, we know it is a promise of something greater.

Peter got it right in his sermon at Pentecost, when talking about Psalm 16, he said this:

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 are all witnesses.

You see, David believed and found joy in the promise he had been given by God. And that same promise David believed of a future resurrection is the same promise that is for us in Christ today. The second reason why we can have joy is that, just like it was true for David:

The promise of the resurrection is for you.

What David had an idea of, we have already seen the beginning of, though. Because we know that Jesus, the Messiah, the long-hoped-for, final King of Kings allowed death to swallow him up for the sake of sinners. But before death could take him down and turn him to dust, he killed

death. He killed death for himself and for all who belong to him, for all who surrender to him. And one day, as it says in Revelation 21, he will resurrect all of his children, he will restore them and all of creation. And we will reign with him forever, at his right hand, in his presence, face-to-face, fully and forever joyful alongside a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

David rested in the truth that death was not the end. He was confident that whatever was before him, the trials, the sufferings, or even the tornados, he could rejoice in God. Because the same way God was faithful to David, the same way he was faithful when he fulfilled the promise to die and rise 3 days later for your sins and mine, the same way he will be faithful for all of eternity, is the same way he will continue to be faithful to you and me *right now*. And that brings us to nothing more than full and forever joy. Not momentary happiness or fleeting pleasure. But, as Pastor Tim Keller defines it:

Joy = Delight in God and his salvation for the sheer beauty and worth of who he is.

This is the joy David had when he cried out to God to preserve him. This is the same joy you and I, if we are in Christ, can have today and that we will have for all of eternity.

God will, through the presence of his Spirit and the promise of the resurrection, bring you to joy if you are most satisfied in him.

CONCLUSION

Y'all, I desire so deeply for us to be a church that is utterly and totally satisfied in Christ and because of it, we have an overwhelming, unshakable sense of joy.

So, I have one more question to ask: are you most satisfied in God?

If you aren't, it's a sign you're running after something or someone else. And as long as you keep chasing those gods, you will never be satisfied.

As Peter finished his sermon on Psalm 16 at Pentecost, he challenged the crowd to repent and believe. And that is my same challenge for you today.

Repent: confess to God the things or people you have been trying to find refuge in.

And believe: turning from them and surrendering your life to Jesus, seeing he is all you need for full and forever joy.

As we close our time together this morning, I'd like each of you to get into a poster of prayer between you and God. Because Psalm 16 is simply a prayer, I'd like to close our time by praying it over you. As I do, I'd ask you to simply

praise God for who he is. Because he is worthy to be worshipped fully today, just as he will be worthy to be worshipped fully forevermore.

Hear and respond to the Word of the Lord:

¹Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
²I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
 I have no good apart from you."
³As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
 in whom is all my delight.
⁴The 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.
⁵The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
 you hold my lot.
⁶The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
 indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
⁷I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
 in the night also my heart instructs me.
⁸I have set the LORD always before me;
 because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
⁹Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
 my flesh also dwells secure.

¹⁰For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
 or let your holy one see corruption.
¹¹You make known to me the path of life;
 in your presence there is fullness of joy;
 at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

AMEN!

BENCH

Our problem is that at some point or another, we find out that we can't do enough. So, rather than feeling this overwhelming, unshakable sense of joy the Bible says we can have, we find ourselves feeling sorrow, we find ourselves feeling ashamed, we feel exhausted, we find ourselves just feeling sad.

So we try to escape our sadness, our exhaustion, by finding happiness and pleasure in whatever we can. And most of us do so in a few ways:

Amusement- For many of us, we turn to amusement. We pull up our boot straps and work so hard every day that whenever we get some time off, we just want to completely avoid reality. We veg out for hours on Instagram, on Facebook, or binge watching a show on Netflix, because the only way we can calm down or lift ourselves up after a hard or busy day is by completely checking out.

Arousal?- For others of us, we turn to arousal. Because we can't find joy in the majority of our lives, we try to find happiness and pleasure in momentary stimulation. Pornography and alcohol are the obvious examples. But, there's a lot more subtle ways we pursue arousal, too. Gossiping about that news you just learned about another person so, just for a second, you can feel better about yourself. Going to a sporting event so, just for a few hours, you can be surrounded by people who get excited about

something. Because there's really not a lot of excitement in your day-to-day life.

Apathy- For some of us, though, we're just apathetic. We've been hurt or disappointed so many times in our lives that we've decided it's just not worth it to try anymore. So, in order to protect ourselves, we don't commit to anyone or anything. We do this most often in not committing, not really giving ourselves, to relationships. Because the hurt, the disappointment, the pain, just isn't worth it. We just can't handle it again.

For all of us, I imagine it's pretty easy to determine which way or ways you typically seek to find happiness in your life. Some of you are pretty out in the open with your pursuit of happiness because you think what you're doing is fine, or okay because everyone else is doing it, or just because you don't know what else the goal of life is.