

Psalm 16

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Preacher: David MacPherson

[0 : 00] Are you a fan of The Voice? Now, for the uninitiated, The Voice is the BBC's offering in the Saturday night primetime ratings war. I think the series that has just been transmitted has concluded.

It shows I don't know much about it because I had to actually ask somebody at tea last night because I knew I was going to mention this, so I said to somebody, is it still on? So I was informed that apparently it's not on anymore. It's just finished. But I imagine most of you will be familiar with the program, a cast of unknown wannabes sing a song by a well-known artist in the hope of being taken under the tutelage of one of the judges, of getting on to Team Tom.

That would be Tom Jones, or Team Kylie, or Team Will.i.am. Now, there's another guy, but I have no idea who he is, so maybe you do know who the other guy is. There's one comment that is often made by the judges in complimenting a given contestant's rendition of a song. And I suppose here I'm confessing to having watched it at least once or twice. What I've heard one of the judges say, or more than one of the judges say, in complimenting a contestant goes along something like this, you made it your own, about the song. You made it your own, or words to that effect. And what do they mean by that when they say, you made it your own? Well, the words sung remain the same as the original, but the arrangement in some way is fresh and different. And perhaps even more significantly, the song was sung from the heart. More than just a performance, the singing of the song became the telling of a very personal story that moved the judges. And so, they commend the singer by saying, you made it your own. I thought of that expression and of the truth that at least it would seem to portray. It reminded me of the book of Psalms, and indeed one of the beauties of the Psalms.

I would go further than somebody to call it one of the beauties of the Psalms, but to say the very intention of the Psalms is that the believer can make them their own. Of words penned thousands of years ago, the believer can testify, this is my song. This is my song. Now, in some Psalms, it's so evident. We've sung Psalm 23, the Lord is my shepherd. And when we sing that as a believer, we're not thinking in the first instance that the Lord was the shepherd of David, the one who wrote the Psalm. Of course, that is true, and we know that to be true. But when we sing that Psalm as a believer, what we're saying is, he's my shepherd. We make the Psalm our own as we sing the Psalm as testimony and as praise to God. And today, we're going to consider Psalm 16 in that light, and do so considering the Psalm in three overlapping ways, as a song of David, as a song about Jesus, and as a song for you. We could maybe say those three things in a slightly different way. We could say that the Psalm is a testimony of David. It's a mirror for Jesus. We'll need to explain what I mean by that because it's not perhaps so obviously apparent, and a challenge for you. Not only a song for you, but a challenge for you as a believer. And I'm going to make use of both services today to cover the ground that I want to cover. This morning, we'll consider the Psalm as a song about Jesus, or as we've also suggested or described it, as a mirror for Jesus. And this evening, as a song for you, is a song for you, is a song for you. On both occasions, we will have as the necessary backdrop a recognition that the Psalm is, of course, a song and testimony of David, the one who wrote the Psalm in his own particular personal circumstances. So then, a song about Jesus. Now, I hope that sounds like an appealing suggestion that this is a song about Jesus, but it does beg the question, is that the case? Is it a song about Jesus? Now, before we launch into the Psalm, we need to make in that connection one or two preliminary comments or observations about the so-called Messianic Psalms, though, as I will contend in a moment, that very designation is potentially misleading.

[5 : 01] Ordinarily, in a list of what we might call the Messianic Psalms, you will find those Psalms that are directly quoted in the New Testament. So, for example, this morning, we've read from the

book of Acts where quite an extensive portion of Psalm 16 is quoted and employed by Peter, and so it's very evident that this Psalm, Psalm 16, can be so designated as a Messianic Psalm. It speaks of Jesus so clearly and so explicitly, and that is confirmed by the use that is made of it by the New Testament writers. But ordinarily, in a list of Messianic Psalms, you might not be restricted to those Psalms that are directly quoted, but also that list might include those Psalms where it is argued there are clear allusions to the Messiah, be that His person or His work, even if the Psalm or the relevant portion of the Psalm is not directly quoted in the New Testament. And we can see that that makes sense.

It's not necessary that it be quoted in the New Testament for us to identify in a Psalm, well, this clearly is speaking about Jesus, or at least argue the case that a portion of a Psalm is speaking in that way concerning the Messiah. Just very quickly to illustrate this with one or two examples. One instance of direct quotation, well, we've already given one instance of Psalm 16, but another instance of direct quotation would be from Psalm 22, which is actually the Psalm that is most quoted in the New Testament.

In John's Gospel, in chapter 19 and in verse 24 in the passage that describes or gives us the account of the crucifixion, we read as follows, this happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled, which said, they divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. So, explicitly and directly, that verse from the Psalm is quoted and attributed to or presented as describing what happened to Jesus as He was crucified. Other quotes aren't introduced in that explicit way. So, for example, from the same Psalm, from that same Psalm 22, the very words that begin the Psalm are quoted, I would prefer to say, are owned by Jesus when He cried out on the cross, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? He doesn't say that the Scripture might be fulfilled, but it is so evident that He is drawing from the words of that

Psalm. And as we've just said, the Psalm that we're going to be spending more time on today is directly quoted in the New Testament, not only by Peter, who we've read in Acts chapter 2, but also by Paul in one of his sermons, also recorded in the book of Acts. Now, generally, we are most impressed if I can use that word by those Messianic prophecies that are vividly explicit. For example, the dividing of the garments that we've just mentioned. It's so explicit, it's so clear, it's so detailed that it impresses. And we say, wow, that is some detailed prophecy about exactly what happened. And we rightly are impressed by that. Or in the Psalm that we're going to be thinking about today in Psalm 16, where there's a reference in verse 10 to God not allowing His Holy One to see decay, to remain in the grave. And we say, well, that's so explicit. And it is impressive in that sense. But what I would like to suggest this morning for you to think about is that those texts that are less obviously Messianic, and yet are identified as Messianic, are in some regards more significant. For example, if we think about the Psalm that we're going to be turning to in a moment, we'll turn to it right now, in Psalm 16, verse 10, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay. We say, well, yes, that really is so clearly Messianic. And Peter employs it, and we can see why, and it all makes sense. But you'll have noticed in Acts that Peter quotes a significant portion of the Psalm, not only that verse. He also quotes, he begins his quote from verse 8,

I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. Now, that is clearly speaking about Jesus. Peter confirms that by employing it. But that could easily be a verse that was speaking about David. It doesn't require a Messianic interpretation.

[10:03] You don't read that verse and say, well, clearly that's not about David. It must be about the Messiah. No, in and of itself, we might say, well, that doesn't require a Messianic fulfillment or interpretation.

And there are a host of such Messianic texts, even as they're employed in the New Testament. Now, why are such Messianic texts arguably more significant? Well, it seems to me that such texts, at the very least, suggest that the Psalms quoted or clearly alluded to in the New Testament are only samples of a much larger body of Messianic material in the book of Psalms, that when we first read them, we might not immediately say, well, yes, that's obviously speaking about Jesus.

I would contend that wherever the Psalms describe the voice or the words of the King, wherever they describe a righteous man, wherever they speak of one who suffers as a servant of God, they are pointing to, and I think we can say further, they are speaking of Jesus. They may well also be speaking of the one who wrote the Psalm, but they are speaking of the Messiah. Now, the term that's sometimes employed to describe such Psalms is that they are typically Messianic. The idea

of the Psalmist being a type of Christ, and you might be familiar with that language in other connections, where it's recognized that only Jesus ultimately and fully fulfills the description that such Psalms give. Now, you can see, I hope, the difficulty I have of speaking of Messianic Psalms, where the implication is that this refers to a limited list of identifiable Psalms, because from the perspective that I just outlined, you might even wish to argue that all the Psalms are in some measure Messianic. Well, with these general observations in mind, let's now home in on Psalm 16. Is Psalm 16 Messianic? Well, of course it is.

We've already seen how Peter directly quotes from verses 8 to 11. But given what we have just said, I would argue that it's legitimate, I might even say necessary, to view the whole Psalm as Messianic.

The whole Psalm is a song about the Messiah, about Jesus. The whole Psalm is about what you might call the ultimate believer, the perfectly righteous man, the sinless suffering servant. And to see the Psalm in this light also allows us to treat the Psalm as a whole, as it undoubtedly is. It has a flow where it really seems very artificial to divide and say, well, this part is Messianic, but well, this part isn't. So, we can now look at the Psalm as a song about Jesus. Or as we suggested a few moments ago, as a mirror for Jesus. Now, what do I mean by using the language of a mirror? Well, Jesus would have been able to see himself in the Psalm. When Jesus heard the Psalm read in the synagogue or sang the Psalm with others or alone in private worship, he would have seen himself. Jesus could certainly make the Psalm his own.

[13 : 35] More than that, it was his own. And if Jesus could see himself, then we can also see Jesus in the Psalm. And we can see Jesus with a depth of insight that we could not enjoy to the same extent if we were limited to the material concerning Jesus that we have even in the New Testament.

The Psalm is not to be seen only as a faint shadow. And, oh, you need to get to the New Testament to really see what Jesus is like. No, I don't think it's right to see it as some faint shadow, but to see the Psalm as materially enriching our understanding, even as New Testament believers, of the person of Jesus.

Indeed, I would be so bold as to say of the soul of Jesus. Now, the Psalm ends with David declaring to God that he had made known to him the path of life. There in verse 11, you have made known to me the path of life. Now, Peter quotes that. So, of that part, we are no doubt that it is messianic. And that is how the Psalm ends, David declaring in this way. So, let me suggest a number of ways, taking that picture of the path of life, let me suggest a number of ways in which the Psalm provides a mirror for Jesus as he walked the path of life for us. On that path, I want to notice, and we'll do this really quite fleetingly, but on that path, we'll notice how Jesus depended on the protection of God, how Jesus rested in the sufficiency of God, how he delighted in the company of God's people, how he was satisfied with the provision and the providence of God, how he was led by the voice of God, how he was assured by the promise of God, and how he was accompanied by the presence of God. Seven ways in which Jesus could see himself in this Psalm, and seven ways in which we can see him in this Psalm. Jesus, first of all, then depended on the protection of God. Notice how the Psalm begins, keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge.

Now, it's persuasively argued, though we can't know definitively, that David wrote this Psalm as he fled from Saul, an outlaw driven from his own home. We may touch on this a little bit more detail this evening, because time doesn't allow us to do it this morning. If that is the case, if that is true, as it's argued, David was, as he writes this Psalm, a refugee in the need of the refuge only God could provide. And so, in those circumstances, we can very much warm to why it would have been so helpful to David to address God in this way, to cry out to God in this way, keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. But what of Jesus? What of the incarnate Son of God?

[16 : 43] Was he not, in some respects, a refugee in this world, driven not by violence or force, but driven by loyalty and love from his home in heaven? Was he not exposed to untold dangers in a sin-sick world where he was despised and rejected by men? And what did Jesus do in such perilous circumstances?

Would he not have, on many occasions, cried out, keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge? As in the synagogue he heard those words read, would he not have said, that's me, that is my prayer, that is my cry, keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. Jesus depended on the protection of God, but Jesus also rested in the sufficiency of God. In verse 2 we read, I said to the Lord, you are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing. Let's think first of David, David on the

run, seemingly friendless and deprived of so much he might have considered his own, express this heartfelt conviction. You are my Lord, apart from you I have no good thing. And so too with Jesus. Jesus had a clear sense of his own identity, of his relationship with his Father. You are my Lord. We remember how, even as a child, he was able to speak with such conviction of my Father's house. And we can imagine, as he experienced the unbelief and the rejection of even those closest to him, he would declare in his soul to God, apart from you I have no good thing. Jesus rested in the sufficiency of God, in the sufficiency of his Father. But as we continue through the psalm, we can say this of Jesus, that he delighted in the company of God's people. Verse 3, as for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. David, as he was on the run from Saul, may have felt that the saints or the holy ones in the land were few and far between. But how he delighted in their company. Perhaps even those few who remained loyal to him and were with him in thick and thin, how he delighted in their company. They didn't go with the king. They didn't go with the majority. They didn't go where it was more comfortable. No, with conviction they remained loyal to him. And he delights in their company. He delights in their fellowship. They had nothing, seemingly, but they had each other. And he delights in them. David delights in the saints who are in the land, the glorious ones, in whom is all my delight.

And so too with Jesus, how he delighted in the fellowship and in the service of the saints. He walked with them. He prayed and worshiped with them. He ate and talked and laughed with them. He washed their feet. He prayed for them in the garden. And he even died a sinner's death for them, for the saints, for you and me. And he still delights in the fellowship of God's people. He delights today in our midst, here and now. Of course, his delight in God's people is also contrasted with his somber diagnosis of the fate of those who reject God, which is what we go on to read in the psalm. 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. Not only does he recognize the solemn fate of those who reject God, he also in an unflinching way refuses to be part of, to partake in their idolatry. But we read that, and we don't make more comment on that as we focus particularly on how he delighted in the company of God's people. He depended on the protection of God. He rested in the sufficiency of God. He delighted in the company of God's people. But we can also say this as we continue through the psalm, that Jesus was satisfied with the provision and the providence of God.

[21 : 24] Notice as we read verses 5 and 6, David, as he writes the psalm and employs the language of the book of Numbers that describes the manner in which the promised land was apportioned to the different tribes following the conquest. And you can imagine how the tribes would have delighted in their portion.

As Joshua divided up the land and said, well, you're getting this bit, and you're getting this bit, and it would have been a time, no doubt, of great celebration as people discovered what their inheritance was, what part of the promised land would be especially theirs. But listen to David, on the run, describing his own circumstances in words that he addressed to Saul as he fled from him.

But there's this encounter that's recorded in 1 Samuel chapter 26. Listen to what David says to Saul. Now let my lord the king, it's a reference to Saul, let my lord the king listen to his servant's words. That is David. If the Lord has incited you against me, then may he accept an offering. If however men have done it, may they be cursed before the Lord. They have now driven me from my share in the Lord's inheritance and have said, go serve other gods. David recognizes that certainly everything would suggest that he has been deprived of his inheritance. He's been driven from his share of the Lord's inheritance. And yet, in this psalm, as he pens it and as he sings it, what do we discover?

But we discover a man who is satisfied with the provision, yes, even the providence of God. David saw himself as driven from a share in the Lord's inheritance, and yet he is able to delight in a far greater inheritance than mere territory. The Lord himself was his inheritance. The Lord himself, not just what the Lord could give him, but the Lord himself constituted an inheritance that could not be lost, an inheritance that was protected against the machinations of men. Nobody could take that from him. And so he delights in the provision, in the providence of God in his own life, though difficult were his circumstances. And when we think of Jesus, can we not say the same of Jesus? The one of whom it could be said, the Son of Man has no place to lay his head. He could with the psalmist, and revealing deep contentment and satisfaction, testified, Lord, you have assigned to me my portion and my cup. You have made my lot secure. The boundary lines have fallen for me in

pleasant places. Surely I have a delightful inheritance. And then when we think of our Savior as He approaches Calvary, even and especially as we find Him in the garden under the oppressive shadow of a cursed and cruel death, we detect and we are witnesses to His satisfaction with and subjection to the providence of God. It holds true, it holds firm, not my will, but Your will be done, satisfied with the providence of God. But we can say further as we continue on through the psalm that

[25 : 05] Jesus was led by the voice of God. Verse 7 we read, I will praise the Lord who counsels me. Even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me. Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.

When we think of David, first of all, even on the run, he wasn't deprived of God's direction. The fact that he was out in the wild didn't mean that he couldn't hear God's voice. It didn't mean that he was deprived of the direction and the guidance of God. He didn't need to have to be in a temple or in some formal service to hear God speaking to him. He could speak and testify of how the Lord instructed him, how He counseled him, even in such circumstances. And Jesus, too, I'm sure, could praise His Father who counseled and instructed Him. We're reminded of the occasions when Jesus would leave the disciples and spend the night hours with His Father, or the occasions when we're told that He would rise very early in the morning while it was still dark to pray, to commune with His Father.

And on such occasions did He not experience what the psalmist speaks of in these verses? I will praise the Lord who counsels me, even at night my heart instructs me. But not only counsel and instruction, also the security that comes for the Lord from fixing His attention on God and enjoying the assurance of God's presence. I have set the Lord always before me because He has that at my right hand. I shall not be shaken. And Jesus could say, as He did say, even in the face of vitriol and abuse and attack and rejection, and even in the face of the imminent prospect of death itself, He could declare, I shall not be shaken. I shall not be shaken. I will not be removed from the path that I am taking. Nobody will put me in another direction. I will not be shaken. He was led by the voice of God to where He had to go, and there He went. But Jesus also was assured of the promise of God. We come to that part of the psalm that we might say is so evidently, so clearly, so explicitly messianic. Verse 9,

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decaying. The promise of God. I wonder, did David understand this promise to refer in some sense to himself? Well, possibly he did. Perhaps the assurance of being spared an untimely death. If indeed it's true that he was on the run, it would have been an untimely death for him to die in such circumstances. There was still so much to do.

[28 : 09] He had a kingdom to be king of. There was a promise that he wouldn't die, that he would sit on the throne and reign. Perhaps David understood it in those terms. We don't know. But what is clear, indeed Peter makes it very explicitly clear, is that in this verse, David not only speaks of the Messiah, he not only speaks of Jesus, but in some sense knew that he was speaking of Jesus, if not by name, certainly as the Messiah. We've read that in Acts chapter 2 and in verse 31, how Peter is careful to be really so explicit in this regard. Let's just remind ourselves of what Peter says about David writing these words, seeing what was ahead, Acts 2 verse 31, seeing what was ahead, he, David, spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

Very explicit as to the extent of which David understood what it was that he was saying and speaking about. Well, when we think of Jesus, the question, did Jesus see himself in these verses? Well, it seems just a silly question. So evidently, Jesus would see himself in these verses. Perhaps he spoke of this very psalm when he was with the disciples on Easter Sunday. Remember a week or so ago, we were thinking about on the resurrection day, and he finds himself among the disciples, and he speaks to them of what the Scriptures say in the law, in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning himself. Well, is it not reasonable that among other psalms, many psalms perhaps, as time allowed, he would have directed their attention to this psalm? David, rather Jesus, certainly could see himself in these verses, but not only after the event, but also as he approached the cross and the horrors of a sin-bating death, he could lift up his soul to the Father and cry out. Therefore, my heart is glad, and my tongue rejoices. My body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave. Yes, I'm going to die. There's no other way. This cup can't pass from

me.

I'm going to die, but you will not abandon me to the grave. You will not let me see decay. This is the promise. This is what I cling to. The words of this psalm, the promise of this psalm, would have allowed Jesus to, for the joy set before him, endure the cross, scorning its shame.

[30 : 56] Jesus was assured of the promise of God, but notice finally, as we reach the end of the psalm, Jesus was accompanied by the presence of God. 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. And David here speaks not only of future enjoyment, as we think first of David, but of present and continuing enjoyment.

David experienced joy in God's presence in the here and now, but he was also assured of eternal pleasures, of lasting pleasures at God's right hand. And so too with Jesus, as he walked the path of life, a path in his case, not only to and of life, but a path that would secure life for others. He knew much of the joyful presence of his Father, but he also, even in the shadow of Calvary, could look forward to resurrection, to vindication, to victory, to exaltation, to be welcomed home to heaven, to enjoy eternal pleasures at his Father's right hand, accompanied by the presence of God. A song about Jesus, a mirror for Jesus.

And perhaps with that in mind, let's close by reading the psalm again, reading it from start to finish, but with those glasses on, if you wish, with that perspective of how Jesus could have seen himself in this psalm. Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge. I said to the Lord, You are my Lord. Apart from you, I have no good thing. As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight. 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. Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup. You have made 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 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 tongue rejoices.

My body also will rest secure. Because You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will You let Your Holy One see decay. 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. Let us pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You that it is for us a delightful thing to see Jesus. And we thank You that as we turn to Your Word, we see Jesus. We pray that we would see Him evermore, that we would have an ever greater insight concerning His person and His work, that we would be ever more drawn to Him. And as we will think about more closely later on today, that it would be our desire to be ever more like Him. We thank You for Your Word, and we pray that it would indeed be a Word that instructs and challenges us. And we pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

[34 : 23] Well, let's sing again from this psalm. We sang verses 1 to 6 before the sermon, and now we're going to sing the concluding verses of the psalm from verse 7 to verse 11. We'll sing these verses to the Golden Hill on page 17 in our psalm books, Psalm 16, singing from verse 7. I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and even in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice. We'll stand to sing these verses.

I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice. I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice.

I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice.

I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides my choice, and in the night my heart recalls instruction's voice. But I'll praise the Lord my God, whose counsel guides me the Lord my God, whose husband guides my choice, and in the night my heart proclaims ■■ from this psalm by heart Party, with whom my heart recalls instruction's voice, and in the night my heart recalls gehen your choice, and in the night my heart recallsinhos ■■ fig ■.

Let the Lord alone, because He is at my light's hand, and not be overthrown.

[36 : 07] Therefore my heart is mine, my tongue with joy will sing.

My body too will rest secure in hope and willery.

For you will not allow my soul in death to stay.

Or will you be your only one to see the truth be made?

You have made known to me the power of thy divine.

[37 : 38] Please shall I know that your right hand, right from your feet, will shine.

Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen.