**God my good inheritance**  22/1/23 dkm

Read: Psalm 16, Acts 2:22-39

Text: Psalm 16

Psalms: 119:65-72, 73b:16-28, 49:8-15, 117

Many of the psalms are referred to by Jesus and by the apostles; Psalm 16 is no exception. It is a psalm of lament in which David cries out to the Lord, but in it we also find words of prophecy concerning the Messiah. We know this because both the apostle Peter and the apostle Paul quote from this psalm to prove that Scripture, our OT, refers to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:25-28, 13:35). They were eye-witnesses of the resurrection in that they saw the risen Jesus, but assured the Jews in particular that this unique event was prophesied in Holy Scripture. This prophecy comes at the end of this psalm, in which, after crying to the Lord to keep him safe, David rejoices in the Lord as his ‘good inheritance’, as his guide and counsellor, as well as his hope and his very life- ‘In Your presence is fullness of joy’ (16:11).

We could look at this psalm in two sections, giving verses 1-6 the title, ‘Faithful servant’ and verses 7-11 the title, ‘Faithful Lord’ (see Kidner). But to break it down a bit further we have four sections: God keep me always (1), God’s goodness versus sorrow (2-4), Good inheritance (5-8), and, Grave empty (9-11).

**1. God keep me always**

The psalm has no title apart from, ‘A Michtam of David’. Other ‘Michtams’ have titles giving historical detail but not this one. Other psalms begin as this one does, with David expressing his trust in the Lord, and calling for the Lord to preserve or protect him (Ps 7:1, 11:1). At other times he refers to the Lord as his refuge and strength (Ps 46:1). Even as David cried to the Lord to keep him safe, he goes on to express confidence that the Lord will do just that. People often speak about ‘the power of prayer’, but the power of prayer is the power of God. Prayer is also a means of comfort, again the comfort is not from praying but from the Lord who hears and answers our prayers.

**2. God’s goodness versus sorrow**

In verse 2 we hear the words, ‘You are My Lord’, but in verse 4 we read, ‘Who hasten after other gods’. There is movement from the faithful to the faithless person or people. Just where this transition occurs is not exactly clear because of difficulties in translating the Hebrew. In fact, some think all are the words of an idol worshipper ‘who claimed allegiance to the Lord but who followed after other gods’ (Harman); ‘saints’ means ‘holy ones’ which could be foreign gods. Certainly, verse 4 is referring to idol worshippers, but in verses 2-3 most translations have David praising the Lord who alone is good, and joining hands with other godly people or saints on the earth; ‘holy ones’ are often heavenly beings but in this case they are ‘on the earth’.

‘You are my Lord. My goodness is nothing apart from you’ (16:2). These words are similar to what David writes in other psalms: ‘Whom have in heaven but you? And there is none upon the earth that I desire besides you’ (Ps 73:25). Actually, we find a number of parallels between Psalm 16 and the closing verses of Psalm 73 with reference to being held by the right hand and guided with God’s counsel. In Psalm 119:68 we are told that ‘God is good and does good’. Whatever goodness David experienced, or demonstrated, it was all because of the Lord. He knew no goodness apart from the Lord, and nor do we!

Our Lord is the very definition of goodness, as Jesus reminded the rich young ruler (Luke 18:19). David must have been in some sort of trouble or affliction to be crying out, ‘Keep me safe, O God’ (Ps 16:1 NIV). And in his trouble or affliction he knew the only one who could keep him was the Lord. Peter spoke in the same way of Jesus saying, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’ (John 6:68). Many were turning back from following Jesus, but not Peter and the other disciples, apart from Judas Iscariot who would betray him.

The goodness of God experienced by those who, like David, put their trust in the Lord, contrasts with the sorrow experienced by those who ‘run after other gods’ (Ps 16:4 NIV). ‘Multiplied sorrows’ is what the Lord told Eve she would have after she listened to Satan. ‘Multiple sorrows’ was the lot of Saul after he turned his back on the Lord and consulted the witch of En Dor. ‘Drink offerings of blood’ refers to blood sacrifices, possibly child sacrifices; King Manasseh was guilty of such wickedness.

David would not even take the name of these strange gods upon his lips; to do so would be to grant them recognition. I never allowed Hindus to paint a dot on my forehead, even when entering their home. It is shameful to see politicians and even church leaders allowing their faces to be painted in pagan ceremonies that are becoming more and more common in our land. David would not have participated in any such worship.

**3. Good inheritance**

Pluralism, which is the greatest epidemic in our land today, says that all gods are the same. People look around for a religion or god that works for them, or they happily worship any and every god because they don’t want to offend any! People say they are offended when we say their god is nothing and that there is only one true and living God, but that is what the Bible says. This true God is offended when we give even recognition to another. So you have a choice dear believer- to offend Jesus, the Son of the true God, or to offend those who worship false gods. Making that choice may land you in court!

David knew there was only one true God and condemned those who worship idols (Ps 115). God had blessed him in many ways. In language reminiscent of the people settling in the promised land of Canaan, David speaks of his inheritance, of his lot and the lines falling in pleasant places (Ps 16:5, 6). David’s tribe and family would have received their allotted land, land which remained in the family in perpetuity. But his focus here is on the Levites who were not given land because the Lord was their inheritance: ‘I am your portion and your inheritance’ (Numb 18:20).

In the Lord himself David has the best inheritance he could ever have- he uses the word ‘good’ once again with the sense of completeness. ‘His joy is not first and foremost God’s gifts but the Lord himself’. His cup is full, not of God’s wrath but of God’s goodness. No one in Israel earned their allotted portion or inheritance; they we allotted it by the Lord. So it is with us having the Lord as our inheritance; it is by the electing grace of God.

Land inheritance or Lord inheritance- what do you choose? We think of land or property as being very secure. Maybe you are looking forward to inheriting the family home or land. But did you see the farmer’s land getting washed away in the recent flood? And what about the house built on the beach falling into the sea! Besides, the earth itself will pass away one day, and you will also. There is something or someone more secure than land or property, namely the Lord God. David saw the Lord as his ‘good inheritance’.

Because we cannot physically see the Lord such an inheritance seems unreal, but believe me, or believe David and the apostle Paul who said, ‘For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain’. He gave up the prestige of a Jewish heritage, and status as a Pharisee, to gain Christ- he considered these worldly things rubbish (Phil 3:8). What are you prepared to give up to gain Christ? Do remember the words of Jesus: ‘Whoever does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple’ (Luke 14:33). Do remember that the gain you have with Jesus as your inheritance is eternal life.

With the Lord as your inheritance the blessings begin today- you don’t have to wait. David thanks the Lord for giving him counsel, and for a heart that instructs him in the night (16:7). He has the Lord at his right hand to hold him up when in trouble or when ‘shaking’ comes. David has the Lord as his goal, his guide, and his solid ground. You may recall the previous psalm about dwelling in the presence of the Lord and not being shaken or moved (15:5).

David ‘set the Lord always before’ him, and we would be wise to do the same. Jesus tells us to ‘seek first the kingdom of God’ (Mat 6:33) and in the book of Hebrews we are told to run the race set before us looking unto Jesus the pioneer and perfector of our faith (Heb 12:2). Keep Jesus in your sights each and every day and he will make your paths straight and you will not be moved. We do this by prayer and listening to God’s word, which is what David in effect says in verses 7-8.

**4. Grave empty**

Knowing the Lord as his ‘good inheritance’ makes David a contented and happy man. Having the Lord as his security was better than having a huge army or lots money. It is not only that the Lord is powerful to deliver from sickness or affliction; David takes a much longer term view of having the Lord at his right hand- he looks beyond death. In verse 9 David refers to his heart and his flesh, as well as his glory- NIV translates ‘my glory’ as ‘my tongue’. He is a whole person, body and soul. He is a person made in the image of God, and for the glory of God.

We previously compared the end of Psalm 73 with Psalm 16. There the psalmist comes to the comforting realization that the Lord not only holds him by his right hand all the days of his life, but will ‘afterward receive me into glory’ or into heaven (Ps 73:24). Psalm 49 has the same emphasis: ‘But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave, for he shall receive me’ (Ps 49:15). Here in Psalm 16 David says, ‘You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will you allow Your Holy One to see corruption’ (16:10). We do not agree that David is speaking metaphorically of being separated from God. He is talking about the grave or the place of the dead, and about the decay of the flesh or body.

While not having his soul left in the grave may be applicable to David, not having his body undergo decay is certainly not. It is this aspect that the apostles saw as David speaking prophetically of the Messiah and his resurrection. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter, speaking by the Spirit in the city housing the grave of David, declared that this psalm must be referring to someone else, namely Jesus. Here was proof from Scripture of the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth (Acts 2:27, 13:35). Peter and various others had seen the empty grave and even seen the risen Jesus. As ‘unbelievable’ as this was, it was prophesied in the word of God. Jesus also spoke of his death and rising again on the third day.

And so the resurrection became an essential part of the gospel they preached, proving that all Jesus said and did was by the power of almighty God. The apostle Paul wanted to know more of the power of the resurrection (Phil 3:10). He tells us that Jesus is the firstborn from the dead, and that all who believe in Jesus have the wonderful hope of the resurrection, of coming out of the grave with glorious new heavenly bodies (1Cor 15). David knew about, and believed in, the resurrection, just as Paul did, as showed here in Psalm 16.

The concluding verse of the psalm refers to the path of life and presence or face of the Lord. Moses wanted to see the face of the Lord, as David did, and as I do as a child of God. Living in this body in this world we only see glimpses of God’s glory, but ‘then’ we will see him face to face, and see him as he is (1Cor 13:13, 1John 3:2). The path of life which Jesus has shown us, and indeed put us on, ends in glory, in being in the glorious presence of the Lord. Being on the path, firmly held by the Lord’s right hand, is already a reason for joy and thanksgiving, but fullness of joy and pleasures evermore are the sure and certain hope we have in Christ Jesus, risen from the dead and now seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven.