

## Why Easter Makes My Heart Glad

Psalm 16; Acts 2:22-36

David Sunday

April 16, 2017

---

I'm going to speak to you today about why Easter makes my heart glad. There are so many places in Scripture where we could turn to describe the gladness that Easter brings to the heart of a Christian. But today I want you to turn backwards in the Bible to a thousand years before Christ came, to the book of Psalms—Psalm 16. King David wrote this psalm speaking as a prophet, pointing ahead to the hope that we celebrate this Easter Sunday, the hope of the resurrection.

As I thought about all the Scriptures that I could use to describe why Easter makes my heart glad, my heart kept coming back to this one, because Psalm 16 is a lifeline for me. It's the Scripture I recite more often than any other as I'm running along the Fox River. It's the Scripture I return to more than any other to help recalibrate my heart to the things that matter most, to the passion of God and His presence in my life. So I want to preach this—which I hope you'll see is an Easter psalm. This psalm describes the reason my heart is filled with joy today—not only on Easter Sunday, but every day of the year.

It's not because of Easter bunnies. It's not because of Easter candy—like the box my mom sent me from Jack Andrea's candy shop in Kenosha, Wisconsin, this week. Can you believe that my mom sent her 46-year-old son a box of Easter candy? Isn't that great? I mean, if she's watching right now, thank you, Mom, for your kindness to me. But that's not why Easter makes my heart glad. It's not even because of the daffodils and the beauty of spring. It's a much deeper gladness than that. It's gladness like we hear in Psalm 16:

*Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.*

<sup>2</sup> *I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;*

*I have no good apart from you."*

<sup>3</sup> *As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,  
in whom is all my delight.*

<sup>4</sup> *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.*

<sup>5</sup> *The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.*

- <sup>6</sup> *The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*
- <sup>7</sup> *I bless the Lord who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.*
- <sup>8</sup> *I have set the Lord always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;  
my flesh also dwells secure.*
- <sup>10</sup> *For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,  
or let your holy one see corruption.*
- <sup>11</sup> *You make known to me the path of life;  
in your presence there is fullness of joy;  
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Look at verse nine: *“Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices.”* I want to get underneath that “therefore” today. I want to get underneath why David’s heart is glad with a joy that is full and everlasting, a joy that cannot be worn out by tribulation or conquered by adversity. We’re talking about a gladness that will endure through the greatest sadness we could ever face on earth, a gladness that enables us to be sorrowful yet always rejoicing. That’s the kind of joy I want you to have. That’s the kind of joy I have in the message of Christ risen from the dead.

Now, in order for this kind of joy to be ignited in your heart, you have to be a particular kind of person. As I was thinking about how to describe this kind of person, I thought of the unique traits of a Cubs fan—that subspecies of humanity known as a fan of the Chicago Cubs. If you are visiting from a different part of the country, you are most welcome here. But if you don’t share our enthusiasm for the Cubs, I suggest you kind of fly under the radar and don’t let us know about that.

It may shock those who are fans of the Chicago Cubs that not everyone in the world was elated at 12:47 in the morning on November 3, 2016. In fact, lots of people were sleeping right through it, and other people in the other side of the world were going about their day not even knowing what was going on here. But there were those—myself and my wife included—who sat on the edge of their seats during that 17-minute rain delay. We could barely breathe, until Ben Zobrist smacked the RBI double for a two-run tenth that captured the Cubs’ 8-7 victory over the Cleveland Indians. We were ecstatic. There was a joy that flooded our hearts for the most loyal baseball fans in America.

“Ah, the Cubs fan,” writes Melissa Isaacson for ESPN. “Much has been said, mocked and dissected in regard to this unique species. Motivated by a deep, often familial and sick loyalty,

energized by unbridled and childlike optimism, and distinguished by a gnawing and perpetual state of angst, Cubs fans may resemble those from other cities and towns, but it's the rare combination of these traits that sets them apart."

I want to talk about what is the "rare combination of traits" that sets apart a person whose heart is filled with unspeakable joy at the resurrection of Jesus Christ. What are those traits? This psalm leads us into the heart of such a person, so let's just see how such a person thinks and feels. We can trace David's emotions, affections, convictions and the aspirations that filled his heart. I resonate with this psalm, because what fills David's heart fills my heart as well. I share his convictions. I share his longings.

So you might not yet feel the joy that we're describing this Easter. You might not resonate with what David says in this psalm. But friend, today could be the day that God creates a new heart in you (Ezekiel 25:35-32). Today could be the day that God gives you the kind of heart that treasures what the resurrection of Jesus was designed to prepare you for—because Jesus rose to prepare you for something. In order to appreciate what He rose to prepare you for, you've got to have a heart that treasures those things.

So why does Easter make my heart glad?

### **I am vulnerable to dangers from which only a living Savior can protect me.**

There's this aching and longing need in my heart for protection from danger. Notice that the psalm begins with a petition. "Preserve me. Protect me. Keep me safe, O God." That's a prayer that every believer understands, because we are people who need to be rescued. David doesn't tell us just yet what it is that he most desperately feels the need to be kept safe from. That will come in verse ten.

He begins this prayer the way we often begin our prayers—with, "Help!" Turning on the hazard lights. Sending up the emergency flare. "God, I need You. I am desperate. I'm not in control of my life, and I need to know and trust that You are. I need to know Who You are. Keep me safe, O God." This aching sense of need is what drives us to flee to the Lord for refuge, because we know He's a living Lord. We know He can keep us safe from the danger we fear.

I know it's not flattering to be needy. I heard a pastor say that it's not any fun to always be cast as Lois Lane in every script. We'd rather be Superman, coming to the rescue. But we're the needy ones. We're the desperate ones. This sense of danger, this sense of need for refuge is part of what makes us rejoice in the resurrection of Jesus. It's what drives us to come to God and rehearse over and over and over again all that we have in God, all that He is to us.

## **I am hungry for pleasures that only a living God can satisfy.**

Jesus died and rose again to lead me into these everlasting pleasures. You see David's heart for God in this psalm, as he says to the Lord in verse two, "*I say you are my Lord.*" I want my life to be guided by You. I want You to set the agenda. I want You to establish my itinerary. I want You to be in the driver's seat, O God. I want You to make my paths straight. You are my Lord.

*"I have no good apart from you."* You are my ultimate good, God. This doesn't mean there is nothing else in my life that is good. It is good to sit down at the piano and try to plunk out a piece of Chopin or Debussy or worship music. It feels good to sing. It is good to hear a symphony. Those are good things. It is good to run or ride my bike along the Fox River Trail to see all the flowers coming up and the sun shining as I observed last week at Fabyan Parkway at the nature preserve in Batavia. It is good to see God's nature and rejoice in what He did in making this world.

It's good to enjoy a great meal at one of our many local restaurants, like The Burger Local in Geneva. It is so good to go there; it's even better to go there with my wife, to look in her eyes and rejoice in my lovely bride who has been my best friend since age 16. We think about all the things we've shared together in life, and we rejoice in all the memories. These are good things—wonderful things.

But none of these things, friends, is my ultimate good. They're all pointing me back to the One Who is. They are all, in the words of C.S. Lewis, "The scent of a flower I have not found, the echo of a tune I have not heard, news from a country I have not yet visited." That's what the good things in this life are. They're beckoning us further in, further up, into the God Who is our ultimate good.

You could actually take away all those other wonderful things that are good and wonderful things in my life. You could remove them and I would not be in despair. If I had all those wonderful and good gifts, and an unlimited supply of money to do whatever else I would love to do, but did not have God, I would have no good. I have no good if God's not in it. This is what David is saying. C.S. Lewis wisely reflected on this: "He who has God and everything else has no more than he who has God only."

Think about that. If you've got everything else, but you don't have God, the Bible says you have nothing. Nothing. Nothing that will last. Nothing that will satisfy. David goes on to describe in verses three and four the kind of people he loves to be around—and those he doesn't want to be around. He loves "*the saints who are in the land,*" the people who are excited about God, the people who help him worship. They are his delight. But in verse four, if anyone comes

along and tries to promise David good if he will leave his God, he says, “I don’t even want the mention of their filthy names on my lips. Anyone who tries to draw me away from God—I want to have nothing to do with them or their idols.”

Matthew Henry said, “They that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves. For whosoever thinks one God too little will find two too many, yet hundreds not enough.” Either you shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve, or you’re condemned to perpetual dissatisfaction, restlessness, discontentment and lostness.

David says in verses five and six, “God, nothing compares with the pleasure I have in You.” He describes a table spread before him with all the choicest foods, all the finest wines. And over here is God. And he says, “I want You, God. You are my chosen portion and my cup.” Then he says, “You hold my lot. I’m content to have You directing my life. I’m content to have Your will in my life. Not my will, but Yours be done.”

As I read verses five and six, I think of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, where the cup that God put before His lips was the cup of wrath. It was filled with the poison dregs of our sins and all the evil we’ve done. As Jesus contemplated drinking that cup, His heart recoiled in horror. He said, “Not My will, but Yours be done. You are My chosen portion. You are My cup. You hold My lot. I have come to do Your will, O My God” (Matthew 26:36-46).

Because Jesus drank that cup, we can say what David says in verse six: “*The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.*” It is an inheritance that the Apostle Peter describes as our Easter hope, “*an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for [us]*” (1 Peter 1:4). It’s because Jesus said, “God, You are My chosen portion and My cup,” that we can have that inheritance.

But friends, we don’t know how to get into that inheritance. We don’t know how to reach that heavenly destination, unless we’re guided there. We need counsel day and night. We need God’s Word to instruct us. So in verse seven, David praises the Lord for the way He counsels him and guides him through His Word. Nobody speaks to David like God speaks. Even in the watches of the night, David is having communion with God. He’s experiencing God talking to him in his bed and he rejoices in the counsel of the Lord in his life.

He says in verse eight, “Lord, I’ve set You always before me. I’m watching You everywhere I go. You are my best thought by day or by night, waking or sleeping—it’s Your presence that is my life. And because You are with me, God, because You are at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. I shall not be moved.” So this psalm begins with a sense of desperation in verse one, yet by verse eight there’s a sense of confidence, courage, contentment, resolve, peace that God is keeping him. He’s not scared anymore.

As you read verses one through eight and see the heart David has for God, I'm asking: does that kind of heart for God resonate with you? Do you have a heart that treasures God? This is what will make you the kind of person who is filled with an unshakeable joy at the news that Christ is risen from the dead.

I could give you historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus, and there are many. But I'm not persuaded that what you and I most need today is historical evidences. I think what we need even more than that is the kind of heart that is able to rejoice in the risen Christ. What kind of heart is that? It's a heart that treasures God above all else. It's a heart that longs to live forever in the presence of this God, rejoicing in Him, finding your greatest pleasure in Him.

If you don't have that kind of heart, the resurrection doesn't resonate with you. It won't, because your heart doesn't value the treasures the resurrection was designed to secure for you. That's why verse nine begins with the word "therefore." *"Therefore my heart is glad."* It's because of what I've been saying about my God. It's because of how I treasure Him in these first eight verses that I have so much gladness in Him now. And what follows in verses 9-11 is the ultimate climax of why Easter makes my heart glad.

**Christ made Himself vulnerable to death so He could destroy every danger that threatens me and lead me into a full and everlasting experience of His pleasures.**

Why does Easter make my heart glad? Number one, because I'm vulnerable to dangers from which only a living God can protect me. Number two, because I'm hungry for pleasures that only a living God can satisfy. Finally, because Christ came and made Himself vulnerable to death. He took on the danger that would cut me off from God—even death on a cross. He made Himself vulnerable to the death that I deserve, to the dangers I face. And why did He do that? He did that so He could destroy every danger that threatens me and lead me into a full and everlasting experience of the pleasures of God at God's right hand—the thing my heart longs for the most. That's why Jesus died. That's why He rose again—to deliver me from death and lead me into everlasting pleasures at God's right hand.

My joy is unassailable because of what David says in verse ten: *"For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption."* What's that? To be abandoned to Sheol is to be abandoned to futility, to this monstrous chasm of separation from God, to a death that never ends, to a hell of eternal separation from God. This is the greatest terror. This is the greatest danger from which we all need to be delivered. And David feels that danger. He feels that terror. He feels the threat of death. And he's saying, and I'm saying with him, "I don't want to die. I want to live forever in Your presence, God. I don't want to be cut off from You. I don't

want to be separated from You. You're my portion. You're my cup. You're my inheritance. I want to know You forever. I want to experience joy forever in Your presence. I have a little bit of joy right now, but if it ends at death I don't have any hope. I don't want to be abandoned to the grave. You're my sweetest satisfaction."

I've got to ask you, friend, have you ever brushed up against your own mortality? When has it ever dawned on you that you're going to die? For me, I don't think it had sunk in until seven years ago when my wife was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. This week I heard a pastor, Jason Meyer, call death "an active volcano." As he described that, I thought, "You know, we're all living around the rim of that crater, aren't we?" But I don't think I felt it until Kate's cancer occurred, and then I think our whole family could hear the lava roaring. We could feel its heat rising. Then we knew we were living on the edge of an active volcano.

I debated about mentioning Kate's health today because I don't want you to feel sad for us. I'm telling you this so you'll understand why, when I said to Kate, "How about I call my sermon, 'Why Easter makes my heart glad'?", she said, "Yeah! That's great!" I want you to know why Easter makes our hearts glad. I want you to know it's not just because I'm a pastor and I've got a professional duty to preach about the resurrection at Easter—just doing my job. No, no, no. This is my life. You take away the resurrection and I'm hopeless. I'm in despair.

A friend said to me on Friday night, knowing that Kate had a biopsy this week, "How do you compartmentalize what you're going through and having to get up and preach?" I said, "I don't. I don't try to compartmentalize it, because this truth that I preach, this is the lens through which I see everything. This is my hope. This is our perspective. This is what enables us to keep on going. This is what fuels our joy." So praise God, the gospel invades every part of our lives—even the hard parts and the sad parts. Mostly the hard parts and the sad parts. Easter makes our hearts glad.

You know, people with cancer aren't any different than people without cancer. If anything, the people with cancer are a little more likely to not imagine that the volcano is dormant, to act as if death is far off and not a reality that we're all going to have to face. All cancer does is just help you realize that death is real. It's going to happen.

Leo Tolstoy wrote A Confession in which he described how at the age of 50 he was driven almost to the brink of suicide as questions like these gnawed away at his heart: "What will come of what I am doing today or tomorrow? What will come of my whole life? Why should I live? Why wish for anything or do anything?" Tolstoy said the ultimate question that gnawed away at him, that drove him almost to suicide was this: "Is there any meaning in my life that the inevitable death awaiting me does not destroy?"

I'm so glad the Bible doesn't say, "That's a stupid question. Don't ask those kinds of questions. Just ignore those realities." No. The Bible says, "That's exactly the question you should be asking: Is there any meaning to your life that the inevitable death awaiting you will not destroy?" The Bible gives us a profound, compelling and joyous answer to that question and the answer is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That's what gives me meaning. That's what gives me hope beyond the grave.

Easter makes my heart glad because it gives me rock-solid confidence that everything I most desperately dread has been defeated, and everything I most deeply delight in with my God will be my experience increasingly throughout eternity. I am persuaded that death cannot destroy what is dearest to me or most precious to me. I am confident, friends, God will not abandon my soul to Sheol. I am confident that sickness, enemies, isolation, betrayal, disappointment, persecution, loss nor bereavement will rob my life of meaning. I am confident that the story of my life will not end in frustration, futility or fruitless despair.

I am confident that my death will not make everything that is meaningful to me meaningless. I am confident that death will not rob me of the greatest joys I've experienced in this life, but it's actually going to be the gateway into an ever-intensifying experience of the pleasures my heart craves—pure and lasting pleasures at God's right hand, all because Jesus is risen from the dead.

How could David speak so confidently of resurrection life a thousand years before Jesus? Well, Peter tells us in Acts 2:22-36. Listen to what Peter said at Pentecost, 50 days after Jesus rose from the dead.

*<sup>22</sup> "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—<sup>23</sup> this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. <sup>24</sup> God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it."*

I love that Jesus is the Champion over death! Then Peter quotes David and the very psalm we've been looking at—Psalm 16:

*<sup>25</sup> For David says concerning him,  
"I saw the Lord always before me,  
for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken;  
<sup>26</sup> therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
my flesh also will dwell in hope.  
<sup>27</sup> For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,*

*or let your Holy One see corruption.*

<sup>28</sup> *You have made known to me the paths of life;  
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”*

Peter just asks the obvious, “How could David say that? David died and was buried. His tomb is with us to this day.” Verse 30 is the answer:

<sup>30</sup> *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,* <sup>31</sup> *[David] foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* <sup>32</sup> *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses.*

Jesus is the Champion Whose triumph over death makes my heart glad. It makes my whole being overflow with joy. When hell’s powers came to wrestle Him and pin Him down to that cross, little did hell know that Jesus was taking our sins—hell’s only weapon that could be used against us—and nailed them to the cross so that we beat them no more. Satan’s accusations and sin’s debt is now paid for, and the death penalty reserved for you and me was satisfied by Jesus dying in our place.

When death had Jesus in its stranglehold, Jesus took the arm of death and ripped it out of its socket so that death is lame and limp against Jesus and His followers now. Death could not hold Him down. And when death had swallowed up the Lamb of God whole, inside the belly of death the Lamb of God became a vicious Lion that ate death alive from the inside out. It was not possible for Jesus to be held by death. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again. Death no longer has dominion over Him and death must now serve Christ and His purposes.

What is the purpose of Christ’s resurrection? It’s stated in Psalm 16:11, which Peter repeats in Acts 2:28. He rose to make known to you the path of life. He rose to make you full of joy in God’s presence. He rose to give you eternal pleasures at God’s right hand. I want to ask you, friend, “Does that capture your heart? Does that mean more to you than anything this world could ever give you? Is that what you long for more than anything? To be in the presence of God and to enjoy Him? To have your soul’s treasure satisfied in God alone? If that’s not what you long for, let’s be honest today. Let’s not fake it. Let’s not pretend Easter makes our hearts glad. Instead, be honest. The resurrection of Jesus is probably not the best news in the world to you—not yet.

Be honest if there are a lot of good things you want out of this life and you think you can get them apart from God. Be honest if you really don't want to think about death. Be honest if you really think life beyond the grave is not that great of a concern to you. Be honest if you're pretty confident that you can navigate life safely without a guide and don't need anyone to make known to you the path of life. Be honest if you think you're not going to fall into that volcano. Just be honest.

But as you're honest about it, can I ask you, "What if this psalm is true? What if you're not safe in this world? What if the volcano erupts suddenly and you're staring into the chasm of death? What if the supreme treasure in life is to know God? What if you cannot find your way and you need someone to make known to you the path of life? What if all of this is true? Will you have anything to hold on to that your death will not destroy? Will you?"

Here's my invitation to you: If you're honest and you recognize your soul is not really deeply satisfied with the resurrection of Jesus, and that your soul's not really longing for what Jesus rose to give you, here's my invitation: Would you ask God to create in you a new heart today? Would you ask God to give you a whole new set of priorities, to change the treasure of your heart from this world to Christ? Because He's alive, He's able to change your heart. He's done that for me. He can do that for each and every one of you.

I want to just say to those of you who are saved, Psalm 16:11 describes everything to me: To know God. To be in His presence with fullness of joy at His right hand. Full and everlasting pleasure. That's what I want. That's what I live for in God's presence. I want you to rejoice friends, that the resurrection is your gateway into that joy. The resurrection is the gateway on the path of life that leads to everlasting joy in God's presence. Death could not hold Jesus—and death will not hold you either.

My heart is glad and my whole being rejoices, because there's no happier news in the world than this: Alleluia! Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

---

## New Covenant Bible Church

4N780 Randall Road, St. Charles, IL 60175

(630) 584-2611 ♦ [www.newcbc.org](http://www.newcbc.org)

*All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.*

Text provided by [sermontranscribers.net](http://sermontranscribers.net) ♦ [emily@sermontranscribers.net](mailto:emily@sermontranscribers.net)