

Psalm 16:11

Chasing Joy

The Summit Church, CPC Thursday

MPT: Security, joy, and pleasure come only by trust in the one true God rather than in the many false gods.

MPS: There is a path of life that leads to eternal pleasure, which is rooted in God's presence.

INTRODUCTION

TVCML:

- **Ricky:** religion v gospel; Jesus + Nothing = Everything
- **Bryan:** identity is not in successes or failures, but in Jesus
- Not sure how I get stuck going after those two...*is PJD subjecting me to cruel and unusual punishment?*

Psalm 16:11 [STAND + READ TOGETHER]

You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

PRAY

Being July 4 weekend, it's appropriate for me to remind you of how **The United States Declaration of Independence** says that one of our unalienable rights is **"the pursuit of happiness."**

- As Christians would and *should* agree with that statement. Regardless of what you think, God is by no means **anti-happy**.

- In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote to his disciple, Timothy, and affirmed that God has given us "richly all things to enjoy"¹ --things like food and drink and the ability to sing, laugh, play sports, and make music.

But I think we read that phrase--the *pursuit of happiness*--and think that phrase means that **happiness is something we must chase**; we're in **hot pursuit** of happiness. We think the **pursuit of happiness** has to do with **going after it, seeking it, literally pursuing it.**

- You wish you resonated with the word 'happy' but instead you resonate more with the word 'pursuit.'
- **Life often feels like an endless pursuit of something, doesn't it?** But no matter how hard you **push, or strive, or hustle**, that happiness is juuuuuust around the corner. (Just me?)

We chase it with satisfaction and happiness with:

- **Scholastic achievement** (*The letters behind my name will make me happy.*)
- **Job satisfaction or financial compensation** (*The title in my company or the numbers on my paycheck will make me happy.*)
- **Recreational activities** (*The occasional high or excitement will make me happy.*)
- **Relationships** (*Being known and loved by other people will make me happy.*)
- Most of all, especially in America, I believe we pursue--we *chase*--happiness with **STUFF**. In fact, I think the specific American idolatry here isn't just that we are pursuing happiness, but that we think we can *achieve* happiness by acquiring STUFF. Things. Toys. Titles. Houses. Brands. Followers.

¹ 1 Timothy 6:17

- (Don't get me wrong, I love stuff. The problem isn't when you have stuff; the problem is when stuff has you. The problem is when, in your life, stuff = happiness.)

Here we are, a nation of people, who wake up every single day ready to chase 'happy,' yet a recent study found that currently Americans are the unhappiest they've been in nearly 50 years.²

- Only 14% of American adults say they're "very happy."
- Even with all of social media and it's supposed connections, just in the last three years, twice as many people reported **being lonely**, twice as many say they feel a **lack of companionship**, and less than half believe **America's standard of living is headed in a good direction**. (And this poll was completed *before* George Floyd sparked a national conversation on race, police, etc.)

I believe Psalm 16 shows us **one of the most distinct characteristics of a devoted follower of Jesus**.

- You know this, but **everyone seeks happiness**. Everyone chases it in one form or another--both Christian and non-Christian.
- But while *seeking* happiness is one thing, actually **obtaining it and experiencing it--practicing it--is an entirely different thing**.

It took me about **10 years to fully realize this** before I surrendered my life to Jesus and became a Christian. For 10 years I was on a hellbent quest for satisfaction and chase for joy.

- I thought the **right relationship** would make me happy. It'd be exciting for a bit, but eventually let me down.
- I thought the **right car** would make me happy. It'd be for a while, but eventually would just feel like any other car.
- I thought **partying for days-on-end at the lake with my friends** would make me happy. It'd end up being a vapor...at best a temporary satisfaction with a **handful of memories** and a **fistful of regret**.

Be honest...right now, be honest with yourself and consider this question: "**Am I happy?**" Not "*Are things okay?*" or "*Am I financially secure?*" or "*Sure, everything's fine.*"

- But "**Am I truly, deeply happy?**" You don't have to say it out loud, but I want us to start today with you being honest with *you*.

Can you truly say along with **Psalm 16:11** that what you experience is "fullness of joy" and "pleasures forevermore"?

Boil it down, at the end of the day, we, as human beings, are after **life, joy, and pleasure**.

Very simple yet profound message today that I believe can change your **pursuit of pleasure** and **shape your entire worldview**. Here it is:

There is a path of life that leads to eternal pleasure, which is rooted in God's presence.

Let's see how we get there...

CONTEXT

²<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/americans-are-unhappiest-they-ve-been-50-years-poll-finds-n1231153>

Psalm 16:11 is actually the last verse in this entire Psalm; it's the conclusion to the entire Psalm. I wish we did, but we don't have time to unpack the entire thing, so here's the gist:

- The assumption is that **David wrote this Psalm**.
- We're not exactly sure what's going on in his life when he writes this...he speaks in fairly **general terms**. He could have just **come out of** a difficult situation, he could be **in one**, he could be **anticipating one**, he could be having an **existential epiphany**, we're just not sure.
- What we do know, as we've read the conclusion, is that by the end of the Psalm David expresses a **deep trust** in the Lord that's marked by **joy** and **pleasure** because of the **present confidence** and **future hope** he has in his Savior.

Here's how it happens in Psalm 16:

- In **v1** David calls out to God to keep him safe (again, not sure from what). He says, "**Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.**" This is important cuz verse 1 shapes this entire Psalm, so don't miss this--in verse 1 he asks God to **preserve him**. David is **petitioning** that God would **preserve him**.

Then David spends the next eight verses reminding himself **who God is, what he has done, who he has been to him**, and he **declares** these things over his life:

- V1: refuge
- V2: Lord, master, Sovereign, great treasure, giver of all good things
- V3: people who delight in God make *him* delight in and exalt God
- V4: only true God who is all-satisfying, unlike other gods
- V5: chosen portion; whatever happens comes from God; nothing satisfies, nourishes, and sustains the way God does.

- V6: my beautiful inheritance
- V7: wonderful counselor
- Then in v8 he says, "**I will not be shaken.**"

How did he go from "**preserve me**" to "**I won't be shaken**"? How did he go from **petition** to **peace**?

- Look at **v8**, "**I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**"
- Why will he not be shaken? Because he **set the Lord always before him** and reminded himself that **God is at his right hand**.
- The bridge between **petition** and **peace** is the reminder of **God's presence**.
- Because David fixes his focus on God's presence, he is able to speak with a bright hope, a settled calm, and an inward joy based on the confidence that God is with him.

In Christ, **There is a path of life that leads to eternal pleasure, which is rooted in God's presence.**

WALKTHROUGH

Let's take this phrase by phrase...

There is a path of life...
You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Part of **my testimony**--one of the reasons **this verse changed my life**--is that, for so long, I tried to do things my way...

- Before Christ it was **partying, alcohol, girls, cars, skydiving, tattoos**, blah blah blah. Anything to get a hit of **joy** or **satisfaction**. But the problem is that **it was always temporary**.

- Then I met this girl who invited me to church...well the next six months were the most miserable of all (trying to have one foot in church and one in the world).
- *“...let’s try it your way this time. I’m all in.”*

And it wasn’t until I finally **let go of my life** that I actually **began to find it**. It wasn’t until I stopped trying to **carve my own path to joy** that I began **to find joy**.

Jesus says **if I want life** I must first **lay my own down** (addition by subtraction).

- If I want to be **first**, I must be **last**.
- If I want to be **strong**, I must first be **weak**.
- If I want to **receive**, I must first **give**.
- If I want to **gain**, I must first **lose**.

All of the things I thought would bring me joy ultimately let me down--temporary satisfactions.

It was only **when God made known to me** the path of life that I found what I was looking for. And you know one of the hardest parts of this?... **God’s the one who shows you the path to life**; not your **intellect** or **reasoning** or **rationalization**.

He makes the path known. He directs. He points the way. He guides.

- One of the most **annoying** verses in the Bible to me is **Psalm 119:105**, *“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”* This sounds awesome until you really think about it. I want a SPOTLIGHT, not a lamp! A lamp only shows me the next step. A lamp doesn’t show me what’s ahead.

The path of life begins with God. Not with **us**. Not with our **desires**. Not with our **plans**. Not with our **hopes** and **dreams**; it begins with God. He makes **the way**. He **directs**. He **shows the path**.

- Not only that, but **he has already walked the most impossible path for us**. He **crossed heaven** to come to earth. He **walked up Calvary** to die in our place.

- Only because **Jesus walked that path** can we now have hope that we, too, can **find** and **walk** the path of life.
- He shows us the path because he *is* the path!

I mean, isn’t this the only logical way to explain your salvation? Did you wake up one day and just decide to follow Jesus? No!...Jesus sought *you*. Jesus ran after *you*. Jesus made known the path *to you*.

- **John 6:37**, *“All that the Father gives to me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.”*
- **John 6:44**, *“No one can come to me, unless the father who sent me draws him...”*
- **Acts 13:48**, *“...as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.”*
- **Titus, 3:5**, *“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”*

RC Sproul says it like this, *“Before a person can make a choice that is pleasing to God, he must first have a desire to please God. Before we can find God, we must first desire to seek him. Before we can choose the good, we must first have a desire for the good. Before we can choose Christ, we must first have a desire for Christ. The sum and substance of the whole debate...rests squarely at this point: Does fallen man, in and of himself, have a natural desire for Christ?”³*

- The emphatic answer to this question is: NO!
- Left to ourselves we **will never choose**, and are **unable to find**, the path of life. To find a “way of joy” apart from Jesus is to find a well that will eventually run dry. To think you’ve found a path of life apart from the life-giver is to find one, no matter how awesome it seems right now, that will eventually dead end.

JESUS is the **way**. JESUS is the **truth**. JESUS is the **life**. No one comes to the Father except through JESUS.

- You wanna know the **path of life**? The path is a person, and his name is Jesus.

³ RC Sproul, *Chosen by God*, 45.

- You wanna know which path leads to **God's will for your life**? That path is a person, and his name is Jesus.
- You wanna know how to find the **path that leads to joy**? That path is a person, and his name is Jesus.

Joy **always has been** Jesus. Joy **has always been found in** Jesus. Joy **will always be found in** Jesus. Jesus **began a good work in you**. Jesus **will complete a good work in you**. Jesus did not put you down a path to **abandon** you or **forsake** you...I know because he willingly chose to walk the path of death *for your sin because* he loves you, and now we can walk the path of life.

Lord, you make known to me the path of *life*, and his name is Jesus.

There is a path of life...

...that leads to eternal pleasure...
 You make known to me the path of life;
 in your presence there is fullness of joy;
 at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

The problem, though, is that **we try to find satisfaction in other things**, right?--even good things. This is what mankind has been doing since the beginning of creation—in Genesis 3 the woman saw the tree was “good” and a “delight” and she “desired” it. She replaced the **everlasting pleasures of God** with a **piece of fruit** that was good to taste. God versus a piece of fruit. *How absurd does that sound?* **Yet we do the exact same thing every single day.**

- From the second we wake up, what's the first thing we do? We **grab our phones and scroll through social media** cuz we need that hit of satisfaction. We don't reach for the Bible and seek to sit in God's presence; we reach for our phones to be spectators of a fake digital world. God versus social media.
- Then we get dressed and put on clothes with **labels** or **styles** that we think will make **others think something about us** or will **exude an image we hope to portray** out of a **desire to find**

satisfaction in outward approval. God versus clothes. God versus other people's approval.

- We go to **school** or work in **jobs** in order to **make a grade** or a **paycheck** we think is gonna give us pleasure--or the means to a pleasure--that we believe will fulfill us. God versus a paycheck.

Doesn't that sound so ridiculous?! God vs a piece of fruit. God vs other ppl's opinions. God vs a paycheck. Temporary satisfaction vs. eternal pleasure. Fleeting highs vs. fullness of joy.

- I've said this a million times here, but **what's fuller than fullness?** Nothing. It's as full as it gets. You can't get any more. You have FULLY FULL, as FULL AS IT CAN GET joy.
- And **what's longer than forevermore?** Nothing. It's as long as it can get. You can't get any more. You have ETERNALLY LONG, NEVER-ENDING pleasures.
- Joy that is as full as it gets and pleasure that never ends. Not 99% joy. 100% joy.

This is why God commands our joy:

- **Psalm 37:4**: “**Delight** yourself in the Lord.”
- **Psalm 32:11**: “Be **glad** in the Lord, and **rejoice**, O righteous, and shout for **joy**, all you upright in heart!”
- **Psalm 67:4**: “Let the nations be **glad** and sing for **joy**...”
- **Psalm 100:1-2**: “Make a **joyful** noise to the Lord, all the earth! **Serve the Lord with gladness!** Come into his presence with **singing!**”
- **Phil 4:4**: “**Rejoice** in the Lord always; again I will say, **rejoice**.”
- **Matt. 5:11-12**: “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **Rejoice** and be **glad**, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
- **Romans 12:12, 15**: “**Rejoice** in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. . . . **Rejoice** with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”

The path of life that leads to eternal pleasure is the path of **walking with Jesus**. It's the path of **spending time with Jesus**. The path of **praising Jesus**. The path of **singing to Jesus**. The path of **praying to Jesus**.

Pastor Tony Evans says if you want to be lifted up in your spirit and emotions, **go to God. Sing to God. Talk about God.**⁴

- He makes the point that **it is impossible to be in the atmosphere of the sun and not get hot**; it's impossible to live in the atmosphere of the **cold and not get chilly**. And, in the same way, he says, **you can't live in the atmosphere of God and not have joy!**

So, he says, worship isn't just for God; it brings us joy too. God commands our worship because he knows it's what will bring us the most satisfaction.

- This is **John Piper's** famous line: *God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.*
- **CS Lewis**: *Aim at heaven and you will get earth 'thrown in'; aim at earth and you will get neither.*⁵
- **Westminster Catechism**, "What is man's chief end?" To glorify God and enjoy him forever. I would submit to you that perhaps a better phrasing would be "to glorify God *by* enjoying him forever."

"Pastor, are you saying coming to Jesus automatically makes life easier?" Absolutely not. Let's not confuse "joy" with "a life of ease." Your life *is* **fuller** and **more fruitful with Christ**, but just because you become a Christian doesn't mean life becomes pain-free.

I mean, just due to our own **sin** and **mistakes** and **choices**, we're sure to experience pain and never reach 100% joy this side of eternity. But, in Christ, we can be sure to know where the fountain of joy lies and we are free to drink from it as often and as openly as we desire, because he is the fullness of joy.

⁴ Tony Evans, [Worship is For You, Too; The Benefits of Worship](#)

⁵ CS Lewis, *The Joyful Christian*

- Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst" (John 6:35), which I take to mean: *I am the end of your quest for perfect and full satisfaction. Don't turn to another. Stay here. There's coming a day when you'll never thirst again. You have tasted this fullness, and it will surely, surely come and remain.*⁶

So, Tony Evans says, when **joy has escaped you**, it's time to worship. When **life has crushed you**, it's time for worship. When the **devil has robbed you of happiness**, it's time for worship. When **Satan or circumstances are bringing you down**, it's time for worship.

- You can't live in the atmosphere of God and not have joy.

There is a path of life that leads to eternal pleasure...(and here's the most important part of all of this)

...which is rooted in God's presence.
You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Remember all the way back to v1?...when David asked God to preserve him? And then just a few verses later he declares, "I won't be shaken"? Remember *how* he went from **petition** to **peace**?

- Because he reminded himself of who God was and that God was always with him.
- **There is a path of life that leads to eternal pleasure, but that path is rooted in God's presence.**
- Old baptist preacher said it like this: **Joy is not found in presents, but in his presence.**

If you've been searching for joy, searching for satisfaction...it's not *something* you need to be happy; it's *someone*. **Full, eternal, lasting, neverending, permanent, real** joy is found only in God's presence. It's not *one of* the places we find joy; he himself *is* the joy.

⁶ <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/what-is-fullness-of-joy-and-do-i-have-it>

Because when joy is a PERSON, that means I can have joy EVEN IF my life is tough, because it means I never walk through my valleys alone.

Psalm 23, David (same author as Psalm 16) says he can walk through the valley of the shadow of death because...why? Because **he is with me**.

CONCLUSION (VAMP)

God doesn't say, "Come to me and I'll help you avoid the shadow." No, the assurance is, "Come to me... and **when** you walk through the shadow, you'll have the Shepherd as well."

- That's how you can have joy in all circumstances. . . because you have JESUS with you in all circumstances!
- We don't have to chase after joy, in fact, **joy chases after us**.
[Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...he is with me...and surely goodness and mercy follow me, chase me, all the days of my life.](#)

You don't need something to be happy; you need someone!

I don't wanna be morbid, but I do wanna be real: when you're driving away from the hospital after a loved one has just died it's not gonna matter what **car** you're driving. It's not gonna matter what kinda **clothes** you're wearing; or how many **followers** you have; or what your **bank account** says.

- What's gonna matter in times of **devastation** and **death** and **disappointment**—what's gonna turn your **petitions** into **peace and praise**—is gonna be the belief, the knowledge, and the reality that God is with you. That your Savior weeps when you weep. That your Savior hurts when you hurt. That his presence is with you.
- Then, and only then, will you experience the type of pleasure David is talking about here...the kind that cannot be taken away by anything circumstantial because God is always with you.

You know, so much of our lack of joy is not really about **possession**; it's about **position**.

- If joy is found in him, and he has promised to never leave nor forsake us, then if we're not experiencing joy what's the problem?
- It's not a question of God's presence. His presence is everywhere.
- It's not a question of God's presence. You don't have to ask him to "be with you." He already is.
- It's not about God's presence. It's about *yours*.
- God's presence is not in question; it doesn't vacillate.
- We don't have joy when he decides to come into *our* presence...he's always with us. It's not when he comes into *our* presence; it's when we come into *his*. That's when joy is found. That's where joy is rooted—in his presence.⁷
 - In his presence, he is my refuge (v.1)
 - In his presence, he is my goodness (v.2)
 - In his presence, he is my inheritance and cup (v.5-6)
 - YoIn his presence, he is counsel (v.7)
 - In his presence, he is at my right hand (v.8)
 - In his presence, he is my hope (v.9)
 - In his presence, he is my guide (v.11)
 - In his presence, he is my fullness of joy (v.11)
 - In his presence, he is pleasures forevermore (v.11)

...and the best part is that these things can never, and will never be taken away. Even in death—all of your joy and satisfaction—will only be multiplied because you'll be **in the presence of Jesus**.

- If you are in Christ, like David, then you can rejoice because you know that God will enable you to rest forever, even when confronted with death.

In the NT, Peter says in Acts 2 that David "[died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day...but Jesus was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption](#). So we know for certain that Jesus is

⁷ Furtick, [In Your Presence](#) // Furtick, [Joy is not a feeling: it's a focus](#)

both Lord and Christ...and if you repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus for forgiveness of sins..."⁸ Which means, if you are found in Jesus then you will never be abandoned to Hades.

Then again Acts 13:35, Paul says, "David served his purpose and then fell asleep, after he saw corruption...but the one God raised up did not see corruption. And through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed!" Which means, if you are found in Jesus then you will be raised up with him from the grave.

If God did not let Jesus, his Holy One, to see corruption or the pit--and if *we are in Jesus*--then we won't experience those things either.

You want **joy**? Come to **Jesus**.

You want **satisfaction**? Here's the **Savior**.

You want **contentment**? Here's the **Christ**.

You want **meaning**? Here's the **Messiah**.

You want **purpose**? Come to the **one who was pinned to the cross** for your sins.

We have **protection, provision, peace, and promises** from God.

But more than that—*far more* than all that—we have the very **presence** of God. Engrave this on your heart, church: **God is with you; he is with you; he is with you.**

There's a path of life--are you on it?

There are pleasures--are you enjoying them?

There's his presence--are you living in it?

PRAY

⁸ Acts 2:25-28