

“THE UNSHAKABLE FAITH OF A SHELTERED LIFE.”

Rev. Robert T. Woodyard

First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

July 25, 2021, 9 and 10:30 AM

Text for the Sermon: Psalm 16

Prayer:

Introduction.

Last week we considered the theme text for Serve week from Hebrews 12 and our Unshakable Kingdom. This week we take up the text that was Friday’s Serve devotional, Psalm 16 and our Unshakable Faith.

If we say someone has led a sheltered life what are we implying? It is generally understood to be a negative comment. A person who has led a sheltered life is someone who has been pampered, had things handed to them on a silver platter. They have been protected from the harsher realities of life, from unpleasant circumstances. A person with a sheltered life is going to be naïve about the ways of the world.

I am sure most of us would not think of King David as the kind of guy who would be accused of living a sheltered life. He was as manly a man as you could find in the Bible. He killed lions and bears with his own hands, he killed Goliath, he fought battles, he led men into war. He constantly faced all kinds of danger.

Yet he finds no shame in running for shelter from the dangers of life. If you read the Psalms you get the clear idea he led a sheltered life.

Psalm 27:5 He will conceal me under the cover of his tent.

Psalm 61:4 Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!

Psalm 91:1 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.

Psalm 16 is another Psalm of David where he is seeking the sheltered life. In verse one he cries out to God for help, for the providence of God to preserve and protect him. By sheltered life we mean all the things David calls it, coming under the wings of God, taking up dwelling in the tent of the Lord, abiding in the shadow of the Almighty. Being at the right hand of God where he cannot be shaken.

The Psalms teach us we all need to live sheltered lives and it's not shameful to be dependent on Him for His divine protection in our lives. We are never without need of divine shelter. And this shelter is the source of our unshakable faith and confidence and boldness.

Let's consider five benefits of a divinely sheltered life as we find them in Psalm 16 and how they are the reason behind a unshakable faith.

The first benefit of a divinely sheltered life is it is the source of all that is good (vs. 2).

God is the source of all that is good in life and apart from Him we have nothing that is truly good or of lasting good. We all know this from Romans 8:

Romans 8:28 We know that for those who love God [and take shelter in Him] all things work together for good.

In Psalm 16 David starts out saying he needs refuge from the world and he has found that refuge in God. He acknowledges his own weakness and inadequacy, there is no good in himself. God is his supreme good. God is all the good we need. So the sheltered life begins with a confession of submission, of coming under God, and a confession of the sufficiency of God, that what we most need is found not in ourselves but in Him.

David is saying he contributes nothing to this sheltered life, he adds to or aids God in no way. We enter into His shelter by faith, bringing nothing, receiving everything.

The second benefit of a divinely sheltered life is we are not alone (vss. 3-4).

It is stated in the positive and then in the negative. We are not alone in this shelter but in the delightful company of the saints, God's children. These are the ones with whom we share an unshakable faith.

There are clear parallels to this in the NT. Our love for Jesus leads to a love for His people, for the church. You can't just love the head of the church without loving the body of the church, the body of Christ.

Paul praises the Christians in the church in Colossae when he heard of their faith in Jesus and their love for all the saints (Colossians 1:3-4).

The vertical and the horizontal go together. Serve emphasizes that, our love for God translates into love for each other. Our loving others is an expression of our being loved by God and our loving God.

The Bible is never naïve about this. It acknowledges we are not perfect, but sinners.

Think about your own kids. Are they perfect, do they never annoy or frustrate you? Of course they do, but does that mean you would be happy to get rid of them? Of course not, they are your kids, you love them even when you are at their worst.

Why would we think it would be any different with God's kids, with the church. Do we annoy and frustrate each other, do we say and do things that are hurtful sometimes? Sure, but we are brothers and sisters, we are redeemed by the blood of our Savior, we have the Holy Spirit, we are a work in progress, we have the command of our Lord to love one another and make allowances for one another.

Do we delight in God's providence in bring us together in this body for His good reasons? If God is your Father and Christ is your Lord, then love and treasure each other. Even go so far as the Psalmist and cultivate a delight in each other. Do this at our fellowship times, at church picnics, working side by side in Serve, on ministry teams, on council, and especially not neglecting gathering together for corporate worship.

Will you pray that God will restore in all of us a new, refreshed love and delight and desire to be together? Pray for the elders as we meet next week to make final decisions about our being all together sooner than later and what that will look like. Pray God will bless our fellowship, pray God will make it safe for us to be together. Pray that those who have been long absent will have the desire to be together.

Being surrounded by saints who share our unshakable faith strengthens our own faith. They help us maintain our footing and foundation.

Vs. 4 seems kind of out of place in this Psalm. Why does he go off topic to talk about idolatry? He talks about those who have multiplied sorrow and grief for themselves by seeking shelter from other gods, from other sources of help, who are lured into paganism, worldliness, drinking from the fire hydrate of the world, from lust, greed, the pride of life.

This is the nature of an unsheltered life, of being too much in the world and worldly wise. It leads to a multitude of misery. False gods offer false shelter that is no shelter at all, but a destitute life in a desert.

This is saying you can't have a foot in two camps, you can't be one who wavers between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. You can't be divided on this. A commitment to God and His people means a turning away from and rejecting worshipping idols. God's claims on us are exclusive. He is a jealous God and He is a consuming fire.

I Kings 18:21 Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.”

Joshua 24:15 Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

The third benefit of a divinely sheltered life is the contentment of a beautiful inheritance (vss. 5-6).

David uses three metaphors to describe his experience of God, three metaphors that fuel his unshakable faith.

God is his chosen portion, his inheritance.

God is his cup, his abundant provision, daily bread, overflowing sustenance.

God is his keeper, the one who holds him, defends him from those how would take his inheritance or his cup. It is no advantage to have the first two without the third.

Remember I Peter 1:3-5 about this great inheritance we have keep for us in heaven, and how God keeps us for that inheritance, that we not loss it.

To come under God’s shelter is to come under His all-sufficient provision and protection. With an unshakable faith in an unshakable kingdom comes unshakable riches, an inheritance better than any other.

The reason we run after sinful pleasures is we don’t know or have forgotten the pure pleasures of God and how much more lasting and satisfying they are.

David’s contentment is grounded in the providence of God. He believes God has determined his lot in life, his place. God determines our going in and our going out. In Him we live and move and have our being. God is the one who says this much and no more, this far and no farther. He gives and takes away. He determines our boundary lines.

I often hear verse 5 said in regard to earthly or tangible things. My boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places here in Lynden and my life here. But more importantly Jesus is our treasure, our inheritance, the source of true and lasting contentment. He is the pearl of great price and the treasure buried in the field.

The fourth benefit of a divinely sheltered life is the wisdom and guidance of the counsel of God (vss. 7-8).

Could you use a good *counselor*? Would you appreciate some good wisdom and clear guidance for the challenges you are facing in life? You cannot do better than the eternal counsel of the Word of God. Have you considered what an incredible privilege is ours to have the eternal God of the universe as our own personal teacher and counselor through Scripture and prayer.

God is our most trusted counselor, our most faithful guide. Remember Psalm 1:

Psalm 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
2 but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.
3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.

Psalm 32:8 I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

God has sent His Holy Spirit to us who is the great counselor.

John 14:26 The Helper [counselor], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Oh that we had the discipline to seek God and His Word and His wisdom and truth rather than the words of man, the words of friends on social media. Our souls are shriveled up with junk food from screens. We are worldly wise and spiritually poor.

I have set the Lord always before me.

Because he is at my right hand, ***I shall not be shaken.***

This is a firm commitment of faith and trust. I shall not be shaken. Period.

Do you have that kind of confidence, that God is that close, that present, with us always?

In the face of every danger, in the face of every fear, in the face of every conflict, every circumstance, he has set God before him. It is as though God is the filter or lens through which he views everything.

The divinely sheltered life is the granite foundation of an unshakable faith.

The fifth benefit of a divinely sheltered life is the deliverance from fear of death and the joyful security of the path of life (vss. 9-11).

Vs. 9. Therefore my heart is glad. The fruit, the benefit, blessing of this sheltered life is drawn out even more. There is peace, contentment, and even more than that, joy and gladness.

Why?

First, because of God's protection, his flesh dwells secure under the shelter of God's presence.

Second, he has no fear of death. Even if he should descend to Sheol, God will never abandon him.

We are not truly saved, or should I say we have not fully taken hold of our salvation until we are free from all fear of death. We have not fully laid hold of Christ until we know in the depths of our soul that He has fully rescued and delivered us from the power of the grave.

Vs. 10 is interesting to say the least. Both Peter and Paul quote this verse in sermons in the book of Acts as referring to a prophetic promise about the Messiah and the resurrection of Jesus.

If God's Messiah is not abandoned to the grave, but is victorious over death, then God's people can be equally confident they will not see death, but have assurance of victory in the face of death. God will not abandon us to Sheol.

I Thessalonians 4:14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

Jesus is the firstfruits of those who are raised, He is the first to come out of the grave, never to return to it. He is the first of all who will be raised again. If Jesus didn't come out of the grave, no one else ever would. Our faith can be more unshakable than David's because of Jesus.

If death cannot shake us, then what else on earth can? Our unshakable faith rests in a risen Savior.

Vs. 11. This is the sheltered life that leads to fullness of joy and true and lasting pleasures.

There is a kind of a sheltered life that is cause for derision or shame, but this is not it. Full happiness and joy comes from leading a sheltered life.

Only those who have found unshakable faith in the sheltered life in God will know true and everlasting joy and happiness. Why would anyone be interested in a religion that offers anything less than fullness of joy and pleasures forevermore?

I have been enjoying this summer very much, maybe one of the best. I have enjoyed extended time with my family, with my grandkids who are a delight to me. I love their uninhibited affection. I love hearing that word, Papa. I have enjoyed extra meals out, eating outside, watching a son and some nephews play softball at Bender, going to Edaleens.

I have loved these endless sunny warm days, with blow up swimming pools, cool water, and window air conditioners. I have enjoyed the longer days, evening walks with Phama, extra time with Zach before he leaves for grad school in two weeks. I have enjoyed learning how to play pickleball, a great game an old guy can play and even beat my boys some of the time. I have enjoyed the wonderful ocean breezes that have kept the smoke away. I enjoyed being able to participate in Serve and go out to Telos, a place that holds some fondness to me because of my friends Tim Lewis and Von and Sue Golder.

But that could all vanish in a moment, in an accident, in a phone call, in a doctor's visit. All of that joy and happiness overturned by some hardship, tragedy, crisis.

Faith is not an unshakable faith if it can be shaken by anything on earth. He who has taken shelter in the granite foundation of God, his is an unshakable faith, his is fullness of joy forever.

Conclusion and application.

Charles Spurgeon the great Baptist preacher from London records a personal story from the year 1854, the worst year of the great cholera pandemic in England.

<http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/treasury/ps091.htm>

“My congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. ... I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:

Psalm 91:9-10 Because you have made the Lord your dwelling place—the Most High, who is my refuge—10 no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

“The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvelous power I adore the Lord my God.”

May we know that same effect, that same power, that same refreshing of an unshakable faith that comes to those who by faith dwell in the shelter of the Almighty. Call out to God that He would be your refuge and strength. No ill, no harm, no evil can touch those who seek security under His wing. Everything will be overruled for God.

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

In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.