

God is Faithful  
by Rev. Dr. Sara Worcester  
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@ The United Church of Broomfield

Psalm 16 NRSVue

**Song of Trust and Security in God**

**A Miktam of David.**

- <sup>1</sup> Protect 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 holy ones in the land, they are the noble ones  
in whom is all my delight.  
<sup>4</sup> Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows;  
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out  
or take their names upon my lips.  
<sup>5</sup> The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.  
<sup>6</sup> The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
I have a goodly heritage.  
<sup>7</sup> I bless the Lord, who gives me counsel;  
in the night also my heart instructs me.  
<sup>8</sup> I keep the Lord always before me;  
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.  
<sup>9</sup> Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices;  
my body also rests secure.  
<sup>10</sup> For you do not give me up to Sheol  
or let your faithful one see the Pit.  
<sup>11</sup> You show me the path of life.  
In your presence there is fullness of joy;  
in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

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Getting a handle on the message or theme of a Psalm can be tricky because of the context and the ancient language, although very beautiful in its poetic form, still makes it quite complicated. I often thought an English course in college looking at the poetic verses of the Psalms could have helped me greatly. Mostly they are either psalms of joy, praise, sorry or laments offered up by the people to God. Earlier in church history many of the hymns were written from these many texts. Not to worry, I won't try to sing Psalm 16 for you today. Psalm 16 is a song of trust and

security in God which can to us today, I believe. Given our Thanksgiving holiday, the idea that God is faith gives me great gratitude.

So, let's delve into it. "Protect me, O God, for in You I take refuge. I say to the Lord, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart you.'" The Psalmist is setting the stage for us. He's talking about having a trust relationship with God. Why do I put it that way? Because I, and I would many of you, wouldn't claim belonging to someone or asking them for protection without some kind of established relationship. This person must have had a tremendous faith life experience to say, "I have no good apart from You. You are my Lord." Not all of us are at a stage where we are ready to say this. Nonetheless, Scripture tells us that God is always ready for us. How do each of us experience this? Do you sense God in other people? Do you sense God in nature? Does God's presence come to you through feelings, music, or do you struggle to know God? Let's hear next how the psalmist deals with these kinds of dilemmas and emotions, attachments.

"As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. Those who choose another god multiply their sorrows; their drink offering of blood I will not pour out or take their names upon my lips."

I think for me the psalmist tackles one big problem of organized religion and you can let me know later whether you have ever seen or experience this kind of situation. The psalmist admits taking delight in those holy persons who have wisdom. I, too, benefit from leaders through the ages who have exemplified qualities of integrity and wisdom, and who have lived acts of human kindness. I think of Lincoln, Mother Theresa, Jim Carter and others. I'll share a story of someone my late husband met on a bus long ago. My friend got on the 6:25 a.m. to Hartford and sat next to a young man who was mentally challenged and lived in one of the group homes in town. They started talking about their days and where they were going. Today was this young man's day off from work, but each month on his day, he gets up at 5:00 a.m. to make several transfers on the bus going to the Red Cross. There he undergoes the two-hour procedure of donating his white blood cells for cancer patients. Just then a woman from a foreign country got on the bus and was a dime short. This young man had exact change to get home but he gave her the dime and trusted somehow he would get another.

Our scriptural passage today talks about someone who is noble and I think of the young man on the bus in this way, being noble. My friend shared how much he had learned from him. You see, nobility is not reserved for certain kinds of nations, for in this case, I believe the young man on the bus was noble in his heart. So, you see, we can delight and grow from many holy and noble persons. But beware – I offer a strong warning not to place another god with a small "g" in the place of God the Almighty nor do things with offerings and gifts to worship the. The Psalmist shares how this can multiply one's sorrows. As humans, we can fall into this easily. How many of us have almost placed a person on a pedestal to be like a god? How many have made gods of things, or certain charismatic leaders? How many know in their hearts how, when we put ourselves or anything else before God that we have been brought to a place of regret. All of these lesser gods are not perfect and may not have our best interests at heart. God does have our best interest and that is why we are asked to place our trust solely with God. Let's continue,

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup you hold my lot. The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage.” This is so good for me to hear the calling of us back to the beginning of our real heritage as it started with God’s creation of each of us. At those times today when we are dismayed about society, we can think of those who, at the time of this psalm, were likely in exile from their homeland and yet, they still say “The Lord is my chosen portion.”

An example of this that I’d like to share with you is some of my experience early on in ministry at the United Church Board of Homeland Ministries meeting, because I think it connects with knowing that God is our cup and in other places of the UCC that cup “...is running over with great joy!” When we hold our meetings, many people witness during our time to God’s work in their life and the life of their churches. This time we shared more of the “New Century Hymnal” with over 600 hymns of praise that included Pilgrim classes, songs from brothers and sisters in Hawaii and native American spirituals. For me, it made me see and feel the Holy Spirit in many congregations across the land. I heard news of congregations intentionally forming with Hispanic leadership and a call to be a multicultural, multi-racial church. You may ask, so how does this fit with God being the one I choose? Because the UCC motto taken from John says that all may be one, one in God, and the exciting thing I heard – and I want you to hear – is that there are *thousands, no millions* around our nation who are saying God is central in their lives and we are one in God. I didn’t stop humming and singing for three days after that meeting.

Next we read, “I bless the Lord who gives me counsel in the night also my heart instructs me. I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” This raises the question for me, whom do I listen to? What is it that instructs my life? The last words of those two verses are “I shall not be moved.” If we know the ten commandments, if we know the greatest commandments Jesus said we should live by – to love your God with all your heart, mind, and soul and to love your neighbor as yourself – then we do not need to be moved by people, or situations, or anyone else who would have us cherish life any less than God hopes that we will. Some say, “Well, I pray but I don’t hear anything.” Some say, “I pray but I don’t believe it does any good.” Some say, “I pray and I don’t like the answers.” This is where sheer trust comes into play. God is there for our counsel just as the psalmist writes. Maybe the answers or directions come in forms foreign to us, maybe through the silence, or as time passes. Maybe simply knowing that with God on our side, what we ultimately know is eternal good can never be lost. I think western culture in a sense has done a disservice to our faith in that we, as a culture, see things as very linear – one directional – and can’t image life as cycles or circles or having levels. One passage making God a living God and that says life continues is 1 Corinthians 13 which emphatically states, “Love never ends. Faith, hope, and love, the greatest of these is love.” That means with God and with love, we can feel in all relationships that there is an everlasting loop called “love that never dies.” This is why I can say to you without a doubt – trust. God is faith, trust... God is faithful!

In our closing three verses we read, “Therefore my heart is glad, my soul rejoices. You showed me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy. In your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Have you ever read a Dr. Seuss book? In particular, I commend one of his last that is really for adults called, Oh the Place You'll Go. On most of the pages there are pictures of dozens of paths, routes or ways that you can go, and it talks about all the ups and downs, joys and sorrows, but always saying, "Oh, the places you'll go." I connected this with what we read in Psalm 16, "You show me the path of life." It's as if God never forces us in a direction but is always with us showing and encouraging us to take the path full of life. But more than that, friends being there when there are potholes or bumps and give us strength to go further. You see love never ends, God never ends. Trust is a choice and where we place our trust is a choice but there is no question in my mind that God is faithful and when we place our trust in God, new paths of life are pointed out to us. None of you know this, but years ago, my sister Kathy died from cancer at 38 and my sister Christy died at 24 due to issues with addiction. I miss them dearly, yet, I trust that God is faithful and as God shows me new paths of life, I feel God is faithful to my sisters too and I trust the love I feel is that their lives are on an eternal path. Therefore, as the psalmist says and this Thanksgiving, may we too say, "My heart is glad, my soul rejoices. Let us all take pleasure in God forevermore." For God is faithful.

Thanks be to God. AMEN