

Sermon
24 June 2018
West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

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Reading: Psalm 16

Today we are saying goodbye to, we're thanking for many years of dedicated service to the church, and a little later we will be welcoming onto Session.

4 different people on their different journeys through life. And just like that, we are all on a journey.

We actually talk about that journey quite often here in church, and with the official summer holidays only a week away, I'm sure there are plenty people here today planning a special journey for their holidays.

And of course, with me living in Balerno and working here – I go on plenty journeys, sometimes more than once in one day!!

So last week one day I got myself ready to go visit people. But when I looked at their address I realised that I'd never been there before.

With modern technology close at hand, that wasn't a problem at all, because I just punched their address into the sat.nav, and within minutes I was guided to their house.

And you know, while I was listening to the instructions from the sat.nav., I realised that that is exactly how God guides us through life as well – step by step.

The sat.nav. plans your whole route, but it doesn't tell you where to go all at once. It doesn't say: At the 1st roundabout, take the 2nd exit and at the 2nd roundabout, take the first exit. Then carry on for 2.9 miles where you should join the motorway for the next 19 miles and then take the slipway to the left, go right at the T-junction, left at the traffic light, then left and left again at the next junction....

Can you imagine that?! If a sat.nav gave all the instructions in one go, everybody would still get lost, because nobody could remember all that!

But that is not how a sat.nav works! It gives the instructions one by one: At the roundabout, take the 1st exit. And only once you have actually done that, it gives you the next instruction. One thing at a time, step by step.

At the start of your journey you have no idea where you are going to end up, but that doesn't matter, because you know that your whole journey is planned, and only when you get close to your destination, you can see the wee flag indicating where you should stop.

My boys are always super excited when they see the flag! Because that means we are almost where we should be.

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And you know, sometimes I think we can find life overwhelming. When there are so many things going on, especially when these are things we don't understand, when we feel as if we are going nowhere fast, and we can't even picture that the destination we are heading to will make our journey worthwhile...

And it is in times like these that we should remember to just take life step by step. That God has a plan. That he has laid out the road for us.

We heard all about this in the beautiful Psalm 16 we read this morning. This is one of the many Psalms written by David or dedicated to David, and in it he says a few things that I would like to highlight:

- He says that God has assigned him his portion and his cup. In those days families would all dine together, they would have equal portions of food, and share a cup. So whatever the patriarch of the family had to drink, everybody else would drink exactly the same.

Metaphorically this means that whatever the head of the family goes through, the whole family will go through too, and they will either rejoice together or suffer together.

This is the same metaphor Jesus uses in the Garden of Gethsemane when he asks God to take this cup away from him, but God doesn't. Because that was just not how it worked. So this one wee sentence shows us just how much God suffered too when Jesus had to suffer and die – because they drank from the same cup.

In Psalm 16 this is a positive reference though, it makes David feel safe and secure, knowing that God is the head of his household, providing all his needs. And he is happy to accept whatever God wants him to have.

- Then he speaks about the bit that made me think of the sat.nav. He said that the boundary lines have fallen for him into pleasant places. This refers to the time when the Israelites moved into the promised land, and God divided up the land in equal parts for the different clans. They had to measure the land by line and then divide it by lot. And David is so happy about how all this worked out for him, because, he says, that the boundary lines have fallen for him in pleasant places, he has a delightful inheritance.

He is happy with the road that God has measured out for him, because he knows that if he stays within those boundary lines, he'll always be okay.

- Even at night, he says, his heart instructs him. In the original translation it says that his *kidneys* instruct him – meaning the exact same thing – he feels safe all the time.

Just as today we associate our feelings with our hearts, they thought that their feelings, especially their conscience, originated in their kidneys. In this context it means that he feels *internally* secure all the time – when he is awake and even when he is asleep, because he knows that God is always with him.

- And then finally he says that he shall never be shaken, because God is at his right hand. A soldier's right hand was the hand he

fought with. In his left hand he would carry a shield, so his right hand would be exposed. But a fellow soldier would then be close at his right hand, to help defend him, to keep him safe. The person on your right hand was always the most important person in your life. That person would also be your council, the person who would advise you what to do.

In the New Testament we learn that Jesus went up to God to sit at his right hand, to be our council, to intercede for all of us.

So all these beautiful images say exactly the same thing – David feels secure and safe, because he knows that God is in control of his life. Therefore, he will never steer away from the road that God has laid out for him, because he knows that if he stays between the boundary lines set out for him, he will reach his destination, and he looks forwards to that with joy in his heart.



To me this Psalm expresses exactly what faith in God should be like.

No matter what is going on in our lives, we should always rejoice in the fact that God is with us. Even in difficult times, even if our journey doesn't make sense at all, because He knows where we are going.

Our journey through life might not always be an easy one. We might encounter storms along the way, we might have to travel over dangerous mountain passes.

But if we just stay on the road that God has laid out for us, we WILL be fine.

Our journeys will *never* just be hard though, and that is something we should rejoice about, just like David did. Because we tend to get bogged down in the hard times, but we all have some pretty amazing experiences in our lives too.

And sometimes a hard road leads to somewhere very special. While we are travelling there we struggle to understand why certain things are happening to us, but once we reach our destination, we'll be able to look back and realise that God had a plan with us all along.

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As a family we have been on trips where our sat.nav led us on the “road less travelled”, shall I say?! We even once ended up on a farm road, and when I had to get out of the car to open a gate, I was standing ankle deep in the mud – much to my family’s amusement! But where sat.navs can be programmed wrong – God doesn’t make mistakes.

So walk proudly into your future, one step at a time, and have confidence in what you do, because you are where you are because God wants you there.

He has laid out the boundary lines for you...

To conclude in the words of David:

Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;

You will not abandon me

You have made known to me the path of life,

*You will fill me with joy in your presence
With eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

Amen