

WHITE MEMORIAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

WMPC - Men's Bible Study
5 Great Psalms - Spring 2017
Lesson 1

Read Psalm 16

Three Sets of Questions:

Q1: As we begin, a good first and opening question is a direct one: what is a Psalm? What kinds of Psalms are there - one type or multiple types? Can you do some research as to how the Psalms were used by the ancient Hebrews, how early Christians regarded them and thought about them, and how often the New Testament refers to the Psalms?

Q2: Do you have a favorite Psalm? Write a few sentences about it. Be prepared to share. Why has your favorite Psalm become your favorite? Is there one verse that speaks to your soul in deep and crucial ways?

Q3: Specifically to Psalm 16 - take a few moments and read it aloud two or three times. Do you have a favorite verse of Psalm 16? Why does that verse speak to you?

Three Insights:

I1: Psalm 16 is what we would describe as a near "perfect" Psalm. Modern editors describe it as a "song of trust and security in God." In this light, Psalm 16 is similar to the most common prayers we all pray. Psalm 16 is also described as a *mitkam* of David. Only 6 Psalms of the 150 are called *mitkam* and the meaning of the Hebrew is a little uncertain (Which ones? Psalm 16, 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60. You'll note 5 of them are in a group.) Best scholarly guesses are that *mitkam* means writing, poem, or Psalm. When we say near "perfect" Psalm, we would have you look at verses 1 and 2:

Verse 1: A prayer for protection; a prayer for refuge.

Verse 2: An affirmation of faith; a confession of singular devotion: "I have no good apart from you."

As you think about the beginning to a prayer of intercession or praise, can there be a better beginning?

I2: James Mays, who for 5 decades was the acknowledged "dean" of Psalm scholars in the United States begins his comments on Psalm 16 with this sentence, "Psalm 16 is a prayer of universal proportions."

Mays continues, "The psalm is full of joy in the Lord. Life and joy go together. Life is consummated in joy. Where death is removed as threat, life is finally free for complete joy in the presence of God, who alone can deliver from Sheol." (Mays. *Psalms* JKP, 1994. Page 88)

I3: Mays continues: "In the apostolic church, Psalm 16 was read in the light of the resurrection of Jesus. In sermons, both Peter and Paul (Acts 2:24-32 and 13:34) cite verse 10 as a hope fulfilled for the first time when God raised Jesus from the dead. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the last limitation on the

connection between the Lord and life was transcended. Now it is possible to say the psalm in the midst of life and in the face of inevitable death with a trust that matches the language of prayer. The Lord has made known the path of life.” (Mays. *Psalms* JKP, 1994. Page 88 - 89)

Links for Further Study:

L1: Here is the translation of Psalm 16 from the Tanakh, or the JPS Jewish Bible. You’ll notice some slight differences. On the right, you will also see and notice the official Masoretic text of the Hebrew.

http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/16237/jewish/Chapter-16.htm

L2: Here is an interesting link to a blog. I cannot vouch for the author, but I do like the content. It is a good introduction to the Psalms and contains some references to Walter Brueggemann’s *Praying the Psalms* which is a fantastic book.

<https://redeeminggod.com/praying-the-psalms/>

L3: Psalm 16 and Psalm 139 are traditionally attributed to being the inspiration for the glorious gospel hymn “Precious Lord Take My Hand.”

Here is a link to the fantastic resource [hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org) and its entry on this glorious hymn:

http://www.hymnary.org/text/precious_lord_take_my_hand

And here is the “queen of soul” singing the song and bringing tears to eyes and joy to hearts...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b9qH6-lvEs>