Introduction

“This psalm has something of David in it, but much more of Christ.” [1] Thus, Matthew Henry. Psalm 16 is a Psalm about confidence in God in all thing. However, the Psalm is saying more: much more. [2] The Apostle Peter preaches from the revelation of Psalm 16. The old pastor-fisherman preached. [3]

“God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it” (Acts 2:24).

And the Apostle Paul preached his first sermon on this passage after having been sent out by the Church at Antioch:

“And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way, ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.’ Therefore he says also in another psalm, ‘You will not let your Holy One see corruption.’ For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep and was laid with his fathers and saw corruption, but he whom God raised up did not see corruption” (Acts 13:34-36).

Today on the day before Thanksgiving we can thank God for a beautiful inheritance.

Psalm 16

A Miktam of David.

Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.

2 I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;

I have no good apart from you.”

3 As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,

in whom is all my delight.

4 The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;

their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
5 The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.

6 The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.

7 I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me.

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

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure.

10 For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.

11 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 THANKSGIVING OF CRISIS

Thanksgiving is an American holiday born of affliction and shaped by tragedy.

Thanksgiving is an extraordinary union of the civic and the religious in demonstrating our confidence in God in the midst of crisis. So it was in 1607 in Jamestown. English settlers gave thanks to Almighty God in spite of the dangerous and hostile tribes and the brutal and unrelenting Atlantic winter. In 1621 the pilgrims in Plymouth joined with native tribes to render Thanksgiving to God after so many trials had come upon them in their first year there. By the time of the eighteenth century, many of the colonies including North Carolina and South Carolina regularly appealed to their populations to give thanks to God and to show our confidence in him despite the crises that seem to be a perpetual threat.

The Thanksgiving proclamation of Pres. George Washington on October 3, 1789, was given in the midst of a divided nation. While the Lord had granted victory against tyranny and established a new nation upon the earth the usual and predictable arguments about how to govern quickly followed. The Federalists, of which George Washington was one, and the Anti-Administration party, such as Thomas Jefferson, differed on many aspects of government, including the role of the church in the everyday affairs of government. This was a day in which men took out their grievances on day field of supposed honor where they dueled to death. Regionalism, questions about a national bank, divisions concerning tariffs, which led to the whiskey rebellion, and many other trials and tribulations were present whenever a representative from New Jersey made the motion that all of the states should join together as one and giving thanks to God.

Washington made the last Thursday of November a day for the states to have thanks to God. It was in 1863, when the smoking ruins of American cities embroiled in a civil war, that Pres. Abraham Lincoln once again called for a day of Thanksgiving. Later, in the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Thanksgiving was forever connected to Christmas, as Roosevelt sought to enshrine the day one week earlier. It was a presidential misstep born out of a desire to help the merchants of the nation coming out of a depression. While his attempt to alter Thanksgiving ultimately failed, Roosevelt did much to cause Christmas shopping to begin after Thanksgiving. Perhaps, we owe Pres. Roosevelt for Black Friday, apparently so called because the merchants got their books in the black because of that day.

Whatever you think of the last milestone in the evolution of Thanksgiving we all recognize that Thanksgiving is forever connected
to confidence in God in the midst of the crisis. The nation has never paused to thank God merely because “we had it so good.” To the contrary, the American holiday of Thanksgiving is a response to the faithfulness of God in times of famine, war, division, and even depression.

That leads us to think about how very biblical this response is.

### The Golden Inscription of David’s Lament

This 16th Psalm is entitled a “Miktam” of David. Ancient Near Eastern texts have been consulted to suppose that the word has something to do with gold.[11] This was the position of Matthew Henry. He called it a golden Psalm in the midst of trials. [12] I am reminded of Dr. Kennedy’s book that was such a blessing to me during times of trial in my own life, “Turn it to Gold.”[13] Alternatively, the modern Hebrew uses the word as our word “epigram,” or an inscription.[14] Six Psalms have this title. These divinely inspired songs of Davide are Psalms of lament. Written by David, the Psalms speak of David’s confidence in God in the midst of trouble. Even death, in Psalm 16, cannot disturb the faith of David.

“This psalm expresses confidence in the Lord, though it is difficult to tell whether the crisis is past or present to the psalmist. Death may be imminent for him (v. 10).”

So, a crisis of unknown origin is preying on the very existential being of the great King and Shepherd of Israel, and yet he blesses the Lord for “in the night also my heart instructs me.” I wrote a book on the truth of this Psalm called, “Songs in the Night.”[15] It is one of the most comforting truths of all: that in the midst of everything, God is here. We can praise Him, thank Him, and worship Him no matter what blessing or burden comes to us.

Of particular interest to us on this Sunday before Thanksgiving is the remarkable and memorable passage in verse six: “The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.”

Thanksgiving as a holiday is a beautiful inheritance from faithful men and women throughout the centuries of this nation. But the Psalm calls us to bless the Lord and to declare that we have a beautiful inheritance in God himself. Thus, when we gathered to give thanks, we’re not giving thanks to each other, and we are not merely giving thanks for material good. We are expressing our gratitude to the Almighty, our Creator. We are extolling the very virtues of His divine Persons in the Trinity. Thus, our Thanksgiving is not dependent upon whether our health is good or whether our bank accounts are full. Let us see what David means in this Psalm about a “beautiful inheritance.”

Let us see two facets of beauty in our inheritance from God. The first is such a marvelous prism of light flowing from His Person and into our lives:

1. **We have a beautiful inheritance from God in His Providence that is our confidence in life.**

   The sweet Psalmist of Israel pleads that God would preserve him. He declares, “I have no good apart from you.” This is reminiscent of Peter who told Jesus, “Lord where else could we go but to you?”[16] The blessings of God in the midst of a trial shoot from the pages of Scripture like the traces of light when fireworks explode in the sky.

   One ray of light is here shown: there are times of loneliness, but there is the Church. For King David consoles himself with “the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight” (3). He is encouraged by God’s People.

   Another ray of light bursts forth: There are trials, but God is in control. David is giving thanks to God and demonstrating his confidence in God in life despite the difficulties that have come upon him.

   The Psalm is filled with the interplay of light and shadow, day and night, life-and-death. As we focus upon verse six, we note that David says, “The lines have fallen unto me . . .” Does David mean that mere “chance” has bestowed upon him good things? Is he saying that the world is filled with good luck and bad luck? Good karma and bad karma? Absolutely not! We only need to look at verse five before where David says, “The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot.” We are extolling the very virtues of His divine Persons in the Trinity. Thus, our Thanksgiving is not dependent upon whether our health is good or whether our bank accounts are full. Let us see what David means in this Psalm about a “beautiful inheritance.”

   Again I referred to the proclamation of October 3, 1789, “By the President of the United States of America, a Proclamation. Whereas it is the duty of all Nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God . . .”

   It is without question that our founders not only believed in the providence of God but believed that it is absolutely essential for
nations to give thanks to him for his providence. [18] Survey the chapters of American history, and you will see demonstrations of
God’s intervention, is withholding calamity, and even in the mysterious suffering of humankind in this old Poland world, every
page that chronicles our existence as a people gives evidence to his comforting presence. [19]

How much more, my beloved, must you and I give thanks unto God and say with David, “The lines of fallen him to me in pleasant
places.” “Yes, the lines have fallen under me.” “Yes, Almighty God has been my old in all, and he holds my life in the palm of his
hand. “He holds my lot.” Grieving and suffering believer: do not waiver in your faith trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one
who is present in the Psalm who speaks to you by the power of his Holy Spirit this morning. “The lines have fallen unto you”
because he chose you before the foundation of the world because he sent his only begotten Son to live the life you could never
live and die with the sacrificial death for your sins and to rise again. [20] “The lines of fallen under you in pleasant places” and his
providence has determined that you would not remain outside of the ark of his salvation. He has led you into the bosom of
Abraham through the life of the Lord Jesus Christ and the death of our Savior on the cross.

There is another facet of beauty in this inheritance in Psalm 16:

2. **We have a beautiful inheritance from God in His power that is our confidence in death.**

Let us carefully observe that David says the lines have fallen unto me in pleasant places,” and he rehearses the instances of God's
bountiful inheritance not only in life but also in death. Look at verse 11:

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

It is here that we see the faith of King David, a belief in our Redeemer who would rise again from the dead. “For you will not
abandon my soul to Sheol or let your holy one see corruption.” The Holy Spirit was speaking through David, a direct grandfather
threw Joseph, and thus by covenant, which is stronger than blood. And so, our Lord Jesus Christ, the one Moses foresaw, the one
that David not only wrote of but even assumed his voice: He is our power in death.

I told you that I once gave a sermon in a crypt that resulted in everlasting life for some. But I have had the opportunity also to
speak that a most unusual church in a most unlikely place. Back in Kansas City, many years ago, Mae and I were invited to come
to a church plant meeting in a funeral home. The church name was, “Church of the Resurrection.” So, on Sunday mornings, the
sign for McGilley Funeral Home was joined by a large red and white banner, “Church of the Resurrection Meets Here.” Of course.
What better place for a church to be planted than in the very reason for its existence? The Church is here to announce that the
lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, in life and, also, in death. God is curing the wound of sin in our world by sending His
only begotten Son. The Good News is that you and I, like David, can unfurl a banner across our lives. And whether in fair winds or
treacherous sea, we may declare, “I have a beautiful inheritance: an inheritance from God by His providence in every area of my
life; an inheritance from God by His power so that even death will usher me into the presence of Christ, where there is fullness of
joy, and pleasures forevermore.”

Now. The question is this, “Can you say these things with David?” It is not that David's strength allows him to unfurl the banner of
such promise. In fact, David is weak, he is under siege by the world, the flesh, and the devil. But God is powerful in life and death.
David is strengthening himself in these attributes and in the promise of God the Redeemer. How do you meet the challenges of
life? Psalm 16 says, “You make known to me . . .” The Gospel is before you. Will you choose life or death? Will you choose
thanksgiving or murmuring? And will you not receive Jesus Christ today as your living Lord and resurrected Savior? He is being
“made known” to you now. By faith, renunciation of your sins, and trust in Christ alone for forgiveness of sins and promise of
eternal life, join the often-beleaguered band of believers who are singing doxologies in the darkness, singing “Victory in Jesus”
before the apparent defeat by Sheol, and trusting in Jesus Christ as our “beautiful inheritance.”

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[20] “He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (*Ephesians 1:4 KJV*).

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A long-time pastor and educator, the Rev. Michael A. Milton, PhD (University of Wales), is the James Ragsdale Chair of Missions and Evangelism at Erskine Theological Seminary, where he also serves as President and Senior Fellow of the D. James Kennedy Institute of Reformed Leadership. Previously, Dr. Milton served as Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS System) and held the James M. Baird Jr. Chair of Pastoral Theology at RTS. In addition to academic leadership, He served as Senior Pastor of the historic First Presbyterian Church of Chattanooga, Tennessee, after planting PCA churches in Kansas and Georgia. He is also the founding pastor of Trinity Chapel (ARP) in South Charlotte. Dr. Milton has worked as a top-secret Navy linguist, a manager for two Fortune 50 companies, and is a Chaplain (Colonel), U.S. Army Reserve, Retired. He is the author of 30 books, 5 albums of original music, and his work has been featured through interviews and articles on numerous national radio, television, print, and online media channels. The Miltons are parents of eight with a growing number of grandchildren! An alumnus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Mike and his wife, Mae, reside in North Carolina with their son, John Michael. You may learn more about his ministry at Michael Milton About.

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A Beautiful Inheritance. The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup, you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed I have a beautiful inheritance. ~ Psalm 16:5-6 (ESV). Conversations with the little guy I can honestly say that I know without a doubt that I will miss the sayings & words being mispronounced from my little man, it just melts my heart....and most of all makes me crack up! I'm A Princess. Recently (years really)I have made it a point to search out my life by asking the "who's, what's, where's, why's, when's, and how's" in order to "You will seek Me and find Me when you search for me with all your heart." Jer. 29:13 "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter but the glory of kings to search out a matter." Pro. 25:2. You see, adoption and the lack there of (spiritually) have effected me (and everyone else on this world) more than I knew it at the time. Make sense? Again, wish I were speaking to y