Life Is Beautiful

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Protect 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 holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. [4] 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. [5] The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. [6] The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. [7] I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. ***[8] I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. [9] Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure****. [10] For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. [11] You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures forevermore*. (Psalm 16:1-11)

1. Life is Beautiful

In 1997, there was a film entitled "Life is Beautiful." The film is set in the 1930s, where a Jewish man, Guido Orefice meets an Italian schoolteacher Dora. Through wit and cunning, Guido wins Dora over and they soon have a son named Giosue.

Five years later, World War II breaks out and the Germans come to take away Guido and Giosue to a concentration camp. Dora volunteers to go to be with her family in the women's side of the camp.

To protect his son from the horrors of the camp, Guido tells his son that they are playing a game and that they need to win 1,000 points to win a real tank. As things get worse, Guido realizes that time is running out. He hides his son Giosue in a junction box and jeopardizes his own survival to prevent the Germans from finding his son.

The Americans arrive at the camp the following morning and Giosue comes out of hiding just as the tanks roll into the camp. Giosue soon reunites with his mother and the film ends.

We see the very real struggle of the human experience in this film. The situations in the film seem hopeless, but somehow there is light even in the darkest moments of the film. This experience parallels the experience that we read about in today's scripture. We see the struggles of King David and the hope that he has in God.

2. A Song of Trust and Security in God

The author of Psalm 16 is King David. This psalm celebrates the joy of fellowship that David has as he trusts in the Lord. We do not know exactly when David wrote this psalm. However, we know that the passage is written as David faces great danger. King David has the conviction that he can trust God even in the face of death because God is his portion in life. David confesses that God fills him with joy even in these situations and that David rejoices in being at God's right side.

In verses 1-8, David tells us how he has come to trust in the Lord. In verse 1, he says, "***Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge***." This verse summarizes the entire psalm 16. David highlights that his trust is in the Lord because God is David's refuge. In verse 2, David announces his exclusive trust in the Lord saying, "***You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you***." The Lord is all David needs to be satisfied in life.

David praises the Lord because God leads David by day and night. The Lord guides David to safety. And David says that he would not be shaken (verse 7 & 8) even in the worst of situations. David knows that God protects his life and that the Lord would not abandon him or allow him to perish (verse 9-10). David believes even in this situation that God would not let him die.

The passage that we read from today, Psalm 16, has had a profound impact on everyone of us in our faith. Verses 8-11 are cited by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Acts 2:25-28 says, "*I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; moreover my flesh will live in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One experience corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence*." St. Paul quotes Psalm 16:10b at Antioch (Acts 13:35-37) in reference to Jesus' resurrection. David asserts that we can be joyful so long as we acknowledge God's presence with us even in the most difficult situations. When we read the passage, we can imagine the joy and peace of David putting his trust in the faithfulness of the Lord.

3. My Mission Trip to Bolivia

I felt privileged recently to meet a missionary family that has the same kind of joy and trust in the Lord in Bolivia. In Bolivia, I had the opportunity to meet Bolivian pastors and lay leaders and help teach them on the Bible. Roughly 93% of people in Bolivia identify themselves as Christians. However, many of the people have limited education and many pastors become pastors with little biblical education. To help them I traveled with two other pastors. And we spent a large portion of our time teaching and providing as much education on the Bible that we could.

During our stay, I was able to interact a lot with a missionary family. Young Mo Kim is a Korean missionary that serves two churches in Bolivia. One is in Santa Cruz and the other in the mountain region of Mariana. The Kim family lives in Santa Cruz, but travels three hours to get to the region on unpaved roads and serves the people there every week.

We arrived on Saturday night to a youth group gathering of worship and soccer. The church has about 30 soccer teams and many middle and high school children come to the church to play soccer during the week.

On Sundays, the people gather for worship, a meal, and games. I noticed there were many children but fewer adults. Although children are able to come to church, many parents go to the markets in the villages to sell their goods. The missionary family returns back to Santa Cruz on Sunday evenings for another worship service, leading 3 services in 2 towns every weekend.

4. The Joy of Serving the Lord

The amount of coordination and work every weekend can be taxing on a missionary family. But I was struck by the joy and the peace that the family had while serving the people in Bolivia. One of the interactions that left an impression on me was with Yesun, the daughter of the missionary family. Yesun spends every weekend serving the people in Mariana with her family. Despite the travel and the demands of being a high school student, Yesun was full of joy serving God and the people in the village.

Often children of pastors and missionaries feel lots of stress. Sometimes they complain about being pastors' or missionaries' kids. But Yesun was quite different from them. She helped her mother with cooking, took photos of her parents' mission work and played the guitar at worship service. I knew that she did all of those not because her parents ask her to do but because she has joy of serving the Lord and his people. She is now planning to go to medical school and serve as a doctor in South America.

5. Conclusion

King David's life was full of ups and downs. David had the lowly job of tending for sheep as a young man. He would later be chosen to be the second king of Israel. Saul, the first king, tried to kill David several times. David's own son Absalom would try to kill his father David to take control of the kingdom. By many accounts, David was not a person that lived an easy life. And yet, even in the most dangerous situations, David is full of joy. Why? It is because he has confidence that God is the Lord over his life.

6. Application

This past week, 12 people were killed in a shooting in Southern California. Several of the victims were young college students. Authorities are still investigating the motive of the crime.

There are not enough words of comfort that can comfort the families of the people lost in the shooting. But the Bible tells us that even in these situations, the hope that we can have is in the resurrection of Jesus and the faith in knowing that God is always in control and that we will one day see our loved ones again when we are reunited with the Lord.

Each of us faces situations where pain, sickness, and even death create a sense of hopelessness. It is easy to lose hope when we face all kinds of troubles in our lives. Our passage today shows us where we can turn for help when we face these situations.

Psalm 16 tells us that the Lord is our protector and the one who preserves our lives. King David puts his trust in the Lord and haa the peace and joy always.

St. Paul says, "***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice***" (Philippians 4:4). We need to remember that St. Paul was in prison when he wrote the Letter to the Philippians. Paul rejoices even in prison because he trusts in the Lord. When we believe that God is with us and through Jesus Christ we are forgiven and have eternal life, we can rejoice and say to everybody that life is beautiful. I pray that you and I are filled with the same joy and peace in our faith that in all circumstances God is our hope and our joy. Amen.