

Psalm 16

1. *Preserve me, O Lord, for in you have I taken refuge;
I have said to the Lord, 'You are my lord, all my good depends on you.'*
2. *All my delight is upon the godly that are in the land,
upon those who are noble in heart.*
3. *Though the idols are legion that many run after,
their drink offerings of blood I will not offer,
neither make mention of their names upon my lips.*
4. *The Lord himself is my portion and my cup;
in your hands alone is my fortune.*
5. *My share has fallen in a fair land;
indeed, I have a goodly heritage.*
6. *I will bless the Lord, who has given me counsel,
and in the night watches he instructs my heart.*
7. *I have set the Lord always before me;
he is at my right hand; I shall not fall.*
8. *Wherefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices;
my flesh also shall rest secure.*
9. *For you will not abandon my soul to Death,
nor suffer your faithful one to see the Pit.*
10. *You will show me the path of life;
in your presence is the fullness of joy,
and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.*

You are my lord,
my **good depends on you.**

Psalm 16 is a song of confidence, in which virtue and reward are thought to go together.

The psalm begins with lamentation, but the writer declares that good fortune came to him, because he submitted his life to God. (v.1 'Preserve me, O Lord, for in you have I taken refuge. I have said to the Lord, "You are my lord, all my good depends on you."')

In verse, 3 the psalmist delights in the godly, that is the true members of the covenant community. He contrasts the way of the idolater with the way of the godly and rejects pagan practices, such as offering blood to the gods and using their names in magical spells.

In verses 4 and 5 he develops the consequences of his choice. "Cup" is a metaphor for destiny. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prays: 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.' Mark 14,36) The words portion and fortune refer to land. As God gave the

people the land in Canaan, he gave the psalmist a pleasant place in the covenant community.

In the second part from v.6, the psalmist sees God as a guide and inspiration, a companion at his side, as we saw in Psalms 23 and 121. He reveals his will in the night.

In vv. 9 and 10, we see the reason for the psalmist's confidence. He was near death, and God rescued him from the underworld, the Pit. So, he rejoices, because God has given him life and has shown him how to live ('You will show mw the path of life'), and so there is joy and endless pleasure.

At night, if we are unable to sleep, our minds work overtime. Sometimes, ideas come to us in the night, or we suddenly remember a detail, which we were unable to recall during the day! Our worries and fears seem at times to become magnified. How can we solve a difficult problem? How are we going to be able to cope with all that we have to do? Are things going to go all right tomorrow? What will happen to us when we die? Are we putting our trust in the right thing? The psalmist rejects idols and puts his trust in God ('and in the night watches he instructs my heart').

So, God is seen as being there for us, alongside us. We have a "goodly heritage", the Church, those whom we have known, who have been an example to us, our faith and those throughout history, who have inspired it, our families and friends.

The psalm proclaims that in the way and life of God we can find life and total pleasure, a love, which never fails. The last verse gives tremendous hope: 'You will show me the path of life; in your presence is the fullness of joy and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.'

Prayer

God, who in generous mercy sent the Holy Spirit upon your Church
In the burning fire of your love:
Grant that your people may be fervent
In the fellowship of the gospel
that, always abiding in you,
they may be found steadfast in faith and active in service;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

(Collect for Trinity15)