

# Safe Spaces

Daniel 12:1-3 | Psalm 16 | Hebrews 10:11-25 | Mark 13:1-8

## PSALM 16

<sup>1</sup>Protect me, O God, for in you I take refuge. <sup>2</sup>I say to the LORD, 'You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.' <sup>3</sup>As for the holy ones in the land, they are the noble, in whom is all my delight. <sup>4</sup>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. <sup>5</sup>The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. <sup>6</sup>The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage. <sup>7</sup>I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. <sup>8</sup>I keep the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. <sup>9</sup>Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also rests secure. <sup>10</sup>For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit. <sup>11</sup>You show me the path of life. In your presence there is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore.

## INTRODUCTION

A little more than a week ago, I was chatting with a friend in the UK. I was reminded that it was Guy Fawkes Night. You must appreciate the truly British irony of commemorating a failed plot to blow up Parliament, with bonfires and fireworks. But it also got me thinking about a what we remember today: the armistice signalling the end of the Great War. I think about all those who lost loved ones in that war, and the subsequent world war. I think about the generations who lived through this turbulent era—the uncertainty of life that comes when bombs fall out of the sky on London, sending children into the countryside, not knowing when peace might arrive and life might return to normal, never being sure of what world they'd be living in next year. I think it is no wonder that these older generations—those who lived through it and those who were raised by those who lived through—sometimes seem resistant to change in an ever-changing world. It's not just that they are stubborn and set in their ways, it's that they have lived in an unpredictable and unstable world already, most of their lives, in fact. Longing for some foundation of constancy in the face of an uncertain future is, rather, reasonable. And in the late modern world, this tendency is expressed in the desire for *safe spaces*, which can be defined as "a place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations."<sup>1</sup> We all want safe spaces, a place that is secure and stable.

I think that the Psalmist has a word for those who find themselves in places and times of great volatility. He argues that, in a world with an uncertain future, the Lord is the only truly worthwhile refuge, the only one worthy of our hope. Let's take a brief look.

## 1. GOOD FROM GOD

In the first few verses, the first stanza, the Psalmist articulates his greatest expectation: protection. He is confident the Lord will protect him, keep him, watch over him, preserve him, because he has taken refuge in the Lord. This is then contrasted with those who trust in other gods or idols over the next few verses. The holy ones find their good in him. Whereas those who trust in anything else find themselves relying on that which will ultimately disappoint, that

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<sup>1</sup> "Safe Space" in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary. See [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe%20space](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe%20space).

which will multiply sorrows.<sup>2</sup> Good comes from God alone. “*All my good depends on you,*” the Psalmist says.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. BLESSING IN GOD

The second stanza reiterates the Psalmist’s declaration of his allegiance to God. “*The Lord himself is my portion and my cup; in your hands alone is my fortune.*”<sup>4</sup> In God, he finds that his life is given satisfaction. Even though he has been given a good lot in life, land and a goodly heritage, yet it is the Lord on whom he relies. God’s counsel and support surpass that of any material blessings.

## 3. LIFE WITH GOD

And in the final stanza, the Psalmist draws his conclusion. If God alone is the source of good (in contrast to the idols of this earth), and if God himself—his counsel and support—is the blessing, then our confidence for life, even life beyond death, is rightly put in him. “*Wherefore my heart is glad and my spirit rejoices; my flesh also shall rest secure,*”<sup>5</sup> he begins. He goes on to claim that he will be spared death. God will bring him to life eternal and, as such, the fullness of joy in the presence of God. And even though the Psalmist surely did see death, his hope is not unfounded. A thousand years later, the Apostle Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, drew on these final verses and showed how they were fulfilled.<sup>6</sup> Jesus was the first human being to defeat death, never seeing corruption, rising again, and providing a path of hope for humankind. In Christ, in believing in his death and resurrection, we might also have unending life with God, the fullness of joy.

## CONCLUSION

As I close, the message of the Psalm is simple. Good from God, blessing in God, and now life with God. In an uncertain world, full of volatility and conflict, economic and political—where even personal relationships are challenging and unstable, where satisfaction is fleeting and anxiety abounds, where will you place your hope? Will we look to the idols of this world? Will money, happy families, a strong national defence, even science in a pandemic, really give us a good, blessed, and joyful life? Do we really think we can create safe spaces? In this world? Where should we place our hope? Let us join the Psalmist and place our hope in the Lord God, through his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. He alone is a refuge worthy of our hope.

*Let me pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for preserving your Son, that in him, we might also find refuge you. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

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<sup>2</sup> This sentiment is, unfortunately, concealed in the Common Worship translation. See the NRSV for a more accurate rendering of the Hebrew.

<sup>3</sup> Psa 16:1. This translation is that of *Common Worship*, and not the NRSV.

<sup>4</sup> Psa 16:4 in the *Common Worship* version of the Psalm. This corresponds to 16:5 in the NRSV.

<sup>5</sup> Psa 16:8 in the *Common Worship* version of the Psalm. This corresponds to 16:9 in the NRSV.

<sup>6</sup> See Acts 2:25-28. The Apostle Paul, in his sermon at Antioch, did something similar. See Acts 13:35.