

Delights Forevermore

Thomas Robinson, *Rest & Delight in God's Presence 2*, August 23, 2015

Psalm 16:5-11

- ⁵ The LORD (*Yahweh*) 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 (*Yahweh*) who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I have set the LORD (*Yahweh*) 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**. (vv. 7-11 quoted in Acts 2:25-28)

Matthew 11:28-30

²⁸ "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls/lives. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Genesis 1:31

³¹ And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Proverbs 8:27-31 Wisdom, personified, describes

²⁷ When God established the heavens, I [God's Wisdom] was there; / when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, / ²⁸ when he made firm the skies above, / when he established the fountains of the deep, / ²⁹ when he assigned to the sea its limit, / so that the waters might not transgress his command, / when he marked out the foundations of the earth, / ³⁰ then I was beside him, like a master workman, / and I was daily his delight, / rejoicing before him always, / ³¹ rejoicing in his inhabited world / and delighting in the children of humanity.

Isaiah 55:1-3

¹ "Come, everyone who thirsts, / come to the waters; / and he who has no money, / come, buy and eat! / Come, buy wine and milk / without money and without price. / ² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, / and your labor for that which does not satisfy? / Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, / and delight yourselves in rich food. / ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; / hear, that your soul may live; / and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, / my steadfast, sure love for David.

Luke 8:14

¹⁴ And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the worries and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.

Philippians 4:8

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

The Signpost of Delight / The Problem of Pleasure

Our congregational retreat, "In God's Presence – Seeking Rest and Delight in Everyday Life."

We began last time reflecting on the idea of Sabbath/rest planted in the very active account of creation. God rests. God gives people a rhythm of rest in everyday life. But also part of that idea: the Sabbath is not sad or ascetic, but celebratory, a time of delight and pleasure. People have always lived hard lives. God wanted a time of focused joy and delight in our lives. Likewise Jesus, as Lord of the Sabbath, called his disciple to a deep "rest for your souls."

Ps 16 describes the confidence/trust/rest of the psalmist because of trust in God (quoted about Jesus in Acts 2). God gives "the path of life," "fullness of joy," "pleasures forevermore." It's a strange phrase for many who grow up thinking of God as the wagging finger who stops pleasures and delights. Yes, addiction to pleasures can be a great threat, but pleasures have that power for misuse only because God has created a world with so much delight in it. When Jesus looked at the world, he saw beauty, pleasure, delight, God's presence everywhere: lilies, birds, people, mustard seed, rain, sunshine, infants, banquets, planting seeds, feeding hungry.

N T Wright (*Simply Christian*) speaks of beauty as one of the great signposts of God's reality.

He builds on the thoughts of C. S. Lewis, (*The Weight of Glory, Surprised by Joy*) that our sense of delight, longing, beauty, never fully realized points to the transcendence of human life made for fulfillment beyond this world. It is that sense of hope and longing in the Psalm.

The creation expresses the character of the creator. His desire for freedom more than control.

His love of pleasures in his creatures and for his creatures. Why is aesthetic delight so much a part of our life? We love music, delicious food, beautiful words, running, sunsets, etc., etc. Why is there so much beauty, delight, pleasure, joy? Why do we long for more?

The Temptation of Pleasure

It is important to recognize that pleasures are also a danger. Ecclesiastes 2:1-11 gives strong expression to that common experience. Creating ever more intense experiences that give less and less real pleasure is our usual distortion. Pleasure in broken sex, power, domination, accumulation, defeat of others, etc. makes pleasures into false gods rather than God's gift.

C. S. Lewis, again, (*Screwtape Letters*) expresses the interplay of pleasure as a temptation away from God and a signpost to God. Artificial pleasures, manufactured experiences allow us to manipulate our experiences and stimulate our own response. Always more to get less. Learning to experience the pleasures built into God's creation and in ourselves with delight and gratitude in the gift evokes a very different response. Can the real experience of joy and delight can be a temptation back to God? Do we see what the presence of delights means?

Delight in Everyday Life

In creation, God made a "Garden of Eden" (Delight). Jesus calls us to delight in the things around us. Not controlling or manufacturing delights. Receiving them as gifts. Learning to see in them the presence of God. Learning to realize that God is present in all kinds of experiences around us helps us to discern the value God places on our own lives, the depth of his love.

As we learn to live with delight, pleasure, joy in God's world, our lives take on a beauty that itself bears witness to God. Life itself is an art, a thing of beauty. God calls us to abundant life. So much of the noise of life drowns out our ability to perceive God's presence. We need the training of following Jesus, the help of others before us, and daily discipline to learn to see. We open our lives to receive God's gifts of "pleasures forevermore" and live beautifully.

C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*. C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*. N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian*.
Carrie Newcomer, "Holy as a Day is Spent." Norman Wirzba, *Living the Sabbath*.