

The Ultimate Thrill

Psalm 16:11

What is your ultimate thrill? What thing or activity produces in you the most intense joy and brings you the most profound pleasure?

Some of you girls might be thinking, "It would be walking down the aisle wearing my dream wedding dress and having my Prince Charming waiting for me at the altar." Some of you guys might be thinking, "Fifty yard-line seats at the Civil War." Someone else, "A romantic getaway with my spouse at a secluded beach on a tropical island". Another might be thinking, "The pleasure of seeing my investment double in value". Yet another, "Shopping at my favorite department store when everything is seventy percent off."

When I was a little kid, my ultimate thrill was spending the day at Disneyland. When I got a little older it was spending the day on the slopes at the local ski resort. And when I met Mindy it was spending the day with her.

What is your ultimate thrill?

I don't want to sound presumptuous, but if you are a child of God through faith in Jesus Christ I *know* what it is for you—every *one* of you. Because there is only one ultimate thrill for the child of God. And it is identified emphatically by someone who knew what he was talking about, because not only was he inspired by the Holy Spirit when he said it—which makes it absolutely true, but he was speaking from personal experience.

It was David who made the statement, and it is recorded in Psalm 16:11: "*...In your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* Repeat after me:

"...In YOUR presence there is fullness of joy; at YOUR right hand are pleasures forevermore.

"...In your PRESENCE there is fullness of joy; at your RIGHT HAND are pleasures forevermore.

"...In your presence there is FULLNESS of joy; at your right hand are pleasures FOREVERMORE.

"...In your presence there is fullness of JOY; at your right hand are PLEASURES forevermore.

Now. Here comes the big question. Do you believe that? C'mon. Be honest. Do you?

You might be thinking, "Well, I believe it was true for David. After all, he was a man after God's own heart; he had a special relationship with God; he was a spiritually minded person. Besides, life was a lot simpler then. They didn't have all the choices and opportunities for pleasure that we have today. They didn't have the NFL and Hollywood and Disneyland and shopping malls and cruises and..."

No, that's not what I'm asking. I'm asking if you believe it's true for *you* and anyone else who is a child of God by faith in Jesus.

My guess is that we have some skeptics here this morning. I don't say that to condemn you (if you don't believe it's true I'm glad you're being honest) but I say it with the hopes that by being honest you'll be able to evaluate your life in relation to this verse and be challenged to personally experience the truth of this statement.

In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Frankly, I don't think much explanation is needed about the meaning of this verse. It simply means that in God's presence *there is fullness of joy*. Not *some* joy, not *quite a bit* of joy, not even an abundance of joy; but *fullness* of joy—complete joy, pure joy, the most joy that is possible for someone to have. One cannot have any *more* joy than *fullness of joy*.

Likewise, the parallel statement "*in the Lord's right hand are pleasures forevermore*" is intended to communicate that in His presence there is constant pleasure, sustained pleasure; undiminished pleasure.

You've heard of the "Law of Diminishing Returns"? It means that the more you put into something, the less you get out of it. For example, when you do something over and over, there is a decline in what you get out of that activity over time; it becomes less effective or less productive or less pleasurable.

The Law of Diminishing Returns does not apply to being in God's presence. The joy and pleasure that are available to us when we are in God's presence is infinite, unlimited, and inexhaustible, and the more we are in God's presence the deeper and richer that joy and pleasure is.

In other words, being in God's presence is the ultimate thrill of life. It is the means by which we are able to experience the most intense pleasure, the most complete satisfaction, the purest delight, and the most profound joy.

Why is that? Why is there fullness of joy and pleasure in God's presence? There are some clues in the context.

In your Bibles, underneath the title "Psalm 16" you'll see the heading, "A Miktam of David". Quite honestly, no one really knows what *miktam* means. But it is a superscription that is on a number of David's Psalms which have something in common. They were written while he was in some kind of danger. Most often he was being harassed or hounded in some way by his enemies, and usually his life was being threatened. So these are times when David was vulnerable and he is expressing his thoughts and feelings in response to that sense of vulnerability.

Please notice how he does that in this Psalm, and as he describes a number of different things look for the common strand that is woven throughout. **Verses 1-2.** *Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you."*

"Lord, I am acknowledging that You are my Protector and Preserver, and I am putting my trust in You. In You I am safe, in You I have peace, in You I find rest. On the other hand, if I don't have You I'm in trouble. In fact, without You life is empty, meaningless, and downright dangerous."

Verses 3-4. *As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight. The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply; their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out or take their names on my lips.*

"Lord, not only do I have You but I have your people. They are my friends, my allies, and my companions. I see how You have lavished them with joy and blessing, and, therefore, I love to be around them, for that joy and blessing is contagious. On the other hand, I see the joylessness and emptiness of those who don't know You or delight in You, but run after other so-called gods. I see the dead-end path they are on and want no part of it."

Verses 5-6. *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.*

“Lord, I have chosen You, but, more importantly, You have chosen me. And because You are absolutely sovereign and You are extremely good, You have arranged my circumstances and my relationships in such a way that I have been the recipient of Your extraordinary generosity. And what is even more remarkable is that I can look forward to a very bright future. And because of this I am secure, I am confident, I am full of hope.”

Verses 7-8. *I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me. I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.*

“Lord, You are not detached and impersonal. You’re my *personal* Trainer; You’re my *private* Tutor. You communicate with me and instruct me at just the right times, even at times when I least expect it. What’s more, I have determined that I’m going to be conscious of Your presence at all times, that I’m going to live my life with constant, conscious awareness that You are right beside me, watching over me, guiding me, and protecting me. And because of that I am secure; I know where to go and what to do.”

Verses 9-10. *Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.*

“Lord, You are constantly looking out for me and You’re going to protect me even in the most precarious circumstances. Even when I face death itself, I can count on You to rescue me. And so, once again, I am totally secure in You.”

What has David been talking about in this Psalm? He’s been talking about a relationship—*his* relationship with God. And he’s been expressing some ways in which that relationship has profoundly affected his sense of well-being. Not only his physical well being, but his emotional and social and spiritual well-being. Everything about David’s comprehensive sense of well-being emanated from his relationship with God.

And the most visible, tangible result of that comprehensive sense of well-being is joy. *Real joy. Complete joy. Fullness of joy.* **Verse 11.** *In Your presence there is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.*

Let me ask you something. Do you have that kind of joy? I’m not asking if you want it—I *know* you want it. I’m asking if you *have* it. Are you experiencing the fullness of joy in your life right now? Are you so full of it that it wells up within you and radiates from you?

I am fully aware that *joy* is something that can be confusing, because the world offers its own kind of joy that we talked about a couple of weeks ago when we were studying Psalm 1:

“I’m happy when things are going my way. I’m happy when I’ve got plenty of money in the bank, plenty of romance in my relationship, plenty of bounce in my step, plenty of toys in my garage. I’m happy when I feel healthy, when I feel pretty, when people like me, when people respect me, when people pay attention to me. I’m happy when I’m busy, and needed, and productive, and comfortable. I’m happy when all my ducks are in a row.”

But when you base your happiness on circumstances or people or the temporal things of this world your happiness comes and goes, because those things are always changing. What happens when the passion dies in that romance, or when I’m no longer found attractive, or when I lose the respect and admiration of my peers, or when the doctor

informs me that I'm no longer a picture of health, or when my circumstances fall apart?

Then by definition I'm no longer happy. And one of two things usually happens. Either my world caves in, or I must look to something else to try and make me happy. That's why people change partners and jobs and accumulate more toys and attempt new adventures. They're looking to maintain that illusive feeling of happiness, hoping that this time it will last.

But it won't. Because the world's brand of happiness isn't real. It's counterfeit. It's a pseudo-happiness that temporarily stimulates and satisfies, but it doesn't last. I think most Christians know that—in their heads. We've seen the shattered lives of the rich and famous who have it all, but who are miserable—some of whom even take their own lives because what they have isn't worth living for. We know in our heads, but are we really convinced?

Yet even some of us, if we were honest, would confess that the key to happiness in this life is better health, a better job, more money, more vacation time, a more attentive spouse, more of this and that.

My friends, please understand that real joy has nothing whatsoever to do with circumstances or money or moods or personalities or experiences or anything else in this world. It comes from having *an intimate relationship with God*, and I want to tell you why. That's what we we're designed for. That's why God created us. He created us for intimacy with Him. Just as a fish was created for water so we were created for fellowship with our Creator. That's how He wired us—that's how He put us together.

And we will never find *true joy—fullness of joy*—in any other thing. In fact, when we try, we are like a fish out of water.

Why? Because in His presence is everything we long for and everything we need. I'd like to mention two of them.

1. ***His Protection***. If we are conscious of God's continual presence there is nothing to fear. Let me say it in a stronger way. We will *not* fear. We cannot be conscious of God's presence and at the same time be afraid. The two things are mutually exclusive. An awareness and an assurance of God's presence chases away fear. His presence puts everything into perspective—including our enemies—who are nothing in comparison with God. In His presence we are safe, secure, and confident. As David said earlier, "*We will not be shaken, for nothing can move us.*"

Oh how precious is His presence! It is the promise that can get us through the most difficult circumstances and situations. David said, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Why? Because I'm strong and brave and invincible? Not hardly. We're all weak and fragile and if we don't know that now we will when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death. The reason David said "I will fear no evil" is because "*You are with me.*"

His presence gives us the security and peace we need to face any challenge.

Some of you are in circumstances and you are at a point of decision. You're sensing that God is speaking to you and that there needs to be some changes in your life. And you're weighing all the pros and cons and counting the cost and you're saying to yourself, "I don't know if I can afford to step out and go there. I really don't know if I'm capable of going there. I'm not sure I really *want* to go there."

Listen, when God is with you, you don't have to be afraid, because you're not going there on your own. If God is leading you then He most certainly will be with you. And

when you are aware that He is with you, you will be filled with joy.

2. ***His Pleasure.*** It is in the presence of God that we discover and experience *His* pleasure, and that produces immense joy in us.

When my children were little my very favorite thing was when one of them would climb up and sit in my lap—which happened at least once a day. Sometimes they would bring a book and want me to read a story. Sometimes it was when they wanted to talk to me about something. And sometimes it was for no apparent reason at all. One of them would just crawl up, sit there, and stay for awhile...and maybe even fall asleep.

And when this happened I would often just look at them...and stare at them without them knowing it...and the delight and the pleasure I experienced at such times would almost overwhelm me. And after awhile I couldn't help but tell them how much I loved them...and how proud I was of them...and how wonderful I thought they were. And I blessed them and reveled in them.

Do you think that might have anything to do with why they kept coming back, day after day, night after night to sit in my lap?

When we spend extended periods of time in God's presence He does to us what I did to my children, only more so. *Way* more so!

Several years ago I was one of a dozen or more pastors from Salem who went to Cannon Beach to have what we called a *Pastor's Prayer Summit*. We did this every year for many years, but the thing that distinguished this particular year's summit from the rest is that from the first few moments we were there to the time we left we could *feel* God's pleasure. His presence was so palpable, and we reveled in it. For nearly four days we did nothing but sit in the Lord's lap.

On the last night of that retreat something happened to me that had never happened before. As we were worshiping the Lord together and reading the Scriptures several of us began to involuntarily and uncontrollably laugh...at the same time (Mark Haury was there and can testify to what I'm saying). And this laughter, which was an expression of profound joy, continued for several hours, even after our meeting was over. Even after I went to my room I laid on my bed and I couldn't stop laughing for a couple of hours until I fell asleep. And the experience was so pleasurable that I didn't even want to go to sleep.

What was that all about? We didn't contrive it, no one had told a joke or done something funny—we were just worshipping! We were just in the presence of God delighting ourselves in Him!

I wonder if the Holy Spirit simply took control of our faculties and let us experience *His* joy and *His* pleasure. I wonder if He wasn't revealing how much the Lord Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, was delighting in us, His under-shepherds. I wonder if He wasn't giving us a little taste of heaven!

I know this: I came away from that prayer summit extraordinarily refreshed and thoroughly rejuvenated.

I realize that's an unusual experience, but I think it illustrates one of the reasons why David said, *"In your presence there is fullness of joy."* I believe David knew that at such times God was delighting in him, God was reveling in him.

Do you want to experience God's pleasure? Spend time in His presence. Being in His presence is our opportunity to feel His heartbeat. It is the means by which He communicates how much He loves us, how much He enjoys us, how special we are to Him. And it is a time to savor and enjoy and cherish.

And when I talk about being in His presence I'm not talking about reciting a prayer before a meal or tacking a prayer on to the end of the day when we're too tired to think straight. I'm talking about real intimacy, real communication; the kind that encourages and refreshes, and invigorates and endears.

That's our greatest privilege, and if we knew what was good for us, it would be our top priority.

Oh, I know. We're all so busy. We've got places to go and people to see and things to do. From the time our feet hit the floor in the morning until the time our head hits the pillow at night it's go, go, go; hurry, hurry, hurry; rush to this meeting; complete that project; fulfill this assignment; finish that task; make that deadline.

"Sit in God's lap? Spend time in God's presence? Who's got time to do that? We'd be content to just catch our breath."

But in this task oriented, hurry-up-and-get-it-done culture we sometimes let the most important thing go by the way side, and settle for things that can't deliver the goods. We're like kids playing in a sandbox when God offers us the beach.

My greatest desire for me personally and our church collectively is that we be a people who love God so much that we can't wait to be in His presence. That communing with Him is our first priority, and our greatest passion.

One of the most joyful people I've ever met is Floy Hopple, who went to be with the Lord about four years ago. Not coincidentally, the thing she was most passionate about, the thing she talked about in every conversation I ever had with her was being in the Lord's presence. And not coincidentally, whenever I was with her she would inevitably usher me into the Lord's presence.

Our family visited her on Christmas Eve, just a few days before she went to be in the Lord's presence and here's a picture of us singing a Christmas carol together.

The last evening I saw her, two days before she went to be with the Lord, I was quoting 1 Peter 1 which talks about our new birth and our living hope and our wonderful inheritance through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in verse 8 Peter says, "*Though you have not seen him you love him*", to which Floy cried out, "Oh yes!" Peter continues, "*And even though you do not see him now you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy...*" to which Floy cried out, "Oh yes, yes, yes!" And Peter continues, "*...For you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls*".

I want to be like Floy when I grow up! Her little body was wasting away, her lungs gasping for oxygen, her throat parched, her strength gone. But the inexpressible and glorious joy of the Lord welled up within her and radiated from her until her last breath. And now...that joy has been made complete as she is literally in the presence of her Savior!

For in His presence there *is* fullness of joy; at His right hand *are* pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11).

The Ultimate Thrill Psalm 16:11

Main Idea: In God's presence there is fullness of joy.

Introduction: your ultimate thrill

"Fullness of joy"

The meaning of "fullness"

The basis for this joy

Real joy vs. artificial joy

"In His presence"

His protection

His pleasure

His power

Experience fullness of joy in His presence

Prioritizing

Learning to be still

Family Life Groups

Sermon Discussion Questions

Family Life Group Questions

Psalm 16

Main Idea: In God's presence there is fullness of joy

- 1. Have you tasted the joy that is found in God's presence? If so, please describe the joy and the circumstances that led to it.**
- 2. What are some of the sources of counterfeit joy that you find yourself thinking about or pursuing?**
- 3. If it is true that "...In your presence there is fullness of joy..." how can you better prioritize spending time in His presence? What does that look like this week?**
- 4. How can your Family Life Group encourage and pray for you as you seek to prioritize time in His presence?**