



## Sermon

### ***My Cup Overflows – the LORD is my Portion***

**Psalm 23, Psalm 16, Rev 21:1-6; Mark 12:26-27**

All Saints Sunday: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2021

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For some weeks now, I have explored with you new depths in the 23rd Psalm. We looked at it through the eyes of a shepherd thanks to Phillip Keller. Then we found that the first line a title of God: Yahweh Raah - the Lord is my shepherd. But more than that, through the rest of the Psalm aspects of God's character are illustrated which correspond with various titles assumed by God or given to him through the Old Testament.

There are just two illustrations left to explore and they are closely connected.

The words in the Psalm are: verse 5 "... my cup overflows," and verse 6: "... I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

#### **My cup overflows:**

The Psalmist said that Yahweh prepares a table for him in the presence of his enemies and anoints his head with oil. Now his cup overflows. There is plentiful provision. It is not just sufficient but more than he needs. Now we might think of this as merely another example of provision, but it is slightly different.

We heard in Psalm 16 a related expression. 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. [ESV]

This is another title of God. Yahweh: my Portion and my Cup. Here we have two words for portion together *māna* and *helek* and the same word for cup as in Ps 23 (*kos*). It is a double title for God: portion and cup.

The portion relates to what is measured out or allotted to someone; the cup to what they have to drink. But cup is often metaphorical for received blessings or sufferings. (Think of Jesus saying to James and John, "Are you able to drink the cup, I drink?," referring to his suffering.) In the Psalm it is clearly positive blessings.

Psalm 73 also refers to God as my portion. "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living." In Psalm 142 we read: "My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." Similarly, in Lamentations 3:24, Jeremiah, lamenting over the destruction of Jerusalem, says, "'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'"

In each case, the writer is in hard, even desperate circumstances and asserts that God is his portion.

What does "God is my portion" mean? Sometimes the word "portion" is translated as "inheritance." Saying that God is your portion is another way of saying that He is what you received - your allotment in life. When we say that God is our portion, we are saying that He is our all-sufficient One, the source of all we could ever need.

When the Israelites came into the promised land, each tribe was allotted land. Within each tribe, each family had its allotment which was passed down as an inheritance from generation to generation. This was their portion. It was what was allotted to them. It was received as an inheritance.

However, there was one exception: the priestly tribe of Levi, did not receive an allocation. As Deuteronomy 10:9 states, "Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers. The LORD is his inheritance." The Levites were to serve the tabernacle and temple and they were supported by the offerings of the people. So rather than a portion of land, they had God as their portion.

For the tribe of Dan, their portion was the land in the northern tip of Israel. For the Levites – and by extension, the God-fearer - Yahweh was their portion. Although, it may sound as if the Levites had less, in fact they had more since theirs was the greatest heritage of all -- the Lord himself.

In Ps 23, David is saying God is his generous provider as his cup overflows. But this idea of portion and inheritance is illustrated again in the last verse. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Now the focus has moved to the future. Now the thought is of future inheritance rather than received inheritance.

So here in Psalm 23, we are given the understanding that God can be the believer's portion, inheritance, allotment; not only for this life, but on into the next life and forever. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

## **Psalm 16**

The same understanding flows through Psalm 16.

It starts with the cry to God for immediate safety and preservation. The Psalmist delights in the holy ones (the saints) who are in the land and is concerned about those people who worship false gods. In this life, the Lord is his portion and his cup. Life is good and he has a beautiful inheritance. He walks with God both hearing his advice and honouring him. He knows in God's care he is held securely both in this life and beyond: he will not be abandoned in death but will enjoy God's presence in eternity. This is beautifully described as "In your presence there is fullness of joy, at your right hand are pleasures for evermore."

## **New Testament**

So now we make the connection to New Testament believers. The New Testament describes believers as co-heirs with Christ, the Son of God, for we have been grafted into the family of God. Through Jesus' redeeming work, we can become adopted as sons and daughters of God<sup>1</sup>. The presence of the Holy Spirit within our lives is the guarantee of this "eternal inheritance" we have received.<sup>2</sup>

What is the inheritance? The kingdom of God both now and forever. That sounds like the description in Psalm 16, doesn't it? It certainly does not mean that the life of Christian is easy – but we do have the grace of God and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives as we journey through life, and we have the promise of eternity with Christ. God is the source of our sufficiency<sup>3</sup>. The Lord said to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."<sup>4</sup> This is what it looks like to choose to make the Lord your portion.

By saying, "God is my portion," we affirm that God is our source of all that is good. He is our portion in the life that is now and the life that is to come. He is the only inheritance that matters. Relationships, riches, jobs, health, and all other things in our lives may fail, but we can say with confidence that "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever". When God is our portion, we lack nothing for we have a never-ending supply of hope.

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<sup>1</sup> John 1:12; Hebrews 1:2; Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:7

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 1:14

<sup>3</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:5

<sup>4</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:9

## **All Saints**

And so that brings us to the feast of All Saints.

The word 'saint' has been dominated by the idea of special Christians whereas the Bible uses it as 'set apart' ones. All God's people are set apart for him as we heard when Helen preached on God our Holiness. It is God who makes us holy. He separates us for himself. Saints are those who place their faith in Jesus Christ, who are set apart to God in Christ and are transformed by his grace. We are made holy through Christ's death on the cross which cleanses us from sin. Every Christian is a saint by this definition. And that is how the term is used in the New Testament about fifty times!

All Saints reminds us that we belong to the communion of saints. All of us who are baptised, the living and the dead, those on earth or in heaven, we are all bound together in Christ. Our souls are united, we are all in Christ, we are all connected to Christ who is the head of his body, the church.

It also reminds us that one day we will join the multitude of men and women who stand before the Throne of the Lamb in heaven, praising and adoring him without end.

## **The Communion of Saints**

In the Apostles' Creed we say we believe in the Communion of Saints – what do we mean by that?

For a start the word "communion" means to be one with someone – unity or union. When we become Christians we are taken into Christ. Paul likes to say we are in Christ and that we are incorporated into the body of Christ, the Church. We have unity with God the Holy Trinity. We have a union and hopefully unity with other members of the body. Jesus prays for that in his High Priestly prayer after the Last Supper:

**John 17:21-23** "[I ask] that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

Paul describes this unity in Ephesians 2 as Jew and Gentile being incorporated into Christ into one body. Thus he says, Christians are citizens of God's people and members of his household.

We, who are in Christ alive on earth, worship with fellow Christians, we pray for and encourage each other and help each other in times of trouble, sickness or grief – those are expressions of the Communion of Saints.

But it is not limited to those alive on earth at present. It includes all God's people – his holy ones – who have gone before. They are still alive in Him – which is the point Jesus makes in Mark 12:26-27:

Now about the dead rising--have you not read in the book of Moses, in the account of the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Jesus argued that the righteous dead are still alive because God said to Moses at the burning bush: "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." He didn't say, "I was the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Yet at that time those men were long since dead. Nonetheless, they still existed because God said he had relationship with them as their God.

We know from the book of Revelation that the deceased saints worship God while they await the judgement and the resurrection. The Church in heaven still worships. They are in Christ and we are in Christ. In Christ we have unity with the righteous dead, although we are not permitted to communicate with them.

Now Psalm 23 and Psalm 16 both look to an eternal future. "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" and "at your right hand are pleasures for evermore."

We find the development of this truth with greater New Testament revelation in the Epistle reading for the Book of Revelation. In his vision, John sees the future state in the resurrection. The Church is represented as the new Jerusalem, the bride of Christ coming down from heaven to the new earth. And then God will dwell

with redeemed humanity. They will be his people and he will be there God. No more tears, no more death, mourning or pain: this is the consummation of the hopes of the people of God through all time. Here is the fulfilment of David’s words: “I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” This is the inheritance he looked forward to. Here is completeness of the name of God: my portion and my cup. In that blessed state, our cup will overflow.

Whatever your state of mind or provision at present, could you make the choice to depend on God as your portion and your cup. As you look to him to be your inheritance now in the present life, he wants to supply your needs. As we hold onto him as Yahweh our Portion and our Cup, we find he is more than enough and our cup runs over.



We have found in Psalm 23 illustrations of the titles of God. Let me remind you of the list:

- My Shepherd,
- My Provider,
- My Peace,
- My Healer,
- My Righteousness,
- The God who with you,
- My Help,
- My Victory Banner,
- My Holiness,
- My Portion,
- My Inheritance

Surely, whatever you need, there is a corresponding provision in our loving shepherd. Do you remember I said the Hebrew word for shepherd has a root of ‘best friend’?

- Are you lost? **He is your shepherd.**
- Do you lack? **He is your provider.**
- Are you troubled? **He is your peace.**
- Are you ailing? **He is your healer.**
- Are you guilty? **He is your righteousness.**
- Are you afraid? **He is with you.**
- Are you stuck? **He is your helper.**
- Are you struggling? **He is your victory.**
- Are you impure? **He makes you holy.**
- Are you insecure? **He is your portion.**
- Do you fear death? **He is your inheritance.**

Truly, our cup overflows.

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