

Psalm 16:6-11

Peter refers to this Psalm in his first public speech to the people gathered at Jerusalem. (See Acts 2.)

Tom Wright describes the death of Jesus as the 'the day the revolution began' and the resurrection as 'the first visible sign that the revolution was already under way'.ⁱ

Talking of the disciples he says,

'They believed it had opened a new and shocking window onto the meaning of the "God" itself. They believed that with this event the one true God had suddenly and dramatically put into operation his plan for the resurrection of the world.'ⁱⁱ

The second half of Psalm 16 that we've just heard describes David's delight in how the Lord spoke to him. It is a personal and heart-pouring of expression of how the Lord had revolutionised David's heart and, at the same time, it is also a prophetic word of praise that says the Lord will not let his holy one see decay, which means the body of his holy one will not return to dust.

Peter uses this very Psalm in his speech on the day of Pentecost, to tell the thousands of people at Jerusalem that the unthinkable had happened, Jesus had died and was resurrected.

He tells them David died, was buried and his tomb was still there, but God has raised this Jesus to life.' (Acts 2:29 & 32).

Nothing like this had ever happened in all of history and nothing like it will happen again.

In the miracle that is God made man, Jesus, there is both personal meaning and big-picture, all-humanity meaning.

What we must not forget, is this is not only personal and heart-transforming, but world-transforming.

The whole Death and Resurrection story of Jesus really is a Revolution – not in a rebellious way but in a Transforming way, because the Lord has met rebellion head-on and given a way-out from rebellion!

Forgiven and Free!

It is why we talk of being Forgiven and Being Set Free.

Generally, Forgiven focusses on the death of Jesus, and Freedom focusses on the Resurrection of Jesus.

Forgiven:

Author Nick Page comments that the world does not take sin seriously and instead thinks of it as "a bit of naughtiness" ... you know, it's bad but it's not evil'ⁱⁱⁱ

He goes on to say that 'the world doesn't understand the concept of sin, but it really grasps the concept of shame.'^{iv}

A Short Word on being Forgiven and Free: based on Peter's speech & ref. to Psalm 16.
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Jesus turns that on its head and says that sin is a big problem for all humanity. It is not 'just a bit of naughtiness' but is something so serious it separates humanity from the Lord God.

On the other hand, he says that humanity does not need to be covered in shame and during his earthly ministry demonstrated this by bringing many people out of shame. They did not need to be reminded of who they were; they had plenty of accusers or 'tongue-waggers'; just look at the surprised reactions made by the Pharisees and even his disciples when Jesus ministered to the tax collectors, the woman in the affair and the Samaritan woman at the well for example.

In David's Psalm, he said, 'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance.'

Jesus' forgiveness creates this pleasant place within us and is available to all humanity, so that when each person accepts it, knowing they come to the Lord as a shamed sinner, each person is brought out of that shame and called by Jesus' name – Christian.

Not a Private, Personal affair!

The personal release of forgiveness must not stay only as a private affair but, like the evangelical Samaritan woman who met Jesus at the well, we must tell others of what it is like to be freed from the bondage of sin and shame.

Jesus brought shame to light: He hung on the cross for all to see, lifted up as the ultimate sign to all mankind.

And he puts shame to death for all those who will, likewise, give up trying to hide their personal shame and admit it to him – surely, he is the safest pair of hands and the safest heart to make our confession to.

Matt.10:32, 'Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father.'

That doesn't mean we go around telling everyone gory details of who we were before we were forgiven, but it does mean we tell the basics. As Peter later instructed the church,

'in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.' (1Pet.3:15)

To keep it private is to come under the spell of the world that does not treat sin seriously and it is to accept a compromised understanding of who Jesus is.

Free

Cementing this further, Jesus told someone who he had freed, 'go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.' (Mark5:19)

Freedom closely follows forgiveness. Freedom is not, as the world would see it, licence to do as one pleases and deciding truth on a personal level.

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Secular culture will have you believe that you can set your own values and standards, but even a short observation of what that looks like, reveals that anyone who steps out of line with what is called acceptable in this culture, is blamed and shamed.

The court of public opinion is full of accusation and shame. Even before the days of social media, this was true, as we discover in the public trial of Jesus. He knew what was coming and had spoken of being lifted up from the earth as a sign, just as Moses lifted up the emblem of the snake. (John 3:14, speaking to Nicodemus, and again to the crowd after his entry to Jerusalem, John 12:32).

Why do we work so hard to decide on what is true for each of us or, as the early believers prayed with Peter and John, 'why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain?' (Acts 4:24).

Let us not look to our culture to determine what freedom is but look to Jesus whose truth truly sets the soul free. Jesus did not stay dead. He is not encumbered by the ways and opinions of the world but was made alive again, offering true freedom to all who will follow him.

Hallelujah, Christ is Risen!

Peter quotes David's prophetic words of instruction and joy to the crowds saying, 'you make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence' (Psalm 16:7&11)

I finish with Peter's instruction from his first public speech,

'Repent and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call.' (Acts 2:38-39)

ⁱ Tom Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began* (London: SPCK, 2017), p.4.

ⁱⁱ Tom Wright, p.4.

ⁱⁱⁱ Nick Page, *The Dark Night of The Shed* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2016), p.96.

^{iv} Page, p.96.