

## Introduction

- Rupert Higgins, an Anglican vicar in London, tells of a train journey earlier this year. He found himself sitting opposite a man, a very sharp looking race relations consultant. They started talking about life, the universe and everything. When he found out that Rupert was a Christian and followed Jesus, he declared that he followed an ancient Egyptian God called Ra.
  - "I have 10 things I must follow to make me a better person", he said, "I'm pretty OK with about 8 of them, only 2 I struggle with. And anyway, all roads lead the same place, don't they?" - and he stared at Rupert!
  - "Well, that's the big question" said Rupert. "Do they? ... Why are we on this train? Because its the cleanest or the prettiest, was it because it was the closest or the most convenient when we got to the station? No, we are on this train because it is taking us to our destination. So, where is Ra taking you?"
  - he wasn't too sure, apart from an attempt at self-improvement. Rupert could then say that Jesus is taking him through death to be with God forever.
- But this is the big question:

### Where are my beliefs taking me?

- where are my beliefs taking me? What's the destination. Even no belief is taking you somewhere - its taking you nowhere!
  - Psalm 16 is a Psalm about people's beliefs - where they are being taken by them

## Safety in a land of many gods (v.1-4)

- So look at verse 1: David is asking for protection:
  - *Keep me safe, O God, for in you I take refuge* (v.1)
  - as we look at the Psalm we see David asking for safety in a land of many Gods
- Look at vs.2-4:
  - (2) *I said to the LORD, "You are my Lord; apart from you I have no good thing."*
  - (3) *As for the saints who are in the land, they are the glorious ones in whom is all my delight.* (4) *The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. I will not pour out their libations of blood or take up their names on my lips.*
- The "you" in v.2 is very emphatic:
  - its the choosing of the Lord (YOU) in a land where people are choosing any one, even more than one, from a whole range of Gods
  - not just non-Jews choosing to follow other so-called gods; also God's own people
  - something God's people have done consistently down the generations
  - its called syncretism, where you just mix everything up that you believe
  - and the Lord hates it - he hates anything that tries to remove his Lordship from our lives! And look where following any other god leads - v.4 - *the sorrows ... will increase* sorrow upon sorrow - God's judgement - disappointment - being led to disaster - that's what the sorrow is! The phrase, "*sorrows will increase*", in the Hebrew, has echoes of what God said to Eve after she'd eaten the fruit in the garden of Eden - here, as there, its speaks of God's judgement.
- And then we see - last half of v.4 - what David does:
  - he would not be part of this worship, he would not even mention their names - they are false gods
  - and that's the point - they are **false**. sinful human hearts are attracted to worship false gods. And that temptation is even very attractive for God's people today, the church. We too live in a land of many gods - all around us lie the rivals to Jesus being our Lord. Because remember this: false gods never come to us properly labelled!! They never come marked: "**false god, deadly rival to the Lord your God - avoid at all costs**"
  - it would be very helpful if they did!
  - no, they come to us as something much more attractive - a necessity for life, or what everybody else has or what everybody does. We follow the Lord - who said, "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" (John 10:10), but we live in a culture that tries to rival that fullness of life. Our false gods teach

us to acquire more, enjoy more, put ourselves and our personal desires at the centre of our ambitions. The gods of our land make it harder to die to self, make it harder to sacrifice, make it harder for us to reflect the Cross. Jesus said take up your cross and deny yourself, but the gods of our land say, "No, live for yourself"! And now, many of these gods are in our homes, are in our driveways, in our bank accounts - they've found their way into our hearts. They are all rivals to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The Lord who's told us that life consist not of what we have, but of who we are before the Lord. Jesus said, "you cannot serve two masters", but we try, because our culture says, "have a go, see if you can fit Jesus in with the rest of the things life offers you..." So with our lips we say yes to Jesus, but with our lives we are tempted to bow down at the altars of the gods of our land.

- there are many gods - they are all around us
- the warning of this passage is that they lead to sorrow upon sorrow, leads to a compromised, a weakened church.
- But notice in v.3 how David is greatly encouraged and strengthened by other people - they are the "glorious ones in whom is all my delight". You see, staying faithful to Jesus is a **church** thing - its not something you do on your own. We will be picked off if we stay by ourselves. Part of David being kept safe is by being with other faithful saints. We cannot afford to be lone rangers as Christians, we need each other. If we are not in close fellowship with other believers, if we are not accountable to one another, we can so easily be picked off and become compromised. We need each other to stay single minded and devoted to the one Lord.
- That is the first thing David is looking for in this Psalm, safety in a land of many gods

### Contentment in a land of many gods (v.5-6)

- Second thing we see David possessing in this Psalm is contentment in a land of many gods
- **v.5-6 - read**
  - boundary lines - marking out division of promised land between the tribes at entry to the Promised Land. But the Levitical priests didn't have any portion - the Lord himself was supposed to be their inheritance and their portion; they had no physical land, their inheritance was in the Lord. And **that** is what David is saying here about himself. Wonderful God centredness - David declaring his true riches are in the Lord... False Gods lead to sorrow - the Lord leads to pleasant places, to contentment. Materialism so designed we'll never have enough - the boundary lines need to keep being redrawn to satisfy us - that's how advertising works - have to be unsatisfied with what we have so that we want the next thing...
- True contentment only in the Lord
- **Materialism, one of the main "gods" of our world, works on discontentment:**
  - remember the mobile phone advert... **are you ashamed of your mobile phone?**
  - whatever we have is not good enough - we need, we are told, something smaller, faster, more colourful, cooler, bigger...
  - with mobile phones, the handsets Helen and I got 7 years ago, shortly before Andrew was born, you now see in museums.... even the handsets from 2 years ago, much smaller and more chic don't have colour screens or cameras or ....!
  - materialism never allows you to be satisfied - it needs to keep you always hungry, always wanting more - its a never ending spiral
- David has learned - and we need to learn from him - to be content in a land of many gods, knowing that only in the Lord will we ever find ultimate and true contentment

## A Destination where the gods can never take us (v.7-11)

- Finally David, having learned:
  - where to find safety in a land of many gods - in the Lord
  - contentment in a land of many gods - in the Lord
  - now speaks of the destination to which the false gods can never take him
- *Read vs.7-11*
  - David speaks of resurrection, of life eternal!
  - now, as we read those, I wonder whether you noticed that this could not have been directly David's experience.... he died, he had a grave!
  - so who is it writing about? [turn to Acts 2 and find out!](#)
  - [Acts 2:24-31, p.1093](#)
  - quoted there by Peter in explanation of Jesus' resurrection from the dead - in Jesus is the fulfilment of David's [prophetic](#) words; Peter demonstrating from Scripture that the Messiah had to rise - as Jesus has done!
  - David maybe didn't know all the details, but he had the [promise](#) from God - that the Messiah would blaze the path through death to eternal life!
- This is the promise from God of his great purpose for his people:
  - life, with him, for ever; life free from death, made new and perfect; life filled with joy, with eternal pleasures
  - [wow!](#)
  - a destination all the other gods we may erect in our lives will never, ever be able to bring us to!

## Conclusion

- [How many of us will wish on our deathbeds that we'd had a cooler mobile phone?!](#)
  - great spur to devoted living to the Lord
  - our world may say "come this way"...
  - but we can say, "no - we are safe, we are content, and we are going to be with our Father and our Saviour Jesus Christ"
  - all of this in Jesus!
- [Eyes fixed on where Jesus is taking us - mustn't let the bright lights of the world around us distract us from where we are going!](#)
  - when we get there are we going to say, I wish I'd been more single minded?
  - may this Psalm be a spur to us that we would find our safety, our contentment, and our destination in him alone
  - and that we'd be single minded in living towards that destination each day