

# “God Inspired Optimism”

Psalm 16 & Acts 13:22

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September 13, 2015

Optimism can come from many sources. Sales coach, Zig Ziglar, said, “I am such an optimist that I would go after Moby Dick in a row-boat and take the tartar sauce with me.” The great preacher, Charles Spurgeon, was optimistic about the power of a smile. He taught a preaching class, “When you speak of heaven, smile, let your face light up, let it sparkle with a heavenly gleam, let your eyes shine with reflected glory. But when you speak of hell, then your ordinary face will do.”

Some of you are thrilled with the return of professional football, some of you may be dreading it, and others can care less. Almost everyone is optimistic about their team’s chances to win the Superbowl today. Perhaps you have heard of the football prayer: “God help me to be a good sport in this game of life. I don’t ask for an easy place in the lineup. Put me anywhere you need me. I only ask that I can give you 100 percent of everything I have. If all the tough situations seem to come my way, help me do my best. Help me remember that you will get me through every disastrous loss. Each day is a new game with the score reset 0 to 0. Help me accept the bad breaks as part of the game. Help me learn from them, be positive, let it go, so I am ready for the next play. Help me always play fair, no matter what the others do. Help me study the Bible, so I will know the rules. Finally, God, if the natural turn of events goes against me and I’m benched for any reason, help me to accept that as part of the game, too. Keep me from whimpering that I was framed or that I got a raw deal. And when I finish the final quarter, I ask for no honor or fame for you deserve all the glory. All I want is to believe in my heart that I played as well as I could, that I loved with all my heart, soul and mind. Thank you for always cheering for me and your promise to cheer for me forever. Thank you of your desire that I have fun.”

God-inspired optimism is hope that comes from trusting that joy, peace, love, and life will have the final say, trusting that no matter what we do, fail to do, or what happens to us we will be redeemed to enjoy heaven for eternity. God-inspired optimism enables us to put our whole self into God’s call to love extravagantly, to bring heaven to earth, to be filled with God’s joy. God-inspired optimism inspires us to bring hope, forgiveness, renewal, and abundant life to those who are fearful, guilt laden, hurting, or hating. God has a call for each of us to bring a facet of God’s image and a slice of heaven to everyone.

Philip Yancey concludes his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, by reflecting on Pastor Tony Campolo sermon, “It’s Friday but Sunday’s Comin’”. “Campolo contrasts how the world looked on Friday—when the forces of evil won over the forces of good, when every friend and disciple fled in fear, when the Son of God died on a cross—with how it looked on Easter Sunday. The disciples who lived through both days, Friday and Sunday, never doubted God again. They had learned that when God seemed most absent God may be closest of all, when God looks most powerless God may be most powerful, when God looks most dead God may be coming back to life. They had learned never to count God out.” Yancy points out, “Campolo skipped one day in his sermon. The other two days have earned names on the church calendar: Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Yet in a real sense we live in Saturday, the day with no name. What the disciples experienced in small scale—three days, in grief over one man who had died on a cross—we now live through on cosmic scale. Human history grinds on, between the time of promise and fulfillment. Can we trust that God can make something holy and beautiful and good out of a world that includes...” 9/11, refugees, racism, political mudslinging, violence against police,

jammed prisons, disease, and poverty? “It’s Saturday on planet earth; will Sunday ever come? That dark, Golgothan Friday can only be called Good because of what happened on Easter Sunday, a day which gives a tantalizing clue to the riddle of the universe. Easter opened up a crack in a universe winding down toward chaos and decay, sealing the promise that someday God will enlarge the miracle of Easter to cosmic scale. It is a good thing to remember that in the cosmic drama, we live out our days on Saturday, the in-between day with no name.”

After 9/11 Yancey was asked, “Where is God when it hurts?” He thought for a moment and then said, “I guess the answer to that question is another question. Where is the church when it hurts? If the church is doing its job—binding wounds, comforting the grieving, offering food to the hungry—I don’t think people will wonder so much where God is when it hurts. They’ll know where God is: in the presence of God’s people on earth.”

David brought hope through his God inspired optimism. You can read about the story of David in 1 Samuel beginning with Chapter 16 and all of 2 Samuel. David wrote 73 of the Psalms. God said, **Acts 13:22** “**David was a man after my own heart.**” David had God inspired optimism and always gave the glory to God. When Goliath, the huge veteran warrior, mocked God and threatened to make the Israelite slaves “everyone was dismayed and greatly afraid,” except a scrawny boy. David walked right up to the king and said, “Let no one’s heart fail because of Goliath; your servant will go and fight.” The king replied you are just an inexperienced boy and Goliath is a huge seasoned warrior. David replied, “I keep sheep and God has given me skills, strength, and tenacity to protect the sheep from lions and bears. These God given skills, that I practice, will help me protect us from Goliath.” The king gave David his armor and sword, but David was so small he could not even walk in them. David removed the armor. David realized he needed to utilize his gifts and not try to be someone else. David was himself. David used the skills God gave him that he practiced. David took five smooth stones and his sling. After David’s victory, he gave thanks and praised God. Even as a boy facing hopeless situations, David had God-inspired optimism.

Later David was constantly on the run as King Saul sent out his troops to find and murder David. Amazingly David does not become bitter or hateful towards Saul. Twice David could have easily killed Saul. One time David snuck into Saul’s camp while everyone was sleeping, but David harmed no one. Another time, David was hiding in a cave with his friends. Saul came in the cave to relieve himself. David’s friends urged him to kill Saul who mercilessly chased and hunted them. When he refused, they begged him to let one of them kill Saul; instead, David undetected, cut off a piece of Saul’s robe. David said we must be patient and wait for God’s timing. We must refrain from sin, hate, and fear.

David prayed, **Psalm 16 NLT** “**Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge. I said to the Lord, “You are my Master! Every good thing I have comes from you.” The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them! Troubles multiply for those who chase after other gods. I will not take part in their sacrifices of blood or even speak the names of their gods. Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine. The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance! I will bless the Lord who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me. I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for God is right beside me. No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety. For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave. You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.**”

After World War II, a French woman Irene Laure struggled with her hate for the Germans. Her country had been occupied by them, her son was tortured by them, and many of her friends were killed. She realized she must not hate and began asking Germans to forgive her for hating them. When she

stopped hating and asked for forgiveness, she felt like an enormous weight was lifted from her shoulders. In hatred, Irene came to believe there were always the seeds of a future war. She would have identified with Semyon Frank's words: "No bombs, not even atomic bombs, none of the cruelties of war cause so much destruction of normal conditions of life or are the cause of so much ruin and evil as the spirit of hatred" Let me repeat that, "No bombs, not even atomic bombs, none of the cruelties of war cause so much destruction of normal conditions of life or are the cause of so much ruin and evil as the spirit of hatred."

In "The Sermon on the Mount" Jesus said if we hate, we have already committed murder in our hearts. We are commanded to love, those with whom we disagree. David was merciful to Saul who forced him to hide in caves, always on the run, and constantly protecting his life. David did not let hate or fear enter his heart; instead, he waited for God's timing. When God called him to act, he boldly acted with God-inspired optimism making Israel a great nation. David gave all the glory to God.

David wasn't perfect. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and ordered her husband killed in an attempted cover up. However, when Nathan confronted David with his sin he confessed and repented. David's prayer of confession is the 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm. God forgave David. David's sin made a mess of his life and his family's life. Even in the midst of the pain of the consequences of his sin, David remained confident that in time God would wash away all the painful ugliness and establish glorious life. God-inspired optimists expect God's love to sustain them through bleak, miserable circumstances. God-inspired optimists know God will resurrect them. God-inspired optimist trust that Easter Sunday is coming despite being crushed by the struggles of Saturday.

David prayed, **Psalm 16:9-11 MSG "I'm happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell—that's not my destination! Now you've got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I'm on the right way."**

Don't let hate or pessimism into your heart. Jesus defeated sin and death. Our earthly life is Saturday living. When we love, we experience glimpses of Easter Sunday. When we love, we bring snippets of heaven to earth. We will all rejoice in the glory of Easter Sunday. God is redeeming, powerful, and gracious. God is helping us, blessing us, guiding us on a journey to the perfect, glorious person God created us to be for eternity.

In Henri Nouwen's book, *The Wounded Healer*, he recommends prayer as the breath of human existence. "A Christian community is a healing community, not because wounds are cured and pains are alleviated, but because wounds and pains become openings or occasions for a new vision."

We have a vision that each of us will daily strive to know Christ better so we can show Christ to the world. Amen