Sunday was a pretty big day in our house, and I don’t know how you feel about Hallowe’en, but when we look outside and see the decorations set up, or you go into Value Village or the mall and see the costumes, what do you see? You might see pop culture costumes, you might see fun things, but invariably you’ll see things also intended to frighten. My neighbours one year had a really elaborate graveyard set up in their yard, they had like skeletons that would move when the motion detectors would go off, and you know we all know how the magic works with those things, but I’d be lying if I said that it didn’t startle me as I walked up to their house with my kids to trick or treat.

Russell Moore has a great blog post about Hallowe’en and he talks about how Hallowe’en is one of his favourite holidays, and the reason is that as a kid, for him, Hallowe’en it seemed took seriously what he intuitively knew to be true: the world outside was terrifying.

Who can relate? I think we all can. Have you ever been in a situation where you were scared? I think we all have. The very first week we moved in to our house, we got a security system installed. Why? It’s not because we have a great neighbourhood, although we do. It’s because it gives us a feeling of security and safety. Has anyone tried to break into our house? No, not unless you count a bear trying to get to our garbage. But we know that there are people out there who might, and so to meet that feeling of needing safety and security we have a security system at our house.

We all need to feel safe and secure, don’t we? It’s kind of essential for us as human beings and in fact if you’ve taken any intro to psychology course, you’ll likely have heard of Abraham Maslow, and his hierarchy of needs, I’ll put this up on the screen, and if you’re in the drive in service, I’ll try and describe this for you. But we have a pyramid, and three categories of needs. We have basic needs ,so food water, warmth, shelter at the most basic and right above that we have safety and security. And then as you go up the pyramid you have psychological needs like belongingness and love and feeling significant and accomplished, and then at the top you have self actualization. But let’s focus on the bottom of that pyramid for a second. Safety, security. If we are at a deficit of safety and security we don’t care about anything else. It’s only when we feel secure and safe that we care about our psychological needs and fulfilment needs.

I don’t necessarily agree with Maslow about what we need especially at the top of the hierarchy, but I do agree that safety and security when it comes to physical needs and psychological needs are things that we all feel as humans. And so let’s keep this in mind as we read Psalm 16 together. We’ll read the whole psalm

1Keep me safe, O God, for I have come to you for refuge.

2I said to the Lord, “You are my Master! Every good thing I have comes from you.”

3The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!

4Troubles 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.

5Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine.

6The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!

7I will bless the Lord who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me.

8I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

9No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety.

10For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.

11You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

Where do you find security?

I don’t know if you ever watched the show Hoarders, which is about people who have a disorder which makes them acquire and refuse to get rid of things that have no value, and one of the reasons that hoarders will save items and refuse to get rid of them is because they feel safer when they’re surrounded by the things they save. They have tremendous anxiety when thinking about getting rid of items, because for some of them, their safety and security is wrapped up in their items.

Now for those of us without that particular disorder, we can look at that and say that’s ridiculous. But a lot of us have anxiety in our lives when we look and see a world that is scary, and so a lot of our anxiety and fear exists because at the heart of who we are as human beings we long for a sense of safety and security, and we’re not sure that we are, and we’ll do almost anything to feel safe and secure.

This morning as we look into this Psalm, I want you to know that for you and I, the primary source of our security should be God.

When we come to this Psalm, David clearly has had some sort of brush with danger, probably with death when we look at the whole psalm, but it’s clear isn’t it, where his security comes from?

We’re going to look at this from two different angles, security in this life and in the next.

Let’s talk about security in this life. What helps us feel safe? This won’t be an exhaustive but I want to look at different temptations we might feel that keep us from depending on God. I know for me, one of my temptations in this area is money. I feel secure when I have money in the bank. I know what it’s like to live paycheque to paycheque and I always hate that feeling of not knowing if there was too much month for the money. So I’ve been accused of being frugal, maybe even cheap, at times. Like one time, I wore an outfit that was nice enough that I felt I could preach in it that I bought all brand new for less than $5.

Are you someone who loves a good deal? Let me tell you this story, because if you love a good deal, you’re going to love this. I was walking down at Spruceland Mall and Mark’s was having a sidewalk sale, and I found a very nice button down shirt that had been marked down, final clearance. to I’m not even kidding 3.99. I thought it must be a misprint, but you can’t buy a shirt at the Salvation Army for that. And then, and here’s a little savings tip for you, Old Navy, I think especially for men, sometimes has crazy clearance deals, because I found a perfectly good pair of khakis for 49 cents. I mean they were a little weird in colour maybe? But they were fine. You put those together and even with tax I think I was under $5.

I don’t like to spend money. Well, that’s not exactly true. I like to spend money, who doesn’t? But I like the feeling of having money in my bank account more. Because one of my temptations is to depend on money as my primary source of security instead of God.

Maybe that’s not you. Maybe your security is found in relationships. I think for all of us in marriages, and in families, security in that relationship is important. Are you a hugger? If you are, my condolences, I’m sure that this has been a tough coming on two years for you. Do you remember when we used to hug and shake hands in church? But when I hug my children, I’m communicating two things, love and security. I think the best marriages, the best homes are secure in their love, security and love are communicated often in healthy families. It can be a temptation to make relationships our primary source of security, instead of God.

But maybe relationships haven’t been a source of security for you, and so then the temptation is to look within for our primary source of security. Maybe you’re someone who has believed the tale our culture tells us that we’re alone and we can’t depend on anyone else but ourselves. I think there’s a couple reasons we can feel this way. Firstly, we can feel this way because it’s a protective way to live. If we’ve been hurt, if the things that are supposed to be our security, families, schools, churches have failed us, I think the temptation is to look inward, because our experience has taught us to live that way.

I think that we can also be tempted to look inward for security because that’s the dominant view of our culture. We all think of ourselves as the main characters in our own stories, and we all want to be the heroes of our own narratives. Think of almost any great story, there’s a structure to it, where the hero begins a journey, experiences conflict, learns something about themselves, and then returns to their life.

Now at the risk of offending fans of JRR Tolkien here, but if you’re familiar with Lord of the Rings, there’s a question that it seems a lot of people have when it comes to a supposed plot hole in the Lord of the Rings. Why didn’t the eagles just take Frodo to Mt. Doom? There’s giant eagles that pick up Frodo and Sam after they toss the ring into Mt. Doom, why don’t they take him there?

Look I’m sure there are reasons that make sense within the Lord of the Rings universe, but the biggest reason is that then the story isn’t about a hero’s journey, Frodo takes a backseat to these awesome flying eagles who are saving the day.

We all consume narratives. The temptation is to make our lives into a story where we’re the hero, and our security and safety and significance is primarily determined by the choices we make, the decisions we make, the story of our lives is about us, the primary source of our security is in the choices we make, rather than God.

So what’s the problem with these temptations?

It’s a prudent thing to have savings set aside. It’s a wonderful thing to have a home and relationships that are characterized by love and security. I want to teach my kids to be independent, responsible individuals.

The problem is that often times those things can get disordered, if God isn’t the source. Let me show you what I mean.

It’s a good thing to not live in poverty, it’s a good thing to not live paycheque to paycheque, but if I value the security of my bank account more than the plight of someone in need that I could help, that God is calling me to help, that’s disordered. Because at that point I am depending on my wealth for security and not God. I’m not saying, “Lord you are my safety! Lord you are my inheritance, Lord you walk beside me,” I’m saying that about my money.

And so because God isn’t the source of my security and safety, money is, I’m now sinning because where my safety and security comes from is disordered. The book of James illustrates what that looks like in James chapter 2, where it says, “Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing, and you say, “Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well”—but then you don’t give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?”

When where we find our security is disordered like this, we can rationalize things like ungenerosity because my trust, my primary source of security is in money, not God.

What do we see Jesus celebrate? We see him celebrate not the Pharisees who carefully measure out a tenth of everything, we see him celebrate a widow who gave everything she had.

So where is our trust? Is our trust for our wellbeing and security primarily in God first, as the one who will provide?

What about relationships? Well when those are disordered, there’s a few things that can happen. We can put all kinds of pressure on another person to satisfy all our insecurities, to meet those psychological needs, and when they inevitably fail, where does that leave us? Feeling anxious, feeling insecure, right? At worst, when we give another human being that kind of power, that can lead to abuse or manipulation. But even in the best of relationships, if we’re putting someone else where God ultimately should be, we’ve made an idol, right?

But what do we see in this passage? When that’s ordered correctly, here’s what we see David say.

2I said to the Lord, “You are my Master! Every good thing I have comes from you.”

3The godly people in the land are my true heroes! I take pleasure in them!

When we’re not depending on relationships for security, when we’re not trying to control others so that we can feel safe, when that need is met, that’s when we can experience joy in relationships! When we’re anxious over whether we’re loved, it robs us of joy, when that’s disordered, when our primary source of security is other people, we’ve put other people in the place of God. But when we realize that the God of the universe loves and accepts us, when our identity is rooted in that love, we can experience joy in human relationships that comes from a place of freedom.

What about when we depend on ourselves? Well, I think the narratives about ourselves fail when we fail. And when we need to depend on others, on a community, if we’ve believed that we’re the hero and we’re confronted with our own meagre resources, the idol we’ve made is revealed for what it is. When we’ve failed, when our bodies have failed, when we’re not the hero and the story we’ve told ourselves just isn’t true anymore, we can become bitter and angry and despair. As believers, Jesus is the hero of our stories, and what do we see about those who chase after idols?

4Troubles 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.

But I think that for a lot of us, it’s not that we don’t know this, it’s that we want a faith that we can control. And things like money, relationships, and ourselves give us the illusion of control. Because while we might acknowledge the evil in the world a little more openly at Halloween, most of us know that the world is terrifying, and it’s terrifying because we know how little we control, and the picture we have of God is powerful yes, loving sure. But He’s not controllable.

And we want gods we can control, we want control when we think about the things that bring us anxiety, the things that bring us fear. We don’t want a God who is uncontrollable, who might disagree with us on what acceptable risk is. We don’t want a God who says things like Jesus says in John 16:33,

Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.

What? We don’t want that! Come on Jesus, we want the God who removes trials and sorrows. But that’s not what Jesus promises in this life.

As believers, the source of our security should be God.

This morning I want you to ask yourself this hard question. Do you trust God to be your primary source of security? If the answer is no, or probably for most of us, a compartmentalized yes, like a yeah, I’ll trust him with this, but not with that. I’ll trust him with eternal salvation, but not how I should spend my money, the first thing for us to do is repent. This morning, God is inviting you to repent, to turn away from the idols we’ve made that promise control, but will ultimately fail and return to a God who has overcome the world, who can’t be controlled, who is worthy of worship and trust, who loves you so much that he has redeemed and restored us through the finished work of Jesus!

Because the last half of this Psalm is all about the promises of God!

5Lord, you alone are my inheritance, my cup of blessing. You guard all that is mine.

6The land you have given me is a pleasant land. What a wonderful inheritance!

7I will bless the Lord who guides me; even at night my heart instructs me.

8I know the Lord is always with me. I will not be shaken, for he is right beside me.

9No wonder my heart is glad, and I rejoice. My body rests in safety.

10For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.

11You will show me the way of life, granting me the joy of your presence and the pleasures of living with you forever.

When the source of our security, when our trust is in God, we reap the promises of God!

And look at these promises! Inheritance, presence, eternal life.

This psalm finds its ultimate fulfilment in John 1:12 where those who believe are called children of God. And we’ve looked this morning at security in this life, but David ends this psalm looking at security in the next.

Our inheritance as believers, our destiny as believers, our great hope as believers is in the God who is worthy, our great hope is in the God who is love, our great hope is that this life isn’t all that there is, but there is a glorious future coming for those who are secure in Him.

Jesus did not rot in the grave, he rose to life, and our inheritance is eternal life with Him, our future isn’t decay and death, it’s life and life eternal!

Friends, don’t settle for gods you can control. Those gods that we cling to in the hope of controlling the things that make us afraid in the here and now have no power to keep us from the grave!

The only God that has that power is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, the God of Abraham, the God of David, the God of Paul, the God we worship together!

Our primary source of security should be that God!

The world is frightening out there. We might acknowledge it more on Hallowe’en. But there’s a reason anxiety is so prevalent in our culture 365 days a year. It’s because there’s scary things out there, and it’s okay to be afraid, but when the source of our security is an all powerful, uncontainable God, we can say with confidence like David that we will not be shaken not because of anything within us, because the Lord is always with us. What is the source of your security?

Let’s pray.