

Spiritual Desire
My Portion
Lesson 7 Psalm 73:25-26
070625

Introduction

- 1 Last Sunday we experienced something special together. What started out as a baptism service turned into an encounter with God.
 - a I always enjoy our baptism services and the testimonies of how God has moved in people's life or brought them to faith in Jesus.
 - b But last Sunday was unique in a way I can't completely describe.
- 2 All I know is that for a period of several minutes we were with the Lord in a way that lifted us above the normal cares and concerns of life. We were watching baptism but we were experiencing more than baptism. We were experiencing Jesus in a way that increased our love for him.
- 3 Through it all we were once again reminded that all we really need is Jesus. Yes we have other needs. Yes we need God's temporal blessings. But what we need the most is God himself.
- 4 Throughout the Bible, particularly in the Psalms, there is a sentence that captures this need for God above all else ... *the Lord is my portion*.
 - a Sometimes its translated inheritance or reward. But the most common word is portion.
 - b Let me give you a few passages and then we'll dive a bit deeper into what it means.

You are my portion, O Lord; I have promised to obey your words (Ps 119:57).

I cry to you, O Lord; I say, "You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living (Psalm 142:5).

LORD, You are my portion and my cup of blessing; You hold my future (Psalms 16:5 HCSB).

I say to myself, The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him (Lamentations 3:24).
- 5 So let's dive in. Three points this morning:
 - What does "My Portion" mean?
 - How does "My Portion" apply to me?
 - How do I know if the Lord is "My Portion?"

[1] What does “My Portion” mean?

- 1 Well to answer that question we have to look at four people in the Bible, three in the OT and one in the NT..
 - a The three people in the OT are:
 - **Abraham**
 - The **Levites** in Joshua’s day (1/12 tribes of Israel)
 - **Asaph** the Psalmist & Levite in David’s day
 - b The one person in the NT is **Mary**, the sister of Martha.
- 2 Let’s begin with Abraham. Genesis 12 says that when Abraham was seventy-five years old God promised him a son, 1) an heir to build a nation and 2) an ultimate heir through which he would bless all the nations of the earth. Even though he was old, childless Abraham believed the Lord.
 - a But the years went by and still no son. Eventually Abraham’s faith grew weary. And so, God comes to him in a vision and reaffirms the promise of an heir (Gen 15:1f).
 - You will have a son from your own loins
 - Your offspring will form a nation that will one day be like the stars of the heavens. Abraham you will inherit what I have promised.
 - b But Abraham, I am giving you something greater, a greater inheritance, a greater reward than any son or nation could possibly be. *Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward (Genesis 15:1). I am your reward, inheritance, portion.*
- 3 Now the next place we see this concept is when the Israelites first entered the promised land.
 - a Abraham and Sarah had that promised son, Isaac, who in turn fathered Jacob who’s twelve son’s became the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - b After nearly 400 years in slavery in Egypt these 12 tribes are freed by God through Moses and 40 years later his successor, Joshua, leads them into the promised land.



- c When they entered each one of the tribes was allotted a portion of land as an inheritance from God except for the tribe of Levi.

- The priestly tribe of Levi received no portion and was not entitled to own any land. Instead God offered them something very similar to what he offered Abraham.
You shall have no inheritance in their land, neither shall you have any portion among them. I am your portion and your inheritance among the people of Israel (Num 18:20 ESV).
 - In other words, they would get something infinitely greater than land, they would get God himself, the ultimate portion. In other words they would be given a special disclosure of God's Person.
 - The tribe of Judah, Rueben, Simeon, Zebulun and Issachar and so on would get land. But the priestly tribe of Levi would get God himself.
- 4 Over time the concept of the Lord himself being one's portion was used not just of God's promise to Abraham or the Levites. It was used by the Hebrew Psalmists to describe any Israelite who wanted God more than anything else, whose heart was set upon God above all else, who treasured the Lord above all else.
- a In the last part of Psalm 73, that is what Asaph the psalmist is proclaiming. But before he does that, in the first half of the psalm he is complaining.
- Asaph is complaining about all the injustice in his world. His main beef is why does it seem like the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer?
 - Eventually he gets relief when he enters the sanctuary and experiences God's presence and realizes the unrepentant & wicked will one day perish under God's justice but the righteous will have God's presence now and God's glory in the future.
- b Then, in the last part of Psalm 73, he concludes with these words:
Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:25-26).
- 5 The fourth place in scripture where we see the concept of "My Portion" is in the story of Martha and Mary.
- a Martha and Mary were sisters and they lived with their brother Lazarus in Bethany, a village about a mile outside of Jerusalem where Jesus and the disciples often stayed when they were in the area.
- b These visits involved a great deal of last minute preparation by Martha and Mary. But at a certain point it seems that Mary finished and sat at

the Lord's feet alongside Lazarus and the disciples listening to what he was teaching them.

- c Apparently, Martha was one of those folks who was never quite finished preparing and she found great satisfaction in serving others. Perhaps it was the way she showed her love for others. But eventually Martha became irritated because Mary had stopped helping her. So she complained to the Lord about it. Jesus said to her ...

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, ⁴² but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her. Luke 10:41-42 ESV

- Some translations have “good part” or “right thing” but the ESV nails it with “good portion.”
- When Jesus said this both Martha and Mary would have known that he was referring to the same thing that Asaph wrote about in Ps 73. He was saying Mary has made me her portion.

- c Now the difference between Martha and Mary was this: Martha's ultimate fulfillment/portion was in serving Jesus (identity). But Mary went beyond that. She served alongside Martha but her ultimate fulfillment/portion was Jesus himself.

- Like Abraham, Jesus was Mary's *very great reward* (Gen 15:1).
- Like the Levites Jesus was Mary's portion.
- Like the Psalmist Jesus was Mary's greatest desire.

- d And as she sat down to listen to Jesus she was basically living out the words of Psalm 73. *Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever (Psalm 73:25-26).*

- 6 OK. That's the background to the phrase, “the Lord is my portion.” Now let's move to the rest of the New Testament to make some application.

[2] How does “My Portion” apply to me?

- 1 For a believer in Jesus Christ the statement, “the Lord is my portion,” is both 1) **something we have** and also 2) **something we must seek**. *First of all, something we have*. When you believe the gospel, God himself actually gives you himself and becomes your portion.
- a If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, if you've understood your sin and your need to be saved from it, if you've trusted in Christ for forgiveness,

if you have been born again through the power of the Holy Spirit, then the greatest gift that God has given you is Himself.

- The greatest gift is not redemption or forgiveness or righteousness. Rather God redeems you, forgives you and makes you righteous so that He can give you Himself.
 - He redeems you, forgives you and grants you righteousness so that you can commune with him and fellowship with him ... so that you can have Him as your portion.
- b In the Old Testament this “having him” as your portion was sometimes indicated by God giving an individual his name. His name encompassed all that he is. He gave his name by putting his name in their name.
- For example, Jacob. He was the grandson of Abraham. His name meant “deceiver” and it came true in his character and life.
 - But then he had an experience with God and was changed. To signify that change, God gave him a new name, Israel. Isra-El. El was one of the names of God.
 - So God gave Jacob his name which was a way of saying I give you myself. And thus Jacob could say to God, you are my God and you are my portion.
- c When you believe in Jesus, in essence, God gives you His name. He gives you Himself and He says, “I will be your God” and as such I belong to you.
- **You belong to me** because you are my people. You are my possession. You are not your own for I have redeemed you at a great price. (1Cor 6:19). You are my treasured possession. But also **I belong to you** because I am your portion.
For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” (2 Cor 6:16b)
 - God is saying, “In Jesus Christ I have given Myself to you. I am your portion. I am your reward. I am your inheritance.” What an extraordinary promise.
- d Let’s think about that for a moment. It’s an incredible thing just to know the Lord. There was a time when we did not know him. He was a perfect stranger to us. Or maybe we knew of him but simply gave him a nod and practically lived our lives as if he didn’t exist.

- We could not see his hand in our lives or that every good thing in our lives was due to his common grace & providential blessing. We were the ungrateful idolaters of Romans chapter one or the self-righteous religious people of Romans chapter two. Either way we were the spiritually dead of Romans chapter three.
 - But one day, by His sovereign grace and of no doing of our own, the Lord opened up our heart to understand and believe the gospel. The light dawned in our heart so we could see him and know him. And that would be enough.
- e But even more than being saved & knowing him, what an incredible thing it is to be loved by him.
- For God to be mindful of us is astounding. For him to show mercy on us is amazing. For him to help us and bless us in life even more amazing.
 - But for Him to love us and receive our love in return — this is the greatest wonder of all!
- f And yet we have even more than this, for in loving God we come to realize that He has so given himself to us,
- We can say with the Levites He's given us something greater than the land, He's give us himself.
 - We can say with Abraham, Asaph and Mary, "The Lord is my portion forever and ever."
- 2 So, the phrase, the Lord is my portion is firstly a statement of reality. IT'S SOMETHING WE HAVE. ***Secondly, it is something we seek.***
- a If we have it why do we have to seek it? Well it is the case quite often that even though the Lord has given Himself to us, our hearts want something else more than him. Most of the time we don't even realize it.
- b Nonetheless, it is within our nature to want something more than the Lord because that is the nature handed down to us by our first parents.
- In Garden of Eden God said to Adam, you can eat from every tree in the garden except this one tree. If you eat from it you will die.
 - The serpent said, God is lying and withholding from you the thing your heart really needs. You need something more than what he has provided. You need something more than him. You need to eat from this tree and you will be fulfilled.

- c So, what was the serpent trying to do? To get Eve and Adam make something else their portion. And his methods have not changed.
- Every person's heart is set on something. It is human nature to desire something above all else.
 - We want it to be the Lord and we believe it to be the Lord but sometimes our hearts betray us and hide from our conscious thinking the thing we really want like identity, approval, security or success.
 - Likewise, we tend to take good things (spouse, children, careers, hobbies, possessions) and make them ultimate desires.
 - We don't even realize it until that good thing is threatened, lost or taken away and it crushes us because that thing was our portion instead of the Lord. It was what our heart was set on.
- d When you say, "the Lord is my portion," you are expressing a spiritual desire that says ...I don't want anything else to occupy my heart as the ultimate object of my affection. The Psalmist said, *And earth has nothing I desire besides you.*
- There are other desires but none beside you. They are all under you.
 - And if one of those desires is not fulfilled I will not be shaken because Lord, you are my chief desire, you are my portion that will never be taken away.
- 3 Have you ever seen the movie Rocky I? (I say one because there are nine) In Rocky I before his big fight with Apollo Creed he knows he's overmatched and He says to his girlfriend Adrian,
- "I just want to go the distance. Nobody's ever gone the distance with Creed, and if I can go the distance and that bell rings and I'm still standin', I'm gonna know for the first time in my life that I wasn't just another bum from the neighborhood."*
- a Now that sentiment is in every one of us one way or another. If I can just _____ then I will be _____.
- b Deep down in your heart there is this lie that says if I can just get what my heart is pursuing, if I can realize my dream, if I can get the approval of others then I will know I'm not just another bum from the neighborhood ... that I have value and worth, that I am somebody ... that I am a good person, a good parent, a faithful friend, a hardworking employee or a successful entrepreneur.

- c And the only way to be free from trying to get your value and worth, from your accomplishments or from the approval of others is to make Jesus your portion.
- 4 The more we desire Jesus, the more He becomes our portion ... the more free we become and the more satisfied we will be.
- a It's ironic that nothing else in life works that way. If you make anything else your portion, if you desire it above all else ... it will inevitably control you and leave you unsatisfied.
 - b Everything created thing is like chocolate. It's good in its place. But when it gets out of its place, when you eat too much of it, it will make you sick and leave you unsatisfied.
 - c The Bible teaches us that we are in a spiritual battle and it centers around who or what will be our portion. Will it be the land or the Lord?
- 5 Let me explain this from another angle. All of us have hopes and dreams that haven't come about. Likewise we all have things in our lives that we wish we didn't have.
- a And the temptation is to think if only my hopes and dreams could be realized then I could be truly satisfied.
 - b The temptation is to think if these difficult things were not in my life then I could experience the satisfaction I desire.
 - c The psalmist is saying ...
 - "Lord, help me not buy into those lies because the satisfaction that I have always wanted has never been withheld from me in any circumstance of life because You, O Lord, are my portion."
 - "All the satisfaction that I could ever want or need is found in You. You are my portion. Nothing can replace You. If I have you, I have all that I need."
- 6 And this is more than a theological concept, it's the ultimate reality.
- a The Lord said to the Levites I will give you something better than land, I will give you myself. For that promise to be true the presence of God has to be as real as the land of Canaan.
 - b He was saying to the Levites I will give you the very real blessing of my supernatural presence.
- 7 You say "But I am not a Levitical priest." You're right but you have been made something much greater when you were saved. Because of what Jesus Christ has done you are now part of a greater priesthood than the Levites. You are now part of the ultimate priesthood.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy people group, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

- a The priesthood is no longer comprised of one Jewish tribe or even today by a certain clerical group of people. Because of the cross now everyone who believes in Jesus becomes a part of God's holy priesthood.
- b And like the Levites God has given us something better than land or any other earthly blessing. He has given us Himself. He has given us the very real blessing of His supernatural presence.
- c And although nearly unexplainable, when we experience it, it triumphs over all doubt, envy, insecurity, fear, worry and hopelessness. As the Asaph said, *My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the **strength** of my heart and my portion forever.*

[3] How do I know if the Lord is "My Portion?"

- 1 After rescuing his people from slavery in Egypt God brings them to Mount Sinai in the desert where He calls Moses up the mountain and gives him commands to live by and instructions to build a tabernacle in which he would dwell with his people (Exodus 25:8).
- 2 While Moses is on the mountain, they rebel against the Lord (Psalm 106:21), they disregard Moses, and they beg Aaron (the brother of Moses) to make an Egyptian god for them to worship (Exodus 32:1). After Moses finds out he pleads with the Lord to not destroy the entire nation (32:11–13), and though God relents (32:14), there are still consequences:
 - a Three thousand people die (32:28)
 - b Moses has to plead for Aaron's life (Deuteronomy 9:20).
 - c The stone tablets on which the commands were written by God lay in pieces on the ground
- 3 The dramatic story reaches a climax in Exodus 33.
 - a In spite of the Israelites rebellion, God, in his grace, gives the land of Canaan. He cannot go back on his promise to Abraham. He gives them this lush and bountiful land flowing with milk and honey.
 - b But, there's a caveat. God won't go with them (Exodus 33:3). The people are so prone to rebellion and idolatry that God says it is likely He would "consume them on the way." When the people heard this, they went into mourning (33:4).

- 4 Then Moses goes to God and says one of the most incredible sentences in all of Scripture. He says, *If your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here (Ex 33:15).*
- a Moses understands that no matter how great the blessings of promise land are, the promise land would be entirely empty without God himself.
 - b Think about this! The Israelites have never had their own land. They have been holding out hope for it for centuries. But for Moses, having the land is worth nothing if God's not there... because for Moses, only the Lord can be his portion.
- 5 Allow me to reframe this in order to apply it to our lives. The promise land for us ultimately is heaven. And the question is this:
- a If you could have heaven with all of its perfections ... no disease, no poverty, no fear, no pain, no conflict, no natural disasters, no sin or suffering ...
 - b If you could have heaven with all its blessings, absolutely perfect health, incredible abundant provision, unending peace and joy, the most fulfilling relationships, the most gratifying activities, the most delicious of foods, the most beautiful sceneries ...
 - ... Could you be satisfied with all of that if Jesus was not there.
 - Could you be satisfied with heaven if Jesus was not there?
 - Would you, faced with that proposition, say like Moses, I won't go unless You're there.
 - c That is the equivalent of saying, the Lord is my portion.
- 6 Christianity is not primarily about getting to heaven ...
- a It's about getting Abraham's exceeding great reward. It's about getting the Levites portion.
 - b It's about getting the Psalmists greatest desire. It's about getting Mary's good part that she chose. It is about getting Christ himself.
 - c Nothing else will satisfy. Nothing else will fulfill. Try as you may you will never be ultimately fulfilled by anything in all God's creation. Only Jesus himself can satisfy the deepest longings of our hearts.
- 7 Now the question is this: Is the Lord your portion? Not do you know he is your portion, but are you seeking him as your portion? If you believe he is your portion you will be seeking him ... imperfectly for sure but you will be seeking him.

- a And yet it's not hard to get of course. It's not hard to be deceived by the devil as Adam and Eve were. It's not difficult for our hearts to be sidetracked by our own desire for other good things, instead of the best thing.
 - b So like Mary we need to re-choose that good portion every day. And there is mercy to do that every morning. Earlier I read a verse written by Jeremiah in Lamentations 3.
"The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him"
(Lamentations 3:24a)
 - c Just before he makes that declaration he reveals his source of confidence to make such a statement. He says these words ...
²² The steadfast love (hesed) of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; ²³ they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness (3:22-23 ESV).
- 8 It is because of his steadfast love (Hesed) and "new every morning mercies" that we can realign our hearts and pursue the Lord as our Portion. Make that decision this morning as we sing *All I want is Jesus*.

Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 What does the phrase "the Lord is my portion" mean to you personally? Share a time when you felt particularly close to God or experienced His presence in a powerful way. How did that experience impact you?
- 2 The sermon mentions Abraham, the Levites, and Mary as examples of those who chose God as their portion. Which of these examples resonates with you most, and why?
- 3 How do you think our culture encourages us to seek satisfaction in things other than God? What are some common "portions" people pursue instead of the Lord? What are some signs that might indicate we've allowed something else to become our ultimate "portion" instead of God?
- 4 Reflect on the story of Moses in Exodus 33. Why do you think Moses was willing to give up the Promised Land if God's presence wouldn't go with them?
- 5 The sermon states, "The more we desire Jesus, the more He becomes our portion ... the more free we become and the more satisfied we will be." Have you experienced this in your own life? Share an example.
- 6 How can we practically make God our portion in the midst of daily life and responsibilities?