

## God Is My Portion Forever

### Psalm 73:21-28 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, <sup>22</sup> I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. <sup>23</sup> Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. <sup>24</sup> You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. <sup>25</sup> Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. <sup>26</sup> My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever. <sup>27</sup> Those who are far from you will perish; you destroy all who are unfaithful to you. <sup>28</sup> But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.

Dear family and friends of Mr. Estiel “Andy” Jackson, and especially to Mike, Wade, and Lance, and their families,

Where do I start? What needs to be said today for Andy’s memorial service? What should I preach to you? Am I just up here to tell you about all of Andy’s accomplishments – and there are a lot of them. Is my message to you today to be to tell you what he did for this church so that we can go home thinking, “Man, that Andy Jackson was such a good guy. He did so much for Light of the Valley.” And the truth is that he did. Just look around for a moment. Andy’s fingerprints are all over this church. He designed and built the baptism font, the altar, and this cross. He designed and led the charge to cut the wood paneling down on the sides of the sanctuary, to make solid walls on the sides of this room, this platform and the ramp on the other side of the wall, the molding above the doors. He even called me up one day to say, “Pastor, we need new paraments.” Then he showed me in the magazine that I had given him these very paraments and he made the first donation towards purchasing them. He was tickled to see the designs for the remodeling that we will be doing here at church, hopefully shortly. He would always say that he wished he could just breathe better so that he could be doing the wood work and be at church taking on these projects. I’m sure Mike, Wade, and Lance could tell you about many more projects that Andy did and projects that they themselves took on and went to Dad for advice.

But we are not meeting inside a church in order to honor Andy and his accomplishments, to talk about what a great guy he was. If that’s the only reason for this gathering today, it wouldn’t matter if we were in a church or not. We could just as well be over at Lindquist. But here we are. Why are we meeting in a church? Because it was what Dad wanted? Yes, but it’s more than that.

When I first got to Layton back in the summer of 2014, I remember getting a phone call about a week or two into my service here. “Pastor, my name is Andy Jackson. I’m a member of our church. I love each and every person there at the church, but fact is I don’t get down there too much any more because I don’t breathe so good. But, if I have a good morning and can get going, I will be down there at the church. So, I know you’re busy, but if you have some time, I would really appreciate a visit.” Andy wanted to be here every single Sunday. He wanted to be in church. He wanted to be around his brothers and sisters in Christ. He was frustrated that his body wouldn’t cooperate with him to do this because he wanted to be here to hear about his God.

That’s why he wanted you here today. Not to gawk over his accomplishments, but because he wants you to have the same God in your life as he did, the same God who took him by the hand and guided him through life, the same God who had given Andy everything he had and enabled him to do everything that he did. It was in church that Andy learned there was something bigger than him in this life, someone stronger than him, smarter than him. From the Bible, he learned that God had made him, him specifically, Andy Jackson, that God had knit him together in his mother’s womb and God knew everything that Andy would do even before he was formed.

It was also from the Bible that Andy learned that had, as he would say, a little problem - a big problem actually. I know at times like this we only want to focus on the positives, but reality is that Andy was not perfect, as much as we would like to think so. God knew this, and he, through his Word, made Andy aware of this. Andy did not measure up to God’s standard; he had nothing before God.

Instead of challenging Andy to figure out how to make things right with God, God showed him what he had done to fix that “little” problem of sin. God chose to love Andy, chose to love him enough to even die for him. And God was not just willing to die for him, but he actually did die for him. That was God’s plan to save Andy, to save the world. He came down from heaven, took on human flesh that is so frail and weak, lived in our place to be the perfection that we could never attain, and died in our place taking upon himself the wrath that we would never survive. This perfection and satisfaction of God’s justice over imperfection, over sin, this is what he gave Andy. He gave it to him through the waters of Baptism, washing him clean with the forgiveness of sins. This is what he renewed and did all over again every time that Andy took the bread and the wine, Jesus’ body and blood, in the Lord’s Supper. By doing all this, God forgave Andy his sins and clothed him with his perfection. This is what Andy got out of church.

Knowing this, Andy would say to me so many times, "I have been so undeservedly blessed. Everything I have has come from God. I have nothing outside of him." God gave Andy life. God gave Andy talents and abilities and skills. God gave Andy JoAnn. God gave Andy three wonderful boys, their wives, and all those grandbabies he loved so much and couldn't stop talking about. God gave Andy the inheritance of eternal life in heaven.

From going to church, from reading the Bible, from learning about God, Andy knew all this. That's how he knew that when it came to his health, whatever will be will be. It's in the Lord's hands. If God wants him to stick around longer, then God would give him more days on this earth. If God wanted Andy to breathe easier, he would do that for him too. He trusted God completely to do what was best, right up to the moment when God took him to his heavenly home. Because of what he had learned about God he believed as the psalmist did, "Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory." (verses 23-24)

Last Monday night, God took Andy home into his glory. Andy knew where he was going. By being here today in church, we know where he is as well. He is with the Lord. He is in heaven right now. He will never again struggle to breathe. He gets to see Mom again, his JoAnn. He gets to see his parents, his siblings. They all get to worship now around Jesus, their Savior, their God. It's basically like being in church, but way better. Andy is with God in a place that more joyful than there are words to describe it.

Andy wants you here today not to honor him, but to hear the same Word of God that he believed. He wants you here so that you can get to know who God is and what he has done not just for Andy, but for you. That's why Andy was always talking about the church. He would tell anyone who would listen about that wonderful bunch of people down at Light of the Valley, how he wished he could take people down there. He would tell neighbors, aids, kids. He would pass out postcards and devotion books for the church. He wanted everyone to know what was in that Bible so that they too could know who God is and what he has done for you.

We know where Andy is. He is in heaven. Let that thought comfort you, especially in the days and weeks and years to come. And maybe I should just stop preaching right here because that is a beautiful note to end on. But again, Andy didn't want us in a church just for him. It's tempting to look around this church and say, "This is Dad's church." "This is Dad's thing." "This is where he wanted to be." "This was what Dad believed, but it's not for me." Andy wanted you here so that you could hear about God, to reflect on your own personal spiritual life.

Andy and I had talked about what he wanted people to hear when it came to his funeral. He told me, "I want everyone who comes to hear God's Word. I want them to hear that they should be in the Bible, to read it, to read all of it, and to keep reading it." Andy wanted you to have this message because he knew that one day his flesh and his heart would fail. It was not enough to simply exist and do things. Andy lived and still lives because, just as the Psalmist says here, "God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever." (verse 26) "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you." (verse 25) God, religion, the Bible, church, these are not just things you do for this life. These are things that have a forever impact.

God was everything to Andy in his life. Without God, Andy knows that he would never have been able to do anything the things that he did. Without God, he would have had nothing. With God, though, Andy had everything. He had a God who loved him unconditionally, loved him like no one else ever had, loved him enough to die for him to save him from hell. He made the Sovereign LORD his refuge and his portion forever. Andy wants you to have everything that he had. He doesn't want you to be uncertain about what will happen to you when your time comes. He wants to see you again, to have you right by his side in heaven, praising Jesus. That's why he wants you here today. He wants you to know that God loves you, lived for you, died for you, and conquered death for you. He wants his God to be your God; his salvation, your salvation; his hope, your hope; his confidence, your confidence.

I think I figured it out where to start today, but where do you start after today? Start by knowing first and foremost that Andy is in heaven. It's not wishful thinking. It's not nice sentiments. This is what God promised to do for Andy, and God always makes good on his promises. He guided Andy through life with his mighty right hand and his counsel and now has taken him into glory everlasting. Andy knew that it was good to be near God. That's why he wanted you here in church today. He wants you to be near to God. He wants you to keep hearing what God says to you, what God has done for you. He wants God to be your portion forever just as he is for him because eventually for all of us, our flesh will fail. So, make the Sovereign LORD your refuge. Be near God. Be in his Word. That's where he gives you everything you need for life: salvation, forgiveness, hope, confidence, love. God is holding out all of these things for you today, just as he had given them all to Andy. Amen.