

Sermon Notes

WORSHIP SERVICE -

10.13.2024

PSALM 90 - TEACH US TO
NUMBER OUR DAYS

I. INTRODUCTION

PSALM 84:1-12

1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

2 Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

3 You return man to dust
and say, "Return, O children of man!"

4 For a thousand years in your sight
are but as yesterday when it is past,
or as a watch in the night.

5 You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning:

6 in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

7 For we are brought to an end by your anger;
by your wrath we are dismayed.

8 You have set our iniquities before you,
our secret sins in the light of your presence.

9 For all our days pass away under your wrath;

we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

10 The years of our life are seventy,

or even by reason of strength eighty;

yet their span is but toil and trouble;

they are soon gone, and we fly away.

11 Who considers the power of your anger,

and your wrath according to the fear of you?

12 So teach us to number our days

that we may get a heart of wisdom.

13 Return, O Lord! How long?

Have pity on your servants!

14 Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,

that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,

and for as many years as we have seen evil.

16 Let your work be shown to your servants,

and your glorious power to their children.

17 Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us,

and establish the work of our hands upon us;

yes, establish the work of our hands!

- This is the first psalm of Book Four of the Psalter.
- Psalm 89 closes Book Three with these questions and concerns:
- *“How long, O Lord? How long will your wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is!*
- *What man can live and never see death? Who Can deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?*
- *Lord, where is your steadfast love of old?”* (Ps 89:46-48).
- The scribal editors of the Psalms strategically placed Psalm 90 following Psalm 89 to show its connections to those questions and concerns
- Psalm 90 is a somber and reflective psalm of petition and communal lament with elements of wisdom.
- Its author is Moses. The only psalm attributed to him in the Psalter.
- It's titled, “A prayer of Moses, the man of God.”
- Moses is the first person called a “man of God” in the Torah. (Deut 33:1)
- We do not know what prompted Moses to pen this beautiful psalm.
- The fact that this is a prayer places the emphasis on the second part of the psalm (12-17), which is the petition, with the first part (1-16) informing and preparing the way for the second.

II. FROM EVERLASTING TO EVERLASTING

- V1 Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations.
 - The psalm opens with an address to God as Lord (Adonai). He is the Creator and Ruler of the world.
 - The emphatic “you have been our dwelling place” echo Moses’s words in Deut 33:27 The eternal God is your dwelling place.
 - The idea is that God is the refuge of his people. He is their hiding place of safety.
 - Every generation of God’s people could look to the Lord, the Creator and Ruler of the world, as their refuge, their dwelling place.
 - What a comfort for us to know, that we who are in Christ, dwell in safety, God is our dwelling place. He is home!
 - Colossians 3:3 Paul writes that our “life is hidden with Christ in God.”
 - The protection of God for his people is great.
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- V2 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.
 - The imagery is that of God giving birth to his creation. He is Creator.
 - “Before the mountains were brought forth,”—here the mountains signify the most solid and ancient part of creation, the psalmist is saying, “*before anything was brought into existence.*”
 - Before anything was—“From everlasting to everlasting” —God was there!
 - The Lord God is the eternal One.
 - If God were not eternal, he could not be a dwelling place for the successive generations of his people.
 - If God existed only in time, like his creation, he would not be God.
 - “From everlasting to everlasting you are God” is a powerful confessional statement.
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- This is so important. To even consider how to find meaning in life, in the present, in the face of death, depends on our placing the starting point of all things outside of ourselves and even outside of time.
 - Man is not the center of the universe!
 - The epicenter of the cosmos is the eternal, self-existent, infinite, immortal, incomprehensible and almighty God!
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- We don’t spend much time meditating on the timeless and eternal being of God—but we should.
 - Only then can we grasp how precious that promise is , “You have been our dwelling place...”
 - This is the privilege we have in Christ, our lives are hidden with him in God.
 - Our union with Christ secures God’s unrelenting grip on us!
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- The eternal God is the dwelling place of his people! This is good news in light of what Moses discloses next.

III. FROM DUST TO DUST

- God is eternal, in comparison, mankind is dust.
- We are weak, fragile, finite, transient, mortal beings.
- There is an allusion to Gen 3:19, “for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”
- Adam would experience death. But not only him, all of creation would as well.

- Adam, as the representative head of the human race, would pass on the guilt of his sin to his posterity. All of his descendants are now conceived in sin.
- This is why we need God as our dwelling place. We are dust!
- v3 “You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!”
- Man is subject to the Eternal One. The timing of our death is not under our control.
- He alone has the power of life and death over human beings.
- V4 displays a movement from the vastness of God’s eternity to the astonishing brevity of even the longest of human life.
- There is movement from a thousand years, to yesterday when it is past, to a watch in the night (4 hours).
- We consider the span of our life in linear time, but to the Lord, all of human existence, from the first human being to the last, is but a moment.
- 2 Peter 3:8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.
- From our perspective, a thousand years is a very long time.
- But to the Lord this is as time that has already passed.
- Even if people lived to be a thousand years old, from God’s perspective, their span of life is but a day, or even less than that, a night watch.
- V5-6 presents us three more images which are used to show us what it means when God decrees for man to return to dust.
- First, “you sweep them away as with a flood...” Man is not invincible, though he may think he is.
- Second, “they are like a dream...,” literally, “they are sleep”, we are so fragile, it doesn’t take much to put us to sleep. We are like a dream that is quickly forgotten.
- Third, “like grass that is renewed in the morning and flourishes...in the evening it fades and withers.” We are not mighty oaks but grass, we spring up, then wither away with the heat of the sun and fade by sundown.
- That’s who we are in comparison to the Eternal One.
- It’s the sobering reality of human mortality.

IV. LIVING UNDER GOD'S WRATH

- VV 7-11 develops the truly wretched condition of humanity and the reality that death is God’s punishment for sin.
- Death is not accidental, our mortality is not accidental.
- In the beginning, God gave Adam a command, the consequence of disobedience was that he would surely die.
- Adam’s sin introduced death into God’s good creation.
- The consequence for Adam and all his posterity, for all of humanity, was that life would be exceedingly difficult all the days of our life until we return to the ground, return to dust.
- V7 For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed.
- It is God’s anger, the wrath of a holy God, that consumes us, that brings terror to us in the face of death.
- V8 You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.
- Nothing is hidden from God. Whether our sins are public knowledge or they are only known to us, it is all laid bare before him.
- Hebrews 4:13 And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- The Lord's anger and wrath, create a barrier between the Lord and humanity.
- All of sinful humanity is under God's wrath.
- We live the totality of our life under the judgment of God as punishment for our sin.
- V9 For all our days pass away under your wrath..."
- We are by nature children of wrath (Eph 2:3).
- The wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

- V10 acknowledges again the brevity of life but it is filled with toil and trouble.
- The shortness and frailty of human life are the fruit of sin and judgment in the world.

- The first section of the psalm comes back to the anger and wrath of God in v11
- "Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?"
- This is asking in the wisdom sense.
- The greatness of God's wrath should evoke fear and reverence for God, as those who fear the Lord are more aware of the fierceness of his anger and wrath.
- Most people live their lives oblivious to the fact that, apart from Christ, they are living this life under God's wrath.

- Mankind's wretched condition should make us weep and feel the sorrow of human mortality.
- We should feel the weight of what are sin demands and what all humanity is under, God's righteous and holy anger.
- Read Romans 5:12-21.
- The human condition is dire and God's wrath abides upon sinful humanity. Christ is the only hope and escape!

V. OUR DESPERATE NEED OF WISDOM, MERCY AND GRACE

- What should all of this contemplation and reflection of God's eternity, man's finiteness and brevity, and God's wrath on sinful humanity, lead us to?
- It should lead us to prayer.
- The only legitimate response to the misery of the human condition is to pray for wisdom.
- V12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.
- Moses isn't asking that God would tell us how many days we have left on this earth.
- The tragedy of human life is that the fear of death does not necessarily lead to repentance, we need God to grant that to us.

- "Teach us to number our days..." is to pray that God would teach us:
- to apprehend the brevity of our existence and our wrath incurring sinfulness.
- to show us how weak we are and how powerful he is.
- to recognize the vast difference between the infinite God and finite human beings.
- to acknowledge that we need divine revelation and illumination.
- to confess that every day is a gift of God and we need to live wisely and rightly.
- to apply ourselves to obtaining a heart of wisdom.

- Deut 5:29 Oh that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever!
 - Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.
 - The Lord gives wisdom to the one who asks for it. (James 1:5)
 - True wisdom is Christ. Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:24).
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- vv13-16 Prayer for God's mercy.
 - It is a prayer for the restoration of covenant blessings on the people of God. "Lord," in v13 is Yahweh.
 - Return/Relent, O Lord, How long?
 - God's anger consumes but he may relent by again showing his favor to his people who are waiting for his full salvation; they ask, "how long?"
 - Have pity/compassion on your servants!
 - The Lord's servants, his people, wait patiently for the compassion of their Master.
 - Psalm 123:2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, till he has mercy upon us.
 - Satisfy us in them morning with your steadfast love
 - God's favor is his loyal love, his covenantal love for his people.
 - "Satisfy us" means for God to fulfill all of our longings in him, to give us fresh hope as every new morning brings.
 - Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us.
 - This is the opposite of all our days under God's wrath.
 - To what end? That we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
 - God's people long for the continuity of divine blessings rather than the occasional evidence of his love.
 - We want God's favor all our days.
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- Apart from God, all of our days are sorrow lived under the wrath of God.
 - But with Christ, all of our days are rejoicing because of his grace and favor.
 - He truly satisfies and makes this brief life worth living.
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- V17 brings this psalm to an emphatic conclusion.
 - It is a prayer for God's lasting favor—for God's grace.
 - If God's people have God's favor, their work will be established, their life and work will have lasting significance.
 - This is a reversal of vv 3-11.
 - God can give our fleeting human experience something of substance, an assurance of a certain permanence to our work.
 - He will establish the work of our hands!
 - In Christ, God will work to make our lives and our work significant.
 - Phil 2:12-13 work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.
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- The person under God's judgment can accomplish no ultimate good.
 - But the godly and wise pray that the Lord will accept their work and establish it as having value.
 - This is not about personal success but contribution to the lasting value of work done for the building up of Christ's Church and his kingdom (1 Cor 3:10-15).
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- The message of Ps 90 is not "work harder" or that your works can save you.

- The message is that God will preserve and protect his covenant people, he will bless us and bless the work of our hands, he is the dwelling place of his people and will protect them by his eternal power, even as they live their brief life in this broken, sin-sick world.
- This psalm is pointing forward to its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
- He experienced in his flesh, human misery and remained obedient to God.
- He experienced all of the sadness and suffering that this psalm portrays.
- On the cross, he absorbed the unrestrained, fiery wrath of God for sinners, facing the full punishment for our sins.
- We no longer need to fear death because he partook of the same things as we did, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery. (Heb 2)
- Christ's resurrection from the dead means that the sting of death has been removed for all those he has redeemed.
- And in him, all of the years of our brief life will culminate in one glorious Day.
- If you are in Christ, your sins have been forgiven, there is no work to do, we can rest on Christ's work on our behalf, and live out our short lives for the glory of God.
- And we can do the good works which God has prepared beforehand for us to do--we're not saved by works but unto good works.
- May the Lord teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom, and may we redeem the time and live out all of our days for the glory of God, our dwelling place.

APPLICATION AND REFLECTION

In light of today's message....

- What did I learn about the gospel?
- How can I apply what I learned about the gospel to my life?
- With whom can I share the gospel this week?