

Second Sunday of end time/Last Judgment (November 11, 2018)	1761
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The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Psalm 90 A prayer of Moses

Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn men back to dust, saying; "Return to dust, O sons of men."

For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. You sweep men away in the sleep of death; they are like the new grass of the morning -- though in the morning it springs up new, by evening it is dry and withered.

We are consumed by your anger and terrified by your indignation. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years -- or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.

Who knows the power of your anger? For your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants. Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble. May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us -- yes, establish the work of our hands.

Dear servants of our eternal Lord,

The Psalm before us this morning is the oldest one in the book. It was written by Moses, most likely near the end of his life. The Children of Israel were preparing for the day when they would finally enter the Promised Land of Canaan. Moses had spent the last forty years of his life leading the Children of Israel through the wilderness. According to the standards of this world, Moses would be considered foolish for the way he had spent his life. Look how he wasted those many years of his life, suffering hardships of many kinds, to lead a rebellious people to a land that he himself would never enter. But far from foolish, Moses' wisdom surpassed any worldly wisdom. Moses feared the Lord; and "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Human wisdom and God's wisdom are opposites. Human wisdom tries to show

how important people are. God's wisdom shows how insignificant people are, but how important God is. This we see especially in this Psalm of Moses, which encourages us to Gain A Heart Of Wisdom. In order to gain a heart of wisdom, first of all, count your days. (That's not difficult.) Then count God's days. (If you can.) And finally, use your days.

How old do you think you're going to live to be? Moses says, "The length of our days is seventy years – or eighty if we have the strength." That's a pretty accurate average life-span for our day too. Seventy or eighty years seem like a long time to younger people, but ask someone who has passed seventy or eighty, and they'll tell you how quickly life passes. Of course, none of us have any guarantee that we will live even until tomorrow. Our days are few.

Moses understood the shortness of People's lives very well. He saw death all around him. Forty years earlier, when Israel didn't trust the Lord, and refused to conquer the land of Canaan, the Lord told Israel that everyone twenty years old and older would die in the wilderness. The Lord would give the Promised Land to a new generation. During the next forty years, as Israel wandered through the wilderness, Moses saw all these people die.

Moses himself was not permitted to enter the Promised Land. On one occasion Moses, in anger, dishonored the Lord in front of the people, the new generation of Israel. Because of this, the Lord did not allow Moses to lead the people into Canaan. When Moses wrote this Psalm, he knew that his own life too would soon be over.

We see death all around us also. We see it in nature as plants and animals quickly come to their end. We see friends and relatives die. When we're quite young, perhaps we have our first great encounter with death when we lose a great-grandparent. Soon we lose our grandparents also. Then we see our own parents die. We may see the death of brothers and sisters, our spouse, or even our own children. And then it's our turn to die.

Why is it that every living thing on this earth must die? The reason is because of sin. People were not originally created to die. Even unbelieving doctors, who have seen many people be born and many people die, will tell you that birth is a wonderful thing, even though it involves great pain. But no matter how many people you see die, you still always get the feeling deep in the pit of your stomach, "This is horrible and should not be."

Moses says that the Lord has set our sins before him, even our secret sins. The Lord knows all of our sins, and God's righteous wrath declares death upon sinners. Moses says to the Lord, "All our days pass away under your wrath." "You turn men back to dust, saying, 'Return to dust, O sons of men.'" The Israelites died in the wilderness because of their sins, and we die because of ours.

Death is a depressing thought. People generally try to avoid thinking or talking about it. But when you think about it, it's a good thing that we do see death all around us. It helps us to gain a heart of wisdom. Death reminds us that we are sinners and gives us at least a small glimpse of how great God's wrath is on account of our sins. Death and misery make us seek God's grace and help. God's judgment leads us to seek his grace.

If you could choose the length of your life, how long would you want it to be? I think that if we look at life realistically, we'll agree that a person experiences enough problems, pain and grief in seventy or eighty years. Moses mentions, no doubt from experience, that life is full of trouble and sorrow. Thank God that we don't live forever in

this sinful world, in our sinful state. As God's redeemed Children, we can look forward to a time in heaven when we'll be free from sin and its results. In this Psalm, Moses never once complains about his problems, and the death all around him. Instead he accepts death along with his other earthly woes, as he patiently waits for God's salvation. May we gain such a heart of wisdom.

To simply realize that our life is short would lead us only to despair. In order to gain a heart of wisdom, we also need to look to God, to count God's days.

God is eternal. Verse four of our Psalm says, "For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night." God is without beginning and without end. From everlasting to everlasting he is God.

The fact that God is eternal is very comforting because he is our dwelling place, our place of safety, our protection. With the Lord, we are safe forever. The Lord has been the dwelling place of his people since the time he created the world. And he will be our dwelling place not only now, but also when we die, and then forever in heaven.

For he is the LORD. Moses says, "Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants." Moses is asking the LORD to not be angry any longer, to save us, to save us from the eternal death that we deserve because of our many sins. But why should the LORD stop being angry, and have compassion on us? The reason is in that one word, LORD. This is the name for the God of promise. This is the God who promised a Savior to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the God who keeps his promises, as we know so well. This LORD is all-powerful. He is able to and will carry out his promises, to send a Savior, to save us from our sins. The LORD is unchangeable. When he makes a promise, it is as well as done. It is because of the promised Savior, who would take away Moses' sin, that he has the right to ask the LORD to relent and have compassion. Moses knew that God would forgive him. In fact, God had already forgiven him, because he is the LORD.

Because of what God has done through our Savior, our days are without end. Verse sixteen says, "May your deeds be shown to your servants." Moses certainly saw God's saving deeds, when God saved Israel from the Egyptians, and miraculously led them through the Red Sea on dry ground. Moses saw God's saving deeds as the Lord miraculously provided manna and water for the people in the wilderness. And Moses got one final glimpse of the Lord's saving deeds when, just before he died, the Lord showed him the Promised Land from a mountain top, the land that would be given to God's chosen people, the people from whom the Savior would be born.

How much more have God's deeds been shown to us in Christ Jesus! In the pages of Scripture we are shown that Savior whom God had promised to his Old Testament believers, that Savior who lived our miserable life in our world of death, that Savior who died our death that we might live, that Savior who rose from the dead. He is our certainty that death is not the end for us. To take refuge in our eternal God, to trust in him to take care of us on our journey through life, and to eagerly await the home that he has won for us in heaven is to gain a heart of wisdom.

Wisdom is totally worthless unless it is put to use. We would hardly call a man wise who is full of knowledge, but acts like a fool. So a heart of wisdom is of no value to you unless you use your days.

Suppose a man spends his life working on an assembly line putting cars together or making car parts. He works eight hours a day for five days a week for forty years. In

ten or twenty years, all those cars will eventually end up in the same place, the junk yard. If that is all there is to this man's life, what lasting use will his life have served? Without the Lord our days have no value. All of the earthly things that people take pride in are soon gone.

Thank God that life is not empty like that for us. We have the Lord, and with the Lord, our days have eternal value. The things that we accomplish in his service will last forever. The Israelites put in their time working day after day just like people today do. But God always had his faithful people in Israel, people who served the Lord, who held on to the promise of the Savior, who proclaimed this promise and passed it on to their children. Look what the Lord did through Israel. He carried out his promise and sent the Savior through them. In Israel, Christ began his kingdom which has come to us also. The Lord established Israel's work forever, not because the people by themselves were great. They were unworthy sinners. The Lord established Israel's work because of his love for them, and because of his love for us.

What will the Lord do through us? We are unworthy sinners just like the Israelites were, but the Lord is gracious. We have seen his grace in Jesus, therefore we pray with Moses: "Establish the work of our hands for us -- Yes, establish the work of our hands." We know that the Lord, in his own way, will do great things through us.

Even though we may work day after day in a factory or an office, with the Lord, it is not wasted time; in fact, it is very valuable time. We serve the Lord at our jobs by being his witnesses to the other employees. We use our jobs to support our families, through whom we pass God's promises on. And we use our jobs to support the work of the church, so that God's saving word can be preached to others. These are things that last forever in heaven. No matter what we do in service to the Lord, our time is extremely valuable. Therefore let us strive to make the best possible use of every day. No matter how difficult our life might be, let us be thankful for every day the Lord gives us. He will take us to heaven soon enough. The days we are privileged to serve the Lord here will not make our eternal life in heaven any shorter. To gain a heart of wisdom is to live each day like it is your last.

When we take an honest look at life, we see that our time here on earth is very short. Because of sin we die. But we have a God who has won an eternal home for us by dying on the cross. Gain a heart of wisdom. Put your trust in his salvation. He grants us the blessed privilege of serving him in our lives, and in grace establishes the work of our hands, for by the work of his hands, every blessing for all eternity is ours.

Amen.

May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us or forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways. Amen.