

The Number of our Days
Psalm 90
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Good Morning!

What did you do yesterday, in the morning and then in the evening? What did you do the day before that? For that matter, what did you do last Friday, in the afternoon around four or five?

“Teach us to number our days so that we might gain a wise heart,” so writes the author of Psalm 90.

How do we number our days?

Do we even remember many of the days that have gone before?

How many days have I been alive: 22,491.

How many more days for me remain?

I wonder... Of the days I have lived, to how many have I given proper attention? The poet Tom Hennen offers a wonderful description of how I, and I think many of us treat the unfolding of our lives. He writes this in his poem, "The Life of a Day"

Like people or dogs, each day is unique and has its own personality quirks which can easily be seen if you look closely...But usually they just pass mostly

unnoticed, unless they are wildly nice, like autumn ones full of red maple trees...or grimly awful ones in a winter blizzard that kills the lost traveler and bunches of cattle. For some reason we like to see days pass, even though most of us claim we don't want to reach our last one for a long time. We examine each day before us with barely a glance and say, no, this isn't one I've been looking for, and wait in a bored sort of way for the next, when we

are convinced, our lives will start for real.

[Meanwhile, this day is going by perfectly well-

adjusted, as some days are, with the right amounts

of sunlight and shade, and a light breeze scented

with a perfume made from the mixture of fallen

apples, corn stubble, dry oak leaves, and the faint

odor of last night's meandering skunk. (p 32, Good

Poems: Selected and Introduced by Garrison

Keeler.]

I am struck by how often, days go by and I am so busy getting through them, and checking things off my list, that I fail to notice the totality, and singularity, of the day, the week, the month and years that slip through my fingers like water cupped in my hand. Or as *Isaac Watts* says in his hymn: "*Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all our years away; they fly forgotten as a*

dream dies at the opening day". ("O God our Help in
Ages Past")

*Teach us to number our days so that we might gain a
wise heart.*

Biblical Theologian, James L. Mays, writes in his
commentary on the Book of Psalms,

Time is the medium of our mortality and the favorite focus of our folly. We do not concentrate on the fact that we are given only a limited, though unknown, number of days and years and undertake to live them with wisdom. The young think they are immortal, the old despair because their time is over. Time is a burden when we have to wait, a scarcity when we are busy. It is a source of anxiety, illusion, remorse. Wisdom in contrast sees the time given as a unique opportunity, the

chance to be and to do in the fear of the Lord.” (Pp 295-

6, Psalms: Interpretation a Bible Commentary for

Teaching and Preaching).

Wisdom comes, not from living a long life, but rather

from living a focused, concentrated life in which we

endeavor to remember over and over again that it is

God in whom we live and move and have our being. Or

as the author of psalm 90 writes, “Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. (v. 1).

It is when I remember that it is God in whom we live and move and have our being, that I am able, to ground myself in the now of my existence. It is when I stop plotting, planning, agonizing and strategizing, that I am able to move beyond my angst and breathe deeply and remember that all that is happening is taking

place in the fields of the Lord. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” (Psalm 90: 2)

When I remember yet again that I am not in control.

Then, I can breathe and take in the everchanging

landscape. It is when I remember that I am a human

being, formed in my mother’s womb in God’s image

and likeness that I can make use of my unique gifts and talents in a focused way, being massively aware that my hopes, dreams and longings are not the final arbitrators of reality. It is when I remember God, remember my role in the world, it is then that I see the days set before me and can begin to live those days in such a way to acquire a bit of wisdom.

*Teach us O Lord, to number our days, that we might
gain a wise heart.*

Tomorrow, my friends, how will you wake and eat,
work and play, rest and sleep, so that those 24 hours
do not pass by, unnoticed, but rather are incorporated
into your soul, touching, changing, forming and
informing the remaining days of our lives.

Amen.