

## “Teach Us to Number Our Days”

(Psalm 90:1-12)

### INTRODUCTION:

1. Tuesday, I preached the funeral of a longtime friend and brother in Christ.
  - A. I met this brother over 20 years ago, although it doesn't seem that long, when I was preaching in Cleveland, TN, and he began worshipping with us at Michigan Ave.
  - B. He was a man that loved the Lord and was zealous to do His work.
    - i. Yet, even as he lay in bed weakened by his illness, he wished for a cure that he might live on, seeing he truly loved life.
    - ii. And, though at 88 he had lived over 32,000 days, he often spoke of how quickly it passed.
    - iii. But now he, as David spoke of in 1 Kings 2:2, has gone “the way of all the earth,” and all of us will one day go that way as well.
2. And, because the “way of all the earth,” the way of life, has been on my mind, I thought it might be beneficial to consider some of the things our God has sought to teach us about our existence here.
  - A. I want to do this so that we might do as David sought to do and learn from God to “number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).
  - B. For, brethren, life is short and we need godly wisdom to use our days correctly.

### BODY:

#### **I. Funerals are better than parties!**

- A. Why, because the wise man says, “the living will take it to heart” (Eccl. 7:1-4).
  1. In 7:1-2 the writer explains, “A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth; <sup>2</sup> Better to go to the house of mourning than to go to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men; and the living will take it to heart.”)
    - a. I know the severe nature of these statements (death better than birth/mourning than feasting) cause us to wince, but *death* poses the questions of life the writer is pressing.
    - b. Death makes us think about life, its brevity, and its spiritual quality as judged by God (Heb. 9:27 – “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement”).
  2. So, he continues in 7:3-4 to remind us that “Sorrow is better than laughter, for by a sad countenance the heart is made better. <sup>4</sup> The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.”
    - a. That sorrow makes the heart *better*, or that the heart is *made right*, is a superior translation to “glad,” seeing sorrow and a sad countenance help make the heart *better suited* for making right judgments (7:3).
      - i. Parties and laughter do not have that affect, often dulling the minds to its realities.
      - ii. Yet, every funeral truly anticipates our own.
    - b. So, the *heart*, the *understanding* and *thoughts*, of the **wise** reflects upon death over joy and is aroused to concern by death, while the *fool* seeks only laughter (7:4).
- B. The wise live life with the understanding of the inevitability of our end (Eccl. 3:18-19 – “I said in my heart, “God shall judge the righteous and the wicked, for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work. <sup>18</sup> I said in my heart, “Concerning the condition of the sons of men, **God tests them**, that they may see that they themselves are like animals.” <sup>19</sup> For what happens to the sons of men also happens to animals; one thing befalls them: as one dies, so dies the other. Surely, they all have one breath; man has no advantage over animals, for all is vanity.”).
  1. My friends, as gloomy as it may sound, an understanding of life's sure eventuality for all living things sets our life apart from all other living things.
    - a. If one refuses to contemplate the end of life and what follows, which is to face God in judgment, the distinction between the life of humans and animals disappears (3:17-18)!
    - b. Animals do not contemplate their demise or passing; they just live and die.
    - c. So, God presents to all the continual and abundant reminders in nature and in human life that life ends in death so that we might contemplate our purpose and ways on this earth.
  2. As is true of the animals, we only have one span of “breath” to prepare for that day (3:19)!

- a. To live your life without that realization is to live like an animal, following one's own appetites and urges, as so many live out their lives today in futility!
- b. A healthy knowledge of the end of all the living will allow us to pass God's test, pressing us see the value of choosing the higher, eternal, righteous ways of God!

## II. Life is a Vapor!

- A. We must grasp the fact of life's brevity and frailty (Psa. 39:4-6 – "Lord, make me to know my end, and what is the measure of my days, that I may know how frail I am. <sup>5</sup> Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor [breath – NASB, ESV]. <sup>6</sup> Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them."):
  1. No matter what age we may be, we need to *measure our days* and know the frailty of our lives, seeing there are no promises of long life and elder years! (Ex. High school mates)
  2. Most all who live very long on this earth will agree to the truth that "certainly every man at his best state is but vapor" (39:5).
    - a. How the time we have flies!
    - b. And, for those who do not contemplate the end of their life and prepare for it with the strength of each day, as the wise man said, "they busy themselves in vain; He heaps up riches, and does not know who will gather them" (39:6).
- B. We must choose to live for God *today*.
  1. James reminds us of the cold reality of life's uncertainty and how this should change our lives (James 4:13-17 – "Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit"; <sup>14</sup> whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. <sup>15</sup> Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin."):
    - a. If you are living your life with the thought that obedience to God is something you can, and even *will*, do in the future, you are living with no thought about your life!
    - b. You do not know what will happen tomorrow!
  2. Confidence in what you will do in the future is truly misplaced and exhibits a foolish arrogance that God does not ignore (Luke 12:16-21 – "Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. <sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?' <sup>18</sup> So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. <sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' <sup>21</sup> "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."): **So, don't be a fool and bet your soul on tomorrow!**

## III. Learn to number your days

- A. The psalmists, again, exhorts us to consider our lives in the one and only context which matters, which is in relation to God Himself (Psa. 90:1-12).
  1. God is our Maker, our dwelling place, and our judge to which we must answer (90:1-3 – "Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. <sup>3</sup> You turn man to destruction, and say, "Return, O children of men."):
    - a. Our eternal God is the source and sustainer of our lives.
    - b. As such He calls all to return to Him...or face Him in His wrath.
  2. The arrogance of our supposed lifespan and plans for the future melts when we compare it all to the eternal God (90:4-6 – "For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is

past, and like a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You carry them away like a flood; they are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: <sup>6</sup> In the morning it flourishes and grows up; in the evening it is cut down and withers.”).

- a. Consider the generations that have come and gone and know that we are like the grass that grows and is shortly cut down!
  - b. But, even the grass has a Maker that cares for it, which beckons us to consider our Maker and seek out His will (Matt. 6:30, 33-34 – “Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?... <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.”).
3. Understanding God’s wrath against sin and how ours are so clearly displayed before him (90:8-11 – “You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. <sup>9</sup> For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; we finish our years like a sigh. <sup>10</sup> The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away. <sup>11</sup> Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.”).
- a. The godly realize that God knows our every thought and actions, even the hidden.
  - b. Even if we live 80 years, life soon cut off and full of labor and sorrow.
  - c. How foolish it would be to compound those labors and sorrows by neglecting the One who made us, who sustains us, who wants to save us, and who will judge us!
- B. Let us seek from God one of life’s greatest gifts—that He would “**teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**” (90:12).

#### CONCLUSION:

1. The only true, abiding, and life-giving wisdom for you to submit and obey in this life is God’s truth, His gospel, His word (1 Peter. 1:22-25 – “Since you have **purified your souls in obeying the truth** through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, <sup>23</sup> having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, <sup>24</sup> because “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, <sup>25</sup> But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you.”).
  - A. With every day that passes your life is also passing.
  - B. What will you do with the enduring word, the gospel, that has been preached to you today?
2. Will you choose life and come to Christ and submit to Him in faith and obedience that the fleeting days of your life will have eternal rewards? Will you B-R-C-B-LF?