

IT'S NOT THAT MANY (Psalm 90:1-12)

Psalm 90:1–12-----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, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God. ³ You turn man to destruction, And say, "Return, O children of men." ⁴ **For a thousand years in Your** sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night. ⁵ You carry them away like a flood; They are like a sleep. In the morning they are like grass which grows up: ⁶ In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers. ⁷ **For we have been consumed** by Your anger, And by Your wrath we are terrified. ⁸ You have set our iniquities before You, Our secret sins in the light of Your countenance. ⁹ For all our days have passed away in Your wrath; We finish our years like a sigh. ¹⁰ **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. ¹¹ Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath. ¹² So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

Port Authority Police Department officers Will Jimeno and John McLoughlin were the last two people rescued from the World Trade Center following the September 11th terrorist attack. Oliver Stone told their story in his 2006 movie entitled "World Trade Center."

For Will Jimeno, however, that tragic day represents a defining moment in his Christian faith. Along with McLoughlin and three other officers, Jimeno entered Tower 1 on a mission to rescue as many civilians as possible. But almost as soon as they got inside, the building collapsed. McLoughlin and Jimeno were pinned under large blocks of concrete rubble and twisted steel. The other three officers were killed instantly.

For the next 10 hours, Jimeno and his partner fought through pain and thirst inside a cramped concrete tomb swirling with dust and smoke. At times, ruptured gas lines would send fireballs hurtling into the collapsed ruins, threatening to burn the two men to death. In another terrifying moment, heat from the fireballs "cooked off" the ammunition inside the firearm of a fallen officer, sending 15 bullets ricocheting around the chamber.

At that point, Jimeno's hope began to falter. "We had been crushed, burnt, and shot at by then," he said. "I was exhausted. I had done everything as a police officer that I could do, and everything as a human being. I was at that point where I just knew I was going to die."

Yet when things began to seem unbearable, Jimeno saw a figure coming toward him through the rubble. "He wore a glowing white robe and a rope belt," he said. "I couldn't see his face, but I knew it was Jesus." Jimeno saw an endless sea of waving grass over the figure's left shoulder and a lake over the right. He says, "I remember asking Jesus, '[When] I get to heaven, can I have some water?'"

According to Jimeno, the vision filled him with a new volley of hope. "I had this resurgence of optimism, this resurgence of the will to fight," he said. Turning toward McLoughlin, he yelled, "We're going to get out of this hellhole!" And they did. Several hours later, U.S. Marines and NYPD rescue workers lifted him out of his temporary prison, and Jimeno thanked God.

The events of that day have given him a new perspective on the brevity of life. He noted that, even if a person lives to be 90-years-old, that's only a little over 32,000 days. **"It's not that many,"** Jimeno said. "You have to do good and do right with the small period you have in between."

When you are young, you feel like you have tons of time left in life. But as you age, you realize that this is just not the case.

Since this is so, I've taken the title for my message today from the words of Will Jimeno in the story I just shared. In reference to the relatively small number of days on earth each of us is given, Jimeno said: **"It's Not That Many."**

And that's what I would like to speak to you about for a few minutes this morning just a few days before the beginning of 2020.

(Prayer)

Jean Calment was a French woman who lived to be 120 years old—the oldest person whose age could be verified (pic #1 is early 40's). (Pic #2—age 119). On her 120th birthday, she was asked to describe her vision for the future. Her reply was: **"Very brief."**

That's a good one, but I like this one better. Another woman was asked the benefits of living to the age of 102. After a pause, she answered, **"No peer pressure!"**

In Psalm 90, Moses is approaching the end of his 120 years on earth. This Psalm is the oldest of all 150 Psalms.

Moses gives us three important insights about this valuable commodity we call "time":

1. Life is very brief

In Psalm 89, the Psalmist wrote:

Psalm 89:47-----Take note of my brief lifespan!

Why do you make all people so mortal? (NET)

Psa 90:1-6 = contrast between the brevity of our lives and God's eternity.

Psalm 90:1-2:

LORD, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting,
You are God.

(Comments)

Psalm 90:4-----⁴ For a thousand years in Your sight Are like yesterday when it is past, And like a watch in the night.

(Comments)

In 90:3 & 5-6 Moses uses two images to picture the brevity of life:

---dust

Psalm 90:3-----³ You turn man to destruction [= **dust**],
And say, “Return, O children of men.”

Illus: buried...cremated...donated to science (doesn't matter, in essence, our physical bodies will still return to the dust from which they were created).

---grass

Psalm 90:5b-6-----^{5b}In the morning they are like **grass** which grows up: ⁶ In the morning it flourishes and grows up; In the evening it is cut down and withers.

Compared to eternity, our life is like a day

Missionary Amy Carmichael: “We will have eternity to celebrate the victories, but only a few hours before sunset to win them.”

[It's Not That Many!]

1. Life is very brief...

2. **Life is very uncertain**

I love the Living Bible's rendering of verse 5:

⁵We glide along the tides of time as swiftly as a racing river and vanish as quickly as a dream.

Illus: rafting trips with teenagers

---sometimes serene

---sometimes turbulent

(comments on how life is like this)

Illus: When we celebrate New Year's Day at the beginning of each year, many predictions are often made concerning the upcoming year... (comments)

One prediction many people fail to make:

Something unexpected will happen this year!

Life is filled with uncertainty!

Many respond to the brevity and uncertainty of life with a self-indulgent attitude---“*Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die...*”

Illus: Cubs games on TV and beer commercial: *“You only go around once in life so you’ve got to grab for all the gusto you can, even in the beer you drink...”*

Moses had a different attitude.

Because life is very brief and life is very uncertain, Moses closes Psalm 90 by telling us...

3. **Life is very valuable**

Vv. 10-12, once again, from the Living Bible:

¹⁰Seventy years are given us! And some may even live to eighty. But even the best of these years are often empty and filled with pain; soon they disappear, and we are gone. ¹¹Who can realize the terrors of your anger? Which of us can fear you as he should? ¹²Teach us to number our days and recognize how few they are; help us to spend them as we should.

Two reasons time is so valuable:

- (1) It is a **limited** resource *[It’s Not That Many!]*

It is like gold (it’s so rare that it costs \$1500 for just an ounce). Same with time.

- (2) It is an **influential** resource

Even though our time is very limited, how we spend the limited time we have determines what eternity will be like for us.

(comments)

First, we must ask, “Am I 100% sure that I will be with God forever and ever?”

(comments)

Second, we must ask, “How am I using the limited time that I have on this earth?”

2 Cor 5:10: ‘For we must all stand...’

Do you want to know one of **the most important questions** that you could ask this morning?

“How are you going to use the limited time that you have?”

(I’ve shared the following story with you before, but it’s a great story...)

Illus: A ham radio operator once remarked: The older I get, the more I enjoy Saturday mornings. Perhaps it’s the quiet solitude that comes with being the first to rise, or maybe it’s the unbounded joy of not having to be at work. Either way, the first few hours of a Saturday morning are

most enjoyable. A few weeks ago, I was shuffling toward the basement shack with a steaming cup of coffee in one hand and the morning paper in the other. What began as a typical Saturday morning, turned into one of those lessons that life seems to hand you from time to time.

Let me tell you about it.

I turned the dial up into the phone portion of the band on my ham radio in order to listen to a Saturday morning swap net. Along the way, I came across an older sounding chap, with a tremendous signal and a golden voice. You know the kind, he sounded like he should be in the broadcasting business. He was telling whoever he was talking with something about "a thousand marbles".

I was intrigued and stopped to listen to what he had to say.

"Well, Tom, it sure sounds like you're busy with your job. I'm sure they pay you well but it's a shame you have to be away from home and your family so much. Hard to believe a young fellow should have to work sixty or seventy hours a week to make ends meet. Too bad you missed your daughter's dance recital."

He continued, "Let me tell you something Tom, something that has helped me keep a good perspective on my own priorities."

And that's when he began to explain his theory of a "thousand marbles."

"You see, I sat down one day and did a little arithmetic. The average person lives about seventy-five years. I know, some live more and some live less, but on average, folks live about seventy-five years."

"Now then, I multiplied 75 times 52 and I came up with 3900 which is the number of Saturdays that the average person has in their entire lifetime. Now stick with me Tom, I'm getting to the important part."

"It took me until I was fifty-five years old to think about all this in any detail", he went on, "and by that time I had lived through over twenty-eight hundred Saturdays. I got to thinking that if I lived to be seventy-five, I only had about a thousand of them left to enjoy."

"So I went to a toy store and bought every single marble they had. I ended up having to visit three toy stores to round-up 1000 marbles. I took them home and put them inside of a large, clear plastic container right here in the shack next to my gear."

"Every Saturday since then, I have taken one marble out and thrown it away."

"I found that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight."

"Now let me tell you one last thing before I sign-off with you and take my lovely wife out for breakfast. **This morning, I took the very last marble out of the container.** I figure if I make it until next Saturday then I have been given a little extra time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time."

"It was nice to meet you Tom, I hope you spend more time with your family, and I hope to meet you again here on the band. 73 Old Man, this is K9NZQ, clear and going QRT, good morning!"

You could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off. I guess he gave us all a lot to think about.

I had planned to work on the antenna that morning, and then I was going to meet up with a few hams to work on the next club newsletter.

Instead, I went upstairs and woke my wife up with a kiss. "C'mon honey, I'm taking you and the kids to breakfast."

"What brought this on?" she asked with a smile.

"Oh, nothing special, it's just been a long time since we spent a Saturday together with the kids. Hey, can we stop at a toy store while we're out? I need to buy some marbles."

"Teach us to # our days..."

(Invitation)