

SERMON
First Lutheran Church
Aitkin, Minnesota

Psalm 90:1-12
Rev. Darrell J. Pedersen
November 16, 2014

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE

Kids, I would like you to line up by age, youngest to oldest, facing the people. Now, tell me how old you are. Does God take better care of two year olds or twelve year olds? Does God take better care of boys or girls? Does God take better care of short kids or of tall kids? Does God take better care of kids or adults?

Does God love people who live in the United States of America more than God loves people who live in Russia? Does God love people who are healthy more than people who are sick? Does God love people who have lots of money more than those who don't have very much?

Does God help people who make mistakes? Does God help people who don't believe in God? Does God help people who are sad, angry, hungry, lonely, afraid, lost...?

Why do we pray?

- Thank God for loving us.
- Tell God that we love God.
- Ask God to help us.
- Ask God to help others.
- Tell God we are sorry for doing something wrong
- Ask God to guide us in doing good things.
- Tell God how wonderful God is.

Will God listen to anyone's prayers? Does God answer prayers? Do you pray? Let's pray right now. Please repeat after me.

Dear God,

Thanks for loving and caring for us.

We are sorry that we don't always love and care for others.

Please help anyone who is in trouble today.

You are so wonderful God. We love you too.

Amen.

ADULT MESSAGE

I am sixty-two. Today, I could be $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through my life. Or, I could die tomorrow. I chose to preach on Psalm 90 this week. It raises up some deep questions about the value and the meaning of our lives.

The people of Israel are apparently in some sort of trouble, again, and have gathered in their place of worship to seek God's help and deliverance. This took place 2800 years ago. They, via this psalm, are pleading for God's grace. In a nutshell, the psalm says, "**Despite our faithlessness, despite our sinfulness – will you be here for us again? One more time, God, will you be our refuge?**"

In the first verse we hear, "**Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.**" "**Refuge**" can also be translated as "**dwelling place**." This place of refuge has been a gift from the eternal God. In verses 2-3, we are told that God has existed since before the mountains and that we humans are simply **dust**. You remember the scripture quote on Ash Wednesday? "**From dust you have come and to dust you shall return.**" In the second creation account we see God scooping up the dust of the earth, forming it into human beings and then breathing life into us. We come from the hand of God... And God cares for us along the way.

By verse 4, "**For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday, when it is past...**" God's perspective on the world and our lives is certainly greater than ours. A **thousand years equals one day** on God's calendar. We humans are easily swept away. We die like the grass.

In verse 7 we hear, "**For we are consumed by your anger; we are afraid because of your wrath.**" What we are is far less than God hopes for us. All through the Old Testament we see the people of God falling short of God's expectations for them. What are those expectations?

1. God creates, loves, protects, and provides for humans.
2. God calls for us to respond to God's divine caring with faith in God.
3. God calls for us to love and care for the neighbor and creation.

God's people usually start out well, but soon give in to their doubts, fail to trust God and proceed to go contrary to God's hopes and dreams for them. So do we. Despite my best intentions, I often let God down. Maybe you can say the same about yourself? We are deserving of God's anger and

judgment for the evil we do and for the good that we fail to do. God's anger is not a good place to be.

The ancient psalmist's people knew the **greatness of God**. They knew the **just expectations of God**. They knew of **God's refusal to let evil**, brokenness, hunger, sickness, selfishness and death **go unchecked** in the world. **But, they didn't know the heart of God**. They knew what God expected of them. But they didn't seem to know how much God loved them.

The psalmist returns, in verse 10, to the plight of humanity. "**The span of our life is seventy years, perhaps in strength even eighty.**" He goes on to say that life is full of labor, sorrow, passes quickly and is gone. Do the math on the earlier thought that a thousand years is like a day on God's calendar. If we live to eighty that means that **each of our lives is about two hours long** on God's calendar. We are so small on life's big movie screen. Yet God is our "**refuge!**" Our lives, hopes and dreams matter to God. We rest securely in the loving arms of the almighty and eternal God. By this ancient scale of human history, my little life is perhaps $\frac{3}{4}$ done and God cares about every moment of every day.

In verse eleven, the psalmist asks if we **realize just how big, powerful and amazing God is**. Why does God even mess with humans? Maybe it's because God loves us. If your child became a mass murder, would you still love them? I am sure that you would be ripped apart, crushed by how their life had turned out. But I'd like to think that you might still love them. So does God. God loves each and all of us way beyond what we could ever imagine.

In our last verse, the psalmist asks for God's help. "**So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.**" The psalmist is asking God to help us to reflect upon our lives and to realize:

- How much God loves us.
- The value we have in God's eyes.
- God's eternal pursuit of us to be living in God's life-giving embrace.
- The potential we have to love and trust God back,
- The opportunity we have to impact this world with God's love and caring.

Twenty eight hundred years ago, Israel was in trouble. Israel was guilty of forgetting about God. Israel had been trying to go their own way apart from God. Israel needed help from what they thought to be an angry God. How fortunate we are to be living these many years later. How fortunate we are to have **met God's deep and abiding love** in the person of Jesus. How fortunate we are to **know what God expects of us** in the love and care of the neighbor and the world. But how much more fortunate we are to know that **God faithfully loves us through every doubt and failure.**

We deserve judgment, but God gives love and forgiveness. We try to build our own shabby, little life, but God gives us eternal dwelling and refuge. We try to go our own lonely way, but God, again and again, invites us to share life, love and joy with God and with each other forever.

Do you know the **greatness of God**? Do you know God's **intolerance for the neglect of the poor**, the widow and the orphan? Do you know God's intolerance for **failure to welcome the stranger**? Do you know God's intolerance for **not seeking justice and truth**? **And do you know the heart of God?**

How we use the resources that God shares with us, is all about **testing our wings of faith**. How we use what we have for the care of others is all about us **truly trusting God** with all of our lives and possessions. Have you **tested God's patience**? Every one of us has. Have you **tested the wings of your faith?** God **waits, watches and delights** every time we do.

I am $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through my life, or maybe I die tomorrow. Another winter is upon us. We are so small and insignificant in the scope of human history. Yet God has been, is and always will be our refuge, our dwelling place. God loves and cares for us every day. God waits for our loving, trusting response every day. **Yet, ultimately, the measure of our faith is in Jesus.** Jesus is the One who loves and trusts God totally for us, for our everyday life and for our eternal salvation. That kind of love is something to **celebrate**, to be **thankful for**, and to **let flow into and through** our lives every day.

Today God wants our lives to count

- For the blessing and benefit of our own precious-to-God lives,
- For the blessing and benefit of God's precious human family and world.

God is eternal and **this life is short**. **But, YOU still matter to God**. And so does the **whole rest of the world and its people**. **Believe that and live each day to the fullest** in God's love and care. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Please join me in this prayer. (Written by Sharlande Sledge, in "Prayers & Litanies for the Christian Seasons," Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1999, p. 31.)

Lord,

"You are the memory of where we have been and the anticipation of where we are going. Though we are not yet in possession of all we have been promised, here and there along the way we catch glimpses of our eternal home. O Lord, you are our home along the way and at the end of our journey. For traveling with us, for rescuing us when we are lost, and for calling us into your holy place, thanks be to you, O God, our eternal home."

Amen.