

PSALM 90: 1-6, 9-10, 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,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

³ You turn us back to dust,
and say, 'Turn back, you mortals.'

⁴ For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.

⁵ You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

⁶ in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.

⁹ For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.

¹⁰ The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.

¹² So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

This Psalm is all about time and our relationship to time. Why is time such a focus in our lives? Sure there is the day to day busyness, and for some of us with multiple tasks and responsibilities too there is never enough time to do everything we need to do or want to do. For others of us, though, the fleetingness of time becomes even more front and centre as our health realities, age or having someone in our lives marking their time with us becomes real. We can never have enough time to do all we want to do or savour and enjoy the things we want to savour and enjoy. And yet, as we know, whether we are aware of it on any given day or not, we are all marking time. We are all mortal. Everything truly valuable, meaningful and precious to us is subject to time.

And yet, this psalm is also inviting us not to cope with the fleetingness of time by ignoring it or pretending it doesn't exist. Mortality is real in case we haven't noticed or had to confront it with someone close to us in our lives yet or not. Rather, what this psalm invites us to do is "count our days that we may gain a

wise heart.” Wisdom and a heart that is wise, according to this psalm, can only be gained as we learn to “count our days.” But what does it mean to count our days?

Counting our days means asking ourselves every day we live whether what we are doing with our time, however much of it we have, is worth it. Does it matter? Or are we wasting our time on things we would probably stop doing if we knew our days were counted? As the writer David Brooks asks in his book, *The Road to Character*: are we focussing our best energies every day on the “resume” virtues or the “legacy” ones. Resume virtues are the accomplishments we put on our resumes – where we’ve travelled, how much money we’ve made, what we’ve accomplished in our work lives, our personal achievements. But our legacy virtues are about how deeply we have loved and been loved, how we have found some courage, grace, compassion and forgiveness... How have we cared, served and given, and how enriching and transforming have we experienced it all in the time we have been given and in the circumstances in which we have found ourselves?

For Brooks and the psalmist, however, there is also something additional to gaining wisdom of heart when learning to count our days. The psalmist contrasts the fleetingness of human life with the eternity they name: God. God is not only creator of all that is. No. God has always been and will always be. God is “from everlasting to everlasting.” So why does this matter? It matters because counting the value of our days also means counting what in our lives will transcend our days? What in our lives will connect us with a reality that is eternal? People often refer to their “legacy” work by which they mean that which they leave for their children and grandchildren, or for the organizations or causes they are a part of that will outlast them. This is important. What are we involved with and what relationships and bonds will carry the impact of what we’ve given after we’re gone in the flesh?

But the eternity we name “God” is also about that which is bigger than even that. It’s all about love. What we give in genuine love and what we receive out of genuine love is bigger than anything else in this world. The truth of what is given and received in love is bigger than any actual mark or trace we leave behind in the world: whether in our family history, the causes we have given ourselves to, the plaques with our names on them, or our pictures on walls somewhere. Love who is God is what lasts eternally, and only as we participate in such love within our

lifetimes, are we also part of the everlastingness which transcends time. Not only does this relativize all we can possibly accomplish or do while we are still alive and breathing, but it may take the pressure off of us having to dot all the i's and cross all the t's in our lives before we die. Perhaps we can let go and zero in on what truly matters: to learn how to love ever more deeply and to give ourselves the time and space to absorb all the love there is to soak up. Out of such loving grows wisdom of heart. And it is such loving that will make our time here on earth truly eternal even as we mark time.

PRAYER: Everlasting God, enlarge us... Enlarge us not with more time, but with greater wisdom of heart as we mark our time. Whether we mark our time in days and months, or perhaps many years yet in terms of the projects we are engaged in, remind us that we are only mortal. Teach us to discern what is truly important in our lives. Draw us into your love so that it is your love we participate in with the quality of love and care we put into all we do and all with whom we engage here and now. Give us the peace of heart to let go that which does not matter in the larger scheme of things. Teach us to let go the grievances that are petty in the larger scheme of things. Teach us to put our energies into every opportunity to love. Teach to become as good in receiving love as in sharing it. In Jesus' name we pray; Amen.