

REFLECTION
Greg Lloyd
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Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church
Psalm 90

Good morning folks. I'm going to talk about Psalm 90, and what it means to me.

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.

This psalm is attributed to Moses. So it's unusual that way. And Moses says The Lord is our dwelling place – we reside in him as he resides in us. Our dwelling place includes our physical home, our spiritual home, our family, our community, and so on.

Our dwelling place is sacred. It is nature – wild and abundant. We live in our dwelling place, which is the same as God. It makes me sad that some are plundering our dwelling place in the name of extracting resources to sell for profit benefiting mostly small groups of people who have learned how to game the political system by buying politicians or electing officials who will do the bidding of the ones who are paying them.

Our culture has succumbed to the “Get rich quick” mentality. Do you smell that awful smell in the air – worse than rotten eggs? That's the smell of money.

But most of us, who do not wish to destroy anything, or get rich at the expense of others – we also carry some of the blame. For years, we have lived in abundant comfort, heating our homes and powering our household devices, driving our vehicles, with the power derived from extraction industries.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place and, excuse us Lord, but we have been destroying you – our dwelling place.

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.

We are all mortals – we live and one day we will die. The psalm describes God as timeless and everlasting. God has been here forever, but humans die – like a dream of death and rebirth continuing on thru time.

Knowing now that I am going to die – maybe sooner, maybe later – it's all in his hands. I didn't think about much when I was growing up. Son of well-off parents

who were not rich, yet gave way too much to their sons, I lost sight of the important things. The important things were not the gifts or presents. The important things were the love, the sharing, the caring, the spending time together, the connections, the conversations.

For someone on the receiving end of these presents, it was hard to know what my parents had done that got them to the place where they could afford to provide all these things. They were so anxious to leave behind the years of wrath – including WWII and the depression. Have mercy on me Lord.

7. For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed.
8. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.
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 70 years, or perhaps 80, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble they are soon gone, and we fly away.
11. Who considers the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you.
12. So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

This part of the psalm describes human life – a lot of anger and wrath. It's hard not to feel anger and wrath at the actions of some humans who – when confronted with overwhelming evidence of climate change, pollution, all the external results of burning fossil fuels – they can deny the truth of these realities and attempt to cover it up. This would seem to me to invite the wrath of God.

But our time is soon over and the next set of dwellers will be left to figure it out. "For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past."

Moses asks God to "teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart." I was changed by the 60's. My worldview was challenged and shattered. But something else emerged from that that was strong and real. I became aware of other possible ways of being. When I think about what Moses said "teach us to count our days", it was kinda like saying "Pay attention to the here and now" – this is how you gain a wise heart.

And, it seems to me, that a wise heart is a much better goal to have in the long run – rather than constantly striving to be better, to have more.

Because in reality, we are enough as we are. We have what it takes to make us happy because God is in our hearts. God is our dwelling place!

There is enough for everyone!

13. Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants.
14. Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.
15. Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil.

16. Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.
17. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands!

Prosper the work of our hands.

So we have a lot of work to do to get our dwelling place in order. I can't think of a better place to do this work than our church – the Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church.

The church is a big part of our dwelling place, where we can learn how to gain a wise heart. Where maybe, just maybe we can have a small impact on our dwelling place to make it truly sacred, dwelling in God as he dwells in us. Prosper the work of our hands. O Prosper the work of our hands.

Briefly, I want to thank you, the people of my dwelling place, who have showered me with prayers, cards, and well-wishes. I feel and appreciate your care for me in my time of need. And a shout out to the women's group who made my prayer shawl. It is so warm, I can feel all your thoughts and prayers inside me, helping me to get healthy. I love you all.