

Making the Most of Each Moment (Part One)

Psalm 90:12-17

“Teach Us!”

Over the next couple of weeks I want to look at “Making the most of each moment in our lives.” When we talk about the possibilities of the moment, with it comes a sense of anticipation, a sense of what could happen, a hope that something will result. In fact we should approach each day with the hope for advancement or progress.

Seizing the moment is normally done with a sense of risk. Each and everyday, you and I are faced with choices and circumstances that we can either ignore and hope that they will go away, or embrace and allow God to make the most out of them. We can get wrapped up in the events of the day, going through heartless motions, or we can see this moment right now as a chance to stop – listen, learn, embrace, value, and savor.

What are some things that we as a Church can do to make sure that we don’t lose the value of the moment? Over the next couple of weeks, I want to look at three things we can allow God to do within us to make sure that we have embraced the value each moment that comes our way – that we would not miss another chance for a heart of wisdom, a satisfying life, and peace in the sovereignty of God.

The text I want to use is found in **Psalm 90:12-17**. It is a Psalm of Moses, in fact considered one of the oldest psalms recorded. Within its words, Moses paints a picture of a pure and holy God who is justified to bring his wrath upon us, yet a God of unfailing love, who chooses to look past our shortcomings and who works within each and everyone of our lives. Let’s read **Psalm 90:12-17**:

12 Teach us to realize the brevity of life, so that we may grow in wisdom. 13 O Lord, come back to us! How long will you delay? Take pity on your servants! 14 Satisfy us each morning with your unfailing love, so we may sing for joy to the end of our lives. 15 Give us gladness in proportion to our former misery! Replace the evil years with good. 16 Let us, your servants, see you work again; let our children see your glory. 17 And may the Lord our God show us his approval and make our efforts successful. Yes, make our efforts successful!

This morning I want to specifically look at verse 12-13. In order for us to make the most of any moment, we need God to teach us. **Every life event is sent our way to teach us something about God and something about ourselves.** Life is a lesson and if we fail to learn the lessons, we will find ourselves living meaningless and empty lives. In fact, I think it is safe to say that if our day has not brought with it a lesson about God or ourselves, then I believe that it is a day wasted. Seizing the moment means to make the most of it to learn from God.

Hanging in the US National Gallery of Art in Washington DC is a series of four paintings by Thomas Cole. The series is called "The Voyage of Life". The four paintings each depict a stage of life: childhood, youth, manhood and old age.

The first painting is of childhood. It shows a mountain with a dark cave at its base and a river flowing out of the cave. A beautiful timber boat is gliding out of the cave into a world of lush vegetation, flowers in bloom and a peaceful, gentle surface on the water. Inside the boat is a laughing baby with a Guardian Spirit standing right behind. The painting shows childhood as a time of wonder and joy.

The second painting is called "youth". We see the same boat not traveled further downstream. The baby has grown into a teenage boy. He stands in the rear, confidently steering the boat towards a majestic white castle off in the distance. The riverbanks are still lush and green and the Guardian Spirit stands on those banks, watching the young man boldly chart his course. The painting shows youth as a time of dreaming and absolute self confidence that nothing can hold me back.

When we look at the third painting the scene has changed dramatically. The youth has become a man, the river has become a set of raging rapids, and the sky has become dark and threatening. The castle of dreams is nowhere to be seen and the boat's rudder has broken. Up ahead lie treacherous rocks, with white water crashing all around them. The man in the boat is caught up by forces he can't control. With the rudder broken he cannot steer his boat. All he can do is look up to the sky and pray. Meanwhile the Guardian Spirit sits hidden in the clouds. The artist is picturing adulthood as a time when the joy and wonder of childhood has been tamed by the difficult and tragic experiences of life, when the confidence and boldness of youth have been swept away by the harsh realities of life.

The final painting is called "Old Age". The battered and weathered boat has finally reached the ocean. The dark clouds remain but the water is still. The old man in the boat has his eyes fixed firmly on the clouds out there in front of him, clouds pierced by the glorious light of heaven, the light pierced by angels coming to and fro. For the first time in his life the man sees the Guardian Spirit that has accompanied him on his journey. It comes, takes him by the hand and prepares him for his journey into the heavens.

We need to be progressing in our lives – eventually turning our thoughts towards heaven, towards our heavenly relationship with God, thinking about our heavenly home, and the great heavenly reunion with those who have embraced the faithfulness of God. According to our text, what lesson is Moses crying out for? Verse 12 tells us “Teach me the brevity of life, teach me to number my days, teach me to make the most out of my life” I believe that it is lesson of our faithfulness to God. A cry for God to teach us faithfulness (Example of society: Marriages, friendships, families)

1. Teach Me Faithfulness

“God, teach me to live my life for you during the short time I am here on this earth.” Remembering the source of this Psalm really brings with it some insight. The children of Israel constantly questioned God and his faithfulness when the reality of what was going on around them proved otherwise. Even when God called them to go and take the land he had promised them, they didn’t trust God enough to obey and thus led to the 40 years of wandering.

Did Moses learn the lesson of faithfulness? Did he see the value of faithfulness? **God has called us to live faith-filled lives of trust and obedience otherwise we will go through life living empty and meaningless lives.** We need to learn from God otherwise we will continue in our cycles of insanity – doing the same things over and over again with the same results. **Proverbs 2:2-6** tells us:

2 Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. 3 Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. 4 Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. 5 Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord, and you will gain knowledge of God. 6 For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

It is one thing to gather truth, but another thing to gain wisdom. Wisdom is knowing how to apply truth. **Wisdom is realizing the faithfulness and the trustworthiness of God and mirroring it back to him through our lives.**

Faithfulness is developed one day at a time, one event at a time, one trial and tribulation at a time. **A successful life is composed of successful days of honoring and trusting God.** The life lesson of faithfulness is a hard lesson – standing strong when you don’t feel like it, trusting God when things aren’t going our way, believing that God’s ways are better for us than our own ideas.

In 1927 the wife of Scottish preacher Arthur Gossip died suddenly. When he returned to the pulpit he preached a sermon titled "When Life Tumbles In, What Then?" In that sermon the preacher compared life to watching a plane pass through the sky during wartime. There you are, lying on your back watching a plane fly gracefully across a brilliant sunlit blue sky when all of a sudden it is blown apart by gunfire and falls to earth tumbling into a tangled mess of metal. Only on this occasion the gunfire was the tragically unexpected death of his beloved wife.

The preacher went on to explain that he didn't understand this life, but what he did know was that during this darkest period of his life he needed his faith more than ever before. "You people in the sunshine may believe the faith, but we in the shadow must believe it because we have nothing else." Without his faith there was no hope.

Faithfulness is a difficult lesson to learn. Today, God is teaching us faithfulness, both in great times of joy, in times of loss, or in times of despair. God is always faithful and we must learn to live lives that mirror his faithfulness back to him. Another lesson we are to learn confidence.

2. Teach Me Confidence.

In verse 13 Moses asks God, “Lord, come back to us.” I am reminded of a sticker I once saw that stated, “If it feels like God is far away, guess who moved.” **Matthew 28:20** Jesus tells his disciples:

20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure (be confident) of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

*For God has said, “I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.” * 6 So we can say with confidence, “The Lord is my helper, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?” **Hebrews 13:5-6***

The reality is that Moses is calling upon Jehovah, the God of the covenant, the God who never breaks his promises. **Having God always by our side should bring confidence in him.** Although there may be times when it feels like God is a long way off, God is right there by our side. There is a song that I wrote during one of the most difficult times in my life - a song that reminds me to be confident in my God. It is entitled, “You Are There” and the words go like this:

No matter how I feel, you're watching over me
No matter what I hear you want to speak to me
The more I feel alone, you're standing next to me
The more I can't go on, you offer hope to me

Lord, you are faithful and true
Nobody love me like You
You're always with me when I need a friend
And when life is more than I can bear
You tell me to place it in Your care
It's good to know You're with me each time I feel alone
You are there.

I have learned to be less confident in myself and more confident in God. I will let myself down, I will fall, I will not always do what I am suppose to do, but despite my inabilities I can be confident in my God. The cry of Moses is not for God to return to his people, but a cry for God's people to return back to him. How can we loose confidence in God? The answer, when we forget who he is and what he has promised.

Sometimes we can allow the intensity of the Storms of life to overpower the things we have learned and experienced, and the promises of God. (Hong Kong –

Childhood) Instead, God has called us to stand strong, remain faithful and build our confidence in God. In fact, many times faithfulness will build confidence. The more we trust God and stay connected with him, the more we will see his trustworthiness and build confidence in him.

As an individual this morning, as a child of God, seizing the moment that we have right now requires that we be people who are still willing to be taught by the great teacher - that we embrace the lessons of faithfulness and allow it to turn into immovable confidence in our God.

The Holocaust is one of the terribly traumatic episodes of modern history, yet it has also yielded some astounding stories of bravery and faith. In France a Jewish family were hidden by some concerned French nationals in the basement of their house. The Jewish family waited and waited for their deliverance. At the end of the war these words were found scribbled on the wall of that basement:

"I believe in the sun even when it does not shine.
I believe in love even when it is not given.
I believe in God even when he is silent."

How we embrace this moment in our lives - how we stop and think about what we are living for, how we take each event (whether good or bad) and respond, is important to God. The world measures success by wealth, power, numbers, and yet God measures success by our faithfulness and humility. Church, we have a chance today, and the next day, and the next day, to see our lives change by the power of God. Are we willing to stand strong? Are we willing to learn from God?

May God teach us to be faithful and may his faithfulness build confidence in our lives.
Let's pray!