

God is Eternal

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Preacher: Rev. Ewen Matheson

[0 : 00] Seeking the Lord's blessing for a few moments, together we'll turn to Psalm 90 that we've just sung together, Psalm 90. We'll read verses 1 and 2, we'll include the title, Psalm 90, a prayer of Moses, the man of God.

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, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. And so especially the words in verse 2, at the end of verse 2 in Psalm 90, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

When we come to an evening like this, and to recognize and mark its significance, we speak of this evening and the final hours of this day in a way that we do not speak about any of the other days or evenings of this year.

There is loaded, of course, a great deal of emotive experience and consideration as we move into the last few hours of a year.

[1 : 21] And as we see for ourselves the passing of one year to another. There are all kinds of emotions. There is the fervorcy of the different memories that we engage in.

As we reflect and look back on what the last 12 months has meant to us and the experiences that we have gone through. Coupled with this, of course, too, is the reality of the hopes and the aspirations that we have moving forward and going forward.

But it appears to us that like every new year and at the end of every year, we feel that there is a very fast pace to the end of the year.

Often we feel unprepared for the vastness of what we ourselves anticipate. And also part of this, too, is the reality of the brevity of human life.

And we become conscious that it is the movement of another year, not just in the world, but with ourselves. And it grants to us the opportunity to take a moment to consider our lives and to consider what it is we're living for.

[2 : 40] And as we turn here to Psalm 90, we can reflect here that this is a psalm and the title tells us that it is a prayer of Moses. And it's a psalm that is reflecting upon the brevity of life.

And as it does so, it does so with a contrast with the reality of who God is. In verse 2, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God.

And then immediately into verse 3, you return man to the dust. And then again, as we continue through the psalm, we are told in verse 9, When our days pass away under your wrath, we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

The years of our life are 70, or by reason of strength, 80. And so he compares how short and brief life is, and how frail human life is, to the vastness and the greatness and the majesty of who God is. And so from one sense of the scene of time, and the recognition of days and months and years and decades, there is the contrast with the majesty and mystery of the God who declares himself as the great I am, the God who tells us that he is from everlasting to everlasting.

[4 : 08] This is the God who Moses has followed. This is the God who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush. And when Moses inquired of him, and he said, Who will I say sent me?

God declares to him, I am that I am. And he gives his life to obedience to this God. And he has given himself in this way to follow God.

Through all the challenges and the difficulties of year by year, of the frustrations of the pilgrimage, of the anguishes he must go through, and the hope that is set before him.

And it is God who he follows. I am that I am. He has given his life to him. And he here surveys his days, and surveys life, and considers and reflects upon who God is.

This is something that we ought to do. And how this evening gives us this opportunity. As we survey the world around us, and we survey everything that has gone on in the wider world, as we think of all the different things, we survey even our own local situation.

[5 : 29] We consider our losses and our gains. We consider all the different things that we've gone through. All the different things we've gone through as a community. All the different experiences.

And we survey ourselves too. And we reflect upon these months of this year. And we wonder what has happened to us. What has become of us. How have we fared in all the challenges and all that has gone on.

But the one greatest need that we must survey is God. To know God. And more than this.

To know who this God is. In one respect, there is something that will always remain mysterious. We cannot delve the great depths.

We cannot comprehend all the greatness of who God is. And yet in another sense, there is something to learn. Something to experience.

[6 : 29] Something to know of who God is. Because this is what He is inviting us to. And He is inviting us to what this is in and through knowing His Son.

To come to know this God. To follow Him. And to give all our days to Him. And to be committed and resolved in this way. And to understand who it is we worship.

Why we are here this evening. Why we have chosen to spend this hour here. To consider and reflect upon who He is. And to grow in our love to Him.

Our devotion toward Him. To think of the truth that we follow. And the God that we declare that we love and worship with all our heart and all our soul.

And there is therefore an invitation this evening. To come and survey. Beyond this night. Beyond this year.

[7 : 34] Beyond these years. Beyond this world. Beyond this life. Beyond time. To consider and reflect with eternity in our sight.

And to recognize the greatness of who God is. To understand that from everlasting to everlasting. God is eternal. This is who God is.

And this is the right way. that we engage ourselves to meet every and any challenge that a new day or a new year will bring in our path with the comprehension and understanding of the eternal God, of the majesty of his being, of the magnificence of who he is, and tonight to lift our own minds beyond what we see, beyond what is going on, beyond the hours and minutes that are ticking away, beyond even time, to think of who this God is, the unchangeable and eternal God, to think of how different he is, infinite, eternal, unchangeable, to lift ourselves in our thoughts, in our hearts, in our souls, in admiration and adoration of who God is.

So, if we will, let us consider briefly three elements in this regard. First of all, we learn here, God is eternal, speaking to us that God is self-existent.

This is a psalm, of course, that is well known to us. We just sung some of the verses in the Scottish Psalter, verses that we know well, verses that are read and sung so often.

[9 : 34] They speak to us of God being our dwelling place. God being there from all eternity. They speak to us of the brevity of life.

They speak to us in this way and in this manner, as we considered in verses 9 and 10, that even if a life is to have many decades, even if there is to be a general thought pattern of an average of life of maybe 70 or 80, that all the decades, they're even in the longevity of life.

There is a moment that comes where this life ends. And Moses here records it for us in verse 9, like a sigh.

Like a sigh, the breath ends. The soul leaves the body. We leave this world, this place of time and space.

And we return, as he tells us here, back to the dust from where we came. Our bodies return into the earth. In a moment, all of these things change.

[10 : 42] You remember how Jesus addressed this in the parable of the man who was building bigger and bigger barns. And how God comes to him on that night and speaks to him and says to him, Fool, this night your soul will be required of you.

Whose then will these things be? And we've spent a lifetime collecting things. We have these things, things that are precious to us.

Not just things of our material possession, but things maybe of sentimental value, things that we will not be parted with. And we hold them close to us. They go where we go.

We hold them. And they will be taken from us because we will leave this scene of time and space.

We will leave this world. And whose then will these things be?

They will be left behind. And we are gone. Moses is seen here that there is this average span of life in verse 10, 70, or maybe 80.

[11 : 47] Moses here is writing this psalm at the end of his own life. He has far exceeded these decades. This is a man who lives till he is 120. But he knows that even his own life is confined in this way.

That every human life is confined, limited by time, limited by the number of our days. Our years are numbered, and they are numbered by God.

You remember how Jesus, in Luke chapter 12, how he speaks there of not being anxious about anything. And he teaches us in that lesson that we cannot add a single hour to our lives.

We are unable to do this. Our days, our years are numbered. The day of our death is set before us. We cannot add a single hour.

We are those who are subject to the unrelenting march of time constantly upon us. There is seasons. There is years.

[12 : 50] There is decades. There is memorial. There is all of these different elements. Even every morning we feel it. Age catching up with us.

The process of time. The older we get. The reality of our human frame under its limitations. And the reality even, as Moses is speaking here, of the generations of people in verse 1.

This is what is happening. We are just part of this continual cycle of generation after generation. We are part of this. We are recipients of it.

And if God, if the Lord will tarry, it goes on. And yet here, from the very beginning of this psalm, these words, their contrast to the reality of the human limitations under time.

In verse 1, you have been our dwelling place. Before the mountains were brought forth, before the earth was formed, from everlasting to everlasting, you are so great.

[13 : 56] You are our security and our strength. You are our dwelling place in all our generations. You think of Moses saying this.

You think of the importance of a dwelling place. The struggles of our own people for their land was a struggle of identity, a struggle of belonging, a struggle for security.

You think, too, of the children of Israel here as they anticipate the promise of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, and you put on your news and you see the struggle continuing today, a struggle of identity and security.

all of these different elements included here. And here is Moses. He never stepped into the land of Canaan.

He grew up in Egypt. He left Egypt under threat of his life. He spent the time of the wilderness, 40 years in Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness.

[15 : 07] And God called him to go back to his people, to take them out of Egypt, to take them into the wilderness, to take them to Sinai, to continue for 40 years in this journey, and to spend his days in a tent, moving from place to place.

And we say to Moses, where is your dwelling place? Where do you abide? Where is your security? Where is your belonging? And he says to us, the Lord is my dwelling place.

This is where I belong. He is my refuge and my strength. He is my confidence. He has been throughout the generations of his people that this is where we belong.

We belong in him. We belong with him. We find our security throughout all the generations, though we are passing through this world like sojourners and pilgrims, our dwelling places in him, the everlasting God, the eternal God, the one who does not change.

You remember how James speaks of him as unchanging. No variation in him. The unchanging God. And here Moses tells us in verse 2, before the mountains.

[16 : 32] The ancient people considered that the mountains had been there from all ages. That there was some kind of sense of security and constancy with the mountains.

They looked to the mountains in that way. And here Moses says, before mountains, there was God. Then he says in verse 2, ever you formed the earth and the world, before the mountains there was God.

Before the earth there was God. Then he says in verse 2, from everlasting to everlasting, you are God. Before the mountains there was God. Before the earth there was God. Before time there was God. God always was. Always is. I am that I am. And Moses gives to us the first words in the first books of the Bible.

And he opens the Bible for us and he says, in the beginning, God. In the beginning. He is telling us God was always there.

[17 : 38] That there is no beginning to God. There was a beginning to the mountains. There was a beginning to the earth. There was a beginning to time. But there is no beginning to God.

In the beginning was God. John of course speaks in the same manner. In the prologue of his gospel he tells us that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He always was there. Always is. The great I am. We speak of God as eternal. Those who gave us our catechism recognize the importance of this.

The first three questions of the catechism are an introduction and then they bring us to the main subject and they bring us to the magnificence and the exaltation of that great question that they want us to comprehend and understand.

What is God? And they're asking us to contemplate in our mind the greatest of all questions for the human mind to wrestle with.

[18 : 44] What is God? God is a spirit infinite eternal. God is eternal.

They want us to comprehend this. We think that our souls are eternal. We think of how God has placed eternity in our hearts. We think that our souls are going to go on forever.

After we have left this seed of time our soul goes before God and our soul is forever either in heaven or hell and in response to how we ourselves have responded to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the giving of his son.

We think of the angels as eternal beings but the angels had a beginning. We had a beginning.

There was a time where we were not. There was a time where we did not exist. There was a time where the angels did not exist.

[19 : 49] The angels and you and I have had a beginning. God made us. God made us. God made us. And there was this time where there was nothing.

There was nothing but God because there was never no God. You know the children ask this question and you wonder what they're thinking in their minds and they ask who made God? Who made God? How do you answer them when they ask you that question? Well the answer is God was not made. God did not have a cause.

He is uncaused. He is self-existent. He is self-sustaining. He is entirely independent. The theologians use the language of the aseity of God.

It's a Latin word that means of one's self. In the beginning were the first words that Moses gave to us in the Bible. The first words of the Bible.

[21 : 02] In the beginning there was God. There was never a time where God did not exist. He is there even before time. From everlasting to everlasting.

You are God. God is eternal. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is self-existent. Secondly, God is timeless.

And so what we understand is that He always is. You and I think what age does to us. And over the last few days I've heard a number of people speak about how age has affected them. how they're unable to walk the way that they used to. Unable to have the vigor to walk up and down steps or walk for miles on end.

The things that they could do in their youth. We recognize that we all suffer the sense of decay. It is the reality of corruption. Our entire being, body and mind suffer this decay.

[22 : 14] We're changing. And whether we like it or not, we cannot stop it. We cannot stop the march of time. And we cannot stop what it is doing to us.

Our entire being under age, under time. And then we come to realize who God is. There is no change.

There is no age. He does not measure how old He is. He is the I am. Always is the being one. With no dependence, no succession, no change. Always the same without time. You see, what Moses is saying in this psalm is that I'm going the generation, going us, the generations of my people.

I'm going the same way I see it in my life. I know what's going on. I'm going to pass away I'm going to face death. I'm going to be taken from this world.

[23 : 20] I know this. I'm feeling it in my body, in my bones, in my being, in every morning. I feel what's going on in my inner being and in my outer being.

I feel these things. And He says that He recognizes that He is going to return to the dust. Christ. But it's not just us that are changing. We think of this world and we survey it and we recognize this world has changed so much and it changes quickly and we feel ourselves that so often the time is against us.

The things that we want to do, we're missing the opportunities, we're losing the opportunities. We recognize too that change keeps getting imposed upon us and we battle and wrestle with it and we come to realize that life is brief, transitory, and limited.

We know that our years and our new years are limited but we know that there is one who is different. God alone is different.

You remember how the catechism speaks first of all that God is infinite. That means that He's not limited to space, that He's omnipresent. That means He's everywhere immediately.

[24 : 52] Then it says and it's connected in the masterful way of the language of the catechism, infinite, eternal. And so what the catechism has said about space now moves into the reality of time.

And as the catechism has said that God is not limited to space, now it says God is eternal, saying He's not limited to time. The theologian says, Hodge says, that God as He is free from all limitations of space, so He is exalted above all the limitations of time.

He is not more in one place than in another, but is everywhere equally present. So He does not exist during one period of duration more than another.

With Him there is no distinction between the present, past, and future, but all things are equally and always present to Him.

With Him duration is an eternal now. The hymn writer said in more accessible terms, change and decay in all around us see, O thou who changes not, abide with me.

[26 : 20] Thirdly, and finally, there is this sense too of when we consider that God is from everlasting to everlasting, that it's speaking to us of stability. God always is, and always will be.

There is nobody, and there is nothing like this. It's not just that we change, everything's changing. People change, and people go.

And here we're brought in to the one who inhabits eternity, and we are told that He is eternal. And Moses is here communicating to us the one who has sustained Him through all the challenges of every day and every month and every year, through all the difficulties and disappointments, through everything He has found the one who is King of King and Lord of Lords, is King and Lord over time and eternity.

And Moses has said, He's our dwelling place. He's the one who gives us that stability. And as we go into the unknown, that we're encouraged to face whatever is before us, whether it be the anticipation of happy times, or the fear of affliction and difficulties, that we are being called by Moses to look to God, fill out hope with Him, the one who changes not, the one who always is and always will be.

He is worthy of our trust. We would have never imagined that as we survey our society at the end of this year, even just a few years ago, what our society would be like.

[28 : 22] Everything is so unsteady and unstable. The world constantly in conflict, people in chaos and confusion, all the difficulties and challenges we face ourselves, we don't know what's ahead of us, personally, or in our families or in our homes, but one thing we do know is that we have a God who changes not, who is always there and always will be.

And He encourages us, therefore, to put all our trust in Him, to put our trust and faith in Him through looking to the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to move into the unknown with faith, with a settled conviction of the one who is always the same as our surety and our dwelling place, and who is worthy of our worship, worthy of our worship, worthy of our commitment, worthy that He would be our dwelling place.

This psalm and these words remind us of the magnificence and majesty of who God is. There will always be part of this for ourselves as we try and study God's word that is beyond us.

The subject matter is so great and so deep and so magnificent, but He is worthy of all our admiration. all our adoration, all our faith, all our worship, all our trust.

The one who is always the same. In a rapidly ever-changing and unstable world, we have the God who is the same yesterday, today, forever, from everlasting to everlasting God.

[30 : 31] He calls us to trust Him and to take these moments as the last minutes and the last hours of this year come to their end, and as we survey the different elements of everything that is going on around us and everything that has happened and all the hopes and aspirations we carry into another year, we are asking ourselves to take this moment in our soul to reflect beyond time, to God who is eternal, to think of the great wonder of who He is, to say change and decay in all around I see, O thou who changes not, abide with me.

Abide with me. The encouragement here today is for faith, to make God your dwelling place. This is an uncertain world. One day is not promised, never mind one year. There are all kinds of things that happen that we don't expect, all kinds of situations we're unprepared for, but you abide in Him.

You make God your dwelling place. He is so different. He is so great. He is so wonderful. The majesty who is enthroned on high.

He is our God worthy of all praise. In verse 14, satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad.

[32 : 23] all our days. And in verse 17, let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us.

As you close this year, and as you anticipate if it is the Lord's will that we would see a new year, let the favor of God be upon you. May He bless you richly.

May He be with you and may you have security and safety for eternity because in this life and in this world you have made God your dwelling place.

You have trusted Him in good times and bad times and in everything that changes you find Him as unchanging and that you would have safety and security in eternity with the God who is eternal. This is the God whom we are called to know and worship and love. And He has given to us His Son as a Savior and as our hope.

[33 : 25] He calls us to trust in Him. He calls us to place all our hope in Him and to engage our hearts in the fullness of adoration and worship with who this God is.

I commend Him to you. I encourage you to come to Him, to learn of Him, to know who God is, to know Him in more and more of His fullness and in the depths of His being and what He is communicating to us in His love and compassion and the safety and the security of finding Him as our dwelling place.

May the Lord bless you and be near to you. Let's pray together. Father in heaven, we give thanks to you for your word. We give thanks to you for who you are.

We thank you for your Son that grants to us the access for He is the way and He is the only way in order that we ourselves would know you as our dwelling place.

Help us, Lord, and we recognize how changeable we are and how changing this world is to put our trust in the one who is unchanging as our eternal security and hope.

[34 : 41] Bless us then, we pray, and forgive us our sins. In Jesus' name, Amen. We'll conclude our worship by singing God's praise in Psalm 102 on page 364, Psalm 102 at verse 11.

Psalm 102 My days are like unto a shade, which doth decline in pass, and I am dried and withered, even like unto the grass.

But thou, Lord, everlasting art, and thy remembrance shall continually endure, and be to generations all. Thou shalt arise, and mercy have, upon thy scion yet, the time to favour her is come, the time that thou has said.

This is verses 11 to 13 of the first version of Psalm 102 on page 364. My days are like unto a shade, which doth declining pass.

My days are like unto a shade, which them wish or these marshal in the Unless live or life in nor times are in the earth, even I come to the dust.

[36 : 30] But now, O'er everlasting heart And thy remembrance shall On timidly and journey To generations old Thou shalt arise And earth thee are Upon thy Zion yet The time to be Our hour is come

The time that love has spent The Lord bless you and keep you The Lord make his face to shine upon you And be gracious to you The Lord lift up his countenance upon you And give you peace Amen