

Advent Devotional December 19, 2020

Scripture

Psalm 90

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. 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 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. 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. 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!

Devotional

The Rev. Darryl Lockie '17

As a child, I always loved those dollar-store Advent calendars. Indeed, my excitement grew every day we opened another panel, as each window held a piece of chocolate for another successful day of waiting. Looking back, it's curious to think how excited I became about a little chocolate that had the same consistency as candle wax (and though I've never tried candle wax, perhaps the same taste too). Nonetheless, those little Advent calendars helped me to number my days and better understand the importance of time and waiting.

We hear something similar in our morning's Psalm. Psalm 90:12 exhorts us to "count our days that we may gain a wise heart." But the context in this passage is slightly different from my childhood penchant for cheap paraffin chocolate. The verses preceding verse 12 contemplate the brevity of our lives, especially when contrasted with the Lord's eternal nature. The author laments just how many of these days are spent in "toil and trouble" (v. 10). Here, however, in admonishing us to "count our days" the Psalmist begins to pivot. The author asks that the Lord "turn" and "satisfy . . . with your steadfast love" (v. 13). With the Lord's presence, this limited time on earth will indeed be glad—though even here there seems to be a keen interest in time, for verses 14 and 15 make reference to the poet's "days" and "years." One wonders, Why the focus on the calendar?

Perhaps it is because through it we gain a proper perspective on our lives. Our existence on earth might be ephemeral, but hope and purpose are found in seeking the Lord's steadfast love—both as we expect it in our own lives and as we extend it to others. Though many of our days may be spent in "toil," they needn't be meaningless when contemplating God's presence within them.

Hence, this Advent season I am again counting my days, just as I did in childhood, but for different reasons. Instead of expecting poor-quality chocolates, I'm now expecting to find more ways to connect with God's "steadfast love" and then extend it others.

Prayer

Dear Lord, teach us to count our days so that we might gain wisdom. May that wisdom be found in contemplating, experiencing, expecting, and even practicing your "steadfast love." We recognize how brief our lives are, so please grant us meaning and purpose as we seek your presence and await your coming. Amen.