

¹⁰ Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we fly away.
¹² Teach us to number our days,
that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

I am grateful and humbled to stand here before you.
Your Pastor – Pastor Joel – has a vision that he has allowed me to share in.
A vision, much like our Founding Fathers, of “a more perfect union.”
A vision, much like the Prophet Amos, where “justice rolls down like waters,
and righteousness like a mighty stream.”
A vision, much like Dr. King, where people are judged “not by the color of
their skin, but by the content of their character.”
You Pastor has a vision of racial justice for our time and for our community.

I am so glad that our churches can begin a dialogue and forge a friendship.
Even while our churches are on lockdown and our people are socially distant,
now more than ever, we need one another and all of us need to show and to
share the love of Jesus.
I pray that God will birth something within us that shows the world “how
good and how pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in
unity.” (*Psalm 133:1*)

Now let me lift up the words of Psalm 90, focusing on 2 verses: vss. 10 & 12.
From these words, I want to talk about “**The Gift of Life.**”

The formative years of my life were spent in Jersey City, NJ where from
grades K-8 I attended and graduated from the Lutheran Parochial School. As
with any good Lutheran institution, our elementary school had fundraisers to

help balance the budget. One year, I can recall a fundraiser selling wooden plaques with inscriptions of inspirational words. I purchased one for myself, and that plaque hung on the wall of my bedroom until I went to college. And even in college, it sat on my desk in my dorm room.

To this day, I can still remember the words on the plaque. It read:
“Our lives are a gift from God. What we do with them is our gift to God”

Those words would become a mission statement for my life.
 They offered me the challenge to do something productive with the precious gift of life given to me by God.
 They encouraged me to appreciate the gift by providing to God a return on His investment in me.

That’s the message of today’s Gospel lesson in Matthew 25.
 To take what you’ve been given and make something of it.
 To make good use of the gifts you have been given that one day you may hear God’s proud pronouncement:
 “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful/
 trustworthy in a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.”

Our lives are a gift from God.

So, what are you doing with yours?

Are you investing your time, talent and treasure for the benefit of the kingdom?

Or are you like the lazy servant in Jesus’ parable, who did nothing with what he had been given responsibility over?

Our lives are a gift from God.

A precious gift might I add.

The coronavirus pandemic of 2020 has underscored just how fragile and fleeting life is.

53 million cases worldwide; 1.3 million deaths globally

10.7 million Americans infected and 245,000 gone.

Every day we hear these numbers as TV news reporters share these grim and growing statistics.

And yet I am reminded that these are not mere statistics, but they are lives affected, lives infected, lives lost

They are not statistics: they are our family members; they are our neighbors; they are our co-workers; they are our church members.

O how precious is the gift of life, especially in this season of suffering.

Truly, our lives are a gift from God.

Because our lives are a gift from God, the words of our Responsive Reading this morning in Psalm 90 have great meaning.

Every morning that I get out of bed, Psalm 90 vs. 12 has become my prayer for the morning and my inspiration and motivation throughout the day.

“Lord, teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

I encourage you to add these words to your morning prayer.

I encourage you to make these words personal.

Lord teach ME to number MY days.

Lord, teach me to appreciate my days.

Lord, help me to make this day, today, productive and fruitful in your sight.

Lord, make me wise enough to not waste the time you’ve blessed me with.

Lord, teach me to number my days.

Lord, show me how to pray more and worry less.

Lord, show me how to encourage more and criticize less.

Lord, show me how to love more and hate less.

Lord show me how to appreciate more and complain less.

Lord, show me how to give more and take less.

Lord, teach us to number our days.

Because the sobering reality is that our days are numbered.

Listen again as the Psalmist declares in Psalm 90 verse 10...

*Our days may come to seventy years,
or eighty, if our strength endures;
yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow,
for they quickly pass, and we are gone.*

That just means that our days are numbered.

That we didn't come here to stay here.

That we all have a date with the dirt.

That there's grave space awaiting you and me.

Someone has wisely called death a reservation without the privilege of cancellation.

In our text, the Psalmist declares that our days are numbered.

None of us knows how many days we have, even though most of us are making plans for how we will spend the rest of our lives.

Only God knows how many days, months or years we have ahead us.

Notice if you will, that the Psalmist makes reference to the possibility of 70 or 80 years of life.

I remember having a conversation about 8 years ago with my mother.

At that time, Mom was turning 79, and I said to her, 'we aren't going to do anything major to celebrate your 79th birthday, but we would wait till next year when you hit the big number – the Big 8-0.

I never will forget her reply.

She looked me in the eye, and said, when you get to be my age, every number is a BIG number.

Then she said, I'm just thankful to be alive and I'm grateful for God's grace.

Is there anybody this morning who can echo the words of my mother?

I'm thankful to be alive and I'm grateful for God's grace

Yes our days are numbered, but I'm grateful for God's grace

Somebody ought to tell GOD right now, Thank you for Your grace.

Grace Pastor Brown? Yes Grace! God's Grace!

For it was by GOD's Grace that you opened your eyes this morning to see a new day.

Grace – God's Grace.

Grace – that's GOD's undeserved blessings.

Grace – that's GOD's unmerited favor.

Somebody this morning is grateful for GOD's grace!

Whatever blessings we enjoy in this life, it's only by God's Grace.

It's not paychecks, but Grace!

It's not stimulus checks, but Grace!

It's not fancy education, but Grace!

It's not a good pension, but Grace!

It's not longevity on the job, but Grace!

It's not good health care, but Grace!

Let me see the hands of those who are grateful for GOD's grace!

As I prepare to go to my seat, I am reminded of a song that speaks volumes about God's Grace.

It's a timeless song that transcends generations.

It's a universal song that rises above denominations.

It's a song that has been embraced by every race and every Christian.

Amazing Grace

It began as a poem, written in 1772 by the Englishman, John Newton.

It describes the joy and peace of a soul uplifted from despair to salvation through the gift of grace.

The words serve as an autobiographical commentary on how Newton's life was spared from death on more than one occasion.

It tells of a man whose life was converted from being a ruthless slave trader to a tireless proclaimer of the Gospel.

It's the testimony of one man – who came to realize that his life was a gift from God – a gift to be used for God's glory.

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

Our lives are a gift from God and we thank God for His Grace.

Amen.