

September 10, 2023

Psalm 90 and Isaiah 55:10-13

“Are We Getting Ready?”

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Little Margie came home from Sunday school and said to her mother: “Mommy, the teacher told us today that God puts people into this world so that they can get ready for heaven.” Almost without thinking, the mother replied, as she tested the roast in the oven, “Yes, dear, that’s right.”

Wrinkling her little forehead into a thoughtful frown, Margie hesitated for a moment and then asked in all seriousness: “Then why don’t we see anybody getting ready?”

Sometimes the best questions come from children don’t they?! God has placed us in this world so that we can come to an understanding regarding God and his deep desire to be our eternal companion in forever love and bliss. We are here that we may receive the gift of God and all that he brings. We are here that we may come to a proper understanding of the relationship that is to be and embrace it as our own. The question is: **Are We Getting Ready?**

It seems to me that the whole world is in a whirlwind. So many are abandoning the faith as they have become wrapped up in lies and delusions. Even Christians are flying into the web of the spider who sinks his fangs into their souls to remove the life of Jesus from within them. We are all in danger! Many have forgotten that word of Christ to keep watch and be ready, for no one knows the hour of the coming of the Son of Man. Are you one of those who have forgotten? Sad truth is that those who have forgotten are probably not even here today. There is great rebellion and more than a willingness to exchange the truth for a lie - to forfeit an eternity for a moment. May God help us all. It says in Psalm 90:5-9,

You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh.

Today is another Rally Day. How disappointed are we to see a young person of great promise turn out badly! How difficult it is to see that most of the youth of this nation have either rejected what they have been taught, or have not been taught the things of God at all, and have little to no knowledge of the one who made and saved them. How sad it is to see lives lived without knowing the forgiveness of sins, the peace that passes all understanding, and the hope of heaven. When people are plunged into the darkness of ignorance they will gnaw their tongues in agony. Can you see the agony and the gnawing of tongues that is rapidly growing in this unbelieving world? The coping ability of people is waning.

Psalm 90 (12-17) goes on to say:

So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted

us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands upon us; yes, establish the work of our hands!

The thought that should occupy us on this Rally Day is our need to not only be ready ourselves, but to be about the business of making others ready. We surely know the words of John the Baptist. We can only receive that which has been given to us from heaven (John 3:27). But this is never an excuse for us to become lazy. No, we are effort oriented. We want this sanctuary to be packed. It would be wonderful if our greatest stress in life would be to figure out how we can instruct 100s of children in the faith. But the stress that the Lord has laid on us in our day is this: how do we reach a society that is becoming increasingly hostile to the truths of God's Word? The answer is to keep teaching.

The Word of God is not popular. Satan and his demons are loosed in this world and are doing their deadly work with great efficiency. All we can do is pray to the one who is our help, be faithful to him and his gospel, and do the work that he has given us to do while leaving the results entirely in his hands. That is a part of our getting ready. The question is: are we still testifying to the people around us? Are we still living lives that are in keeping with our clean identity given to us in our baptisms? Are we still inviting people to come and hear both law and gospel? Are we looking around and seeking the young as well as the old in our families, among our friends, and even in our neighborhoods? Are we making the effort?

We should realize this Rally Day, and in every day ahead, that the Word of God accomplishes the task that God has given it to do. He even uses us in that mission. But the purpose is not always what we had hoped and dreamed. There are those who sow and there are those who reap. There are also those who preach the righteousness of Christ before the end of the world. As Noah preached to mostly deaf ears before the flood, so will preaching rest upon many deaf ears before the fire. But even in this, God is carrying out his purpose to save his remnant, and to issue his warning and judgment for the glory of his name, and so that we may share in that glory.

Again, those words of Psalm 90 echo in our ears, "... teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom ... Let your work be shown to your servants ... Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us ... establish the work of our hands!" Yes! Establish the word of our hands! In other words, teach us to get ready. **Are We Getting Ready?** Oh may he give us strength. May he teach us to regard this life as only a period of preparation for a greater and much more wonderful life that is yet to come - our life with him and all those who are in heaven forever! And may he teach us to use our days, our years in such a way that they might take us in the sure direction of our heavenly home! And may our days be reflective of what is so powerfully stated in the book of Jude:

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to

eternal life. And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

What we are facing this day is what the people of God have faced in the past. Perhaps we may take some comfort in remembering that the Lord was with them and saw them through, and he will do the same for us in all that we face. We have come to the great physician of our souls and have been brought to a spiritual healing in the cross and empty tomb that will even grant to us resurrection from the dead. The power of the forgiveness of sins should never be underestimated. This gospel is the power of God unto salvation and a guarantee that Jesus is with us to the very end of the age. As this gospel has reached us, so do we take it to the old and the young, knowing for certain that God is doing his work.

The MRI of the Bible penetrates through all the wrappings of lies and delusions and lays everything bare so that the medicine of immortality may be applied. In the forgiveness of sins we have the antidote to everything messed up. We have the answer as to why we are here and what we are getting ready for. While it labels us as sinners who are doomed to death and damnation, this is only an emptying of our selves that we might be filled with life and salvation. With that in mind, does any pastor need to sell you on the importance of an ongoing Christian education? I certainly hope not. Having been educated yourselves, you know the power of the gospel. Paul writes: "I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes ... For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

If that is who we are, then it is safe to say that we are ready. Not only are we ready to be with the Lord in the eternal destination that he has planned for us from the foundation of the world, but we are ready to make others ready. Let us proclaim even if we have to be like Noah. Let us invite like the Samaritan woman at the well who brought out the whole town. Let us be as persistent as the men who cut a hole in a roof to lower down a paralytic man so that he could be healed by Jesus. And let us teach like Stephen who saw the glory of Jesus as he was stoned to death.

Amen.

Pastor Brock Abbott