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Pentecost 24 – Psalm 90 – The Lord Is Our Dwelling Place

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“A prayer of Moses the man of God.” That must’ve seemed like the only thing Moses still had when he wrote that as the heading to this psalm, because everything else sure seemed like it was slipping away. For forty years Moses led his people, the Israelites, through the desert wilderness between Egypt and the Promised Land of Canaan. They left Egypt all that time ago with such great promise and so many great things ahead, only to see his people throw them all away. They grumbled because they thought God didn’t take care of them well enough. They complained because they got tired of the endless packing and unpacking, stopping and going of traveling toward their new home. And finally they turned their backs on their LORD and turned toward sinful lifestyles and other gods.

So finally God said enough is enough, and he decided that those people would never enter the Promised Land. Instead, they would circle the desert until that entire generation died out and their children grew up to take their place. So for forty years they wandered, and aged, and died. Moses watched as hundreds of thousands and even millions of people passed through the prime of their lives into the frailty of old age and eventually passed away – ashes to ashes, dust to dust. And Moses knew very well that what he was watching was coming for him and his family, too. Though Moses and his brother Aaron the priest had served and led Israel mostly faithfully for all those years, that “mostly” just didn’t cut it with God. They were assigned to the same fate as the Israelites, to die before they entered Canaan. What Moses saw all around him and what he saw in his own family and life must have whispered in his ear that this life is nothing but fleeting, empty, and unfulfilling. It must’ve all been very fatalistic.

But still he had this glimmer of light amidst all that darkness: he was “*Moses the man of God.*” No matter what happened around him and to him, the Lord was still his dwelling place, and nobody and nothing could take that from him. His God gave him hope – hope that his life wasn’t worthless, everything he did wasn’t for nothing, and this isn’t all there is. No, his relationship with his LORD gave his life meaning and purpose, and it gave him hope for life in all its fullness in eternity. And friends, when we look around at this sinful world, we can have that same purpose and hope. We too are men and women of God, just like Moses the man of God, and so also the Lord is *our* dwelling place both in this life and in life eternal.

But that doesn’t change the reality of our everyday struggle, does it. It certainly didn’t for Moses, and it doesn’t for us either. As Moses said, “*All our days pass away under your wrath; we finish our years with a moan. The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow.*” We’ve all had those days, we’ve all had those times in our lives that make us groan and that make our hearts ache. A mom has a miscarriage or a stillbirth, a dad gets cancer, your kids get in a car accident, you lose your job and don’t know how you’re going to provide for your family, your house gets blown over by a tornado, you have to bury your parents. Those kinds of things happen all the time in this world, and we have to go on living with the burden.

Yes, this world is a troubled and sorrowful place. Years go by and it seems like all you get is more work and more headaches. As you get older, you just aren’t the same physically or mentally. And at the same time that you watch your own body slowly breaking down, you see the same thing happening all around you in society and with your loved ones with every funeral you attend.

No, this world hasn’t changed much since Moses’ day. This life we lead is still just as much a slow march toward death, and the reason for that is because we’re sinful. We’re sinful people living in a sinful world and living under God’s judgment because of it. Every bad thing that happens here in this broken world is a result of our broken relationship with God, it’s a result of our own selfishness, and it’s a result of the devil’s lies. The devil told Adam and Eve back in the Garden of Eden that we could know good *and* evil – as if that were a desirable thing – and that we would *not* surely die. Well, look where we are now. There’s nothing more sure in this world than death, and every sin we commit just condemns us that much more before God’s holiness. The troubles of this world come because of sin, death comes because of sin, and condemnation comes because of sin. And especially as we look toward the Last Day when God will come to judge this world once and for all, that can be a terribly terrifying thought because in that day there will be no running or hiding or escaping. We *all* will stand before God’s judgment seat, and there is no denying what we deserve because of our sin.

But yet, out of that hopelessness, Moses shares with us this hope: for Jesus’ sake our God doesn’t treat us as we deserve, because ours is a God of mercy and salvation. Remember, we too are men and women of God, and so it’s just the same for us as it was for Moses the man of God: The Lord is our Dwelling Place – through all the troubles of this world, as we approach death, and as we look to eternity.

See, even though Judgment Day is a terrifying thing for a lot of people, it's not for us, because we're different. We aren't terrified by God, because we know him as he revealed himself to Moses – as the LORD of free and faithful grace. We aren't terrified by Judgment Day, because the one who's coming to judge the living and the dead is our loving Savior, Jesus Christ. We don't need to be ashamed of our sins on that day, because he's already washed them away forever in his blood. We can stand before him confident by faith, knowing that his wrath won't touch us, that his love surrounds us, and that he's got a place waiting for us in heaven with him forever. The Lord is our dwelling place – for care and protection right now, and preparing a place for us to dwell with him in heaven for all eternity.

So that really does give us special hope and purpose. When we look around at this sinful world and the struggles of our own sinful lives, our faith in Jesus and our hope for heaven lead us to pray with Moses, "*Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.*" We have all these struggles in this world because we are weak and sinful mortals, but those are not problems that our God has. Our God is almighty, he is eternal, and he has promised that everything that happens in this world will serve our spiritual good and bring us closer to him. If you think that the problems you have right now are too many and too big to do anything about, just remember who your God is. He was here before this world, he created this world, and he rules over this world. So that means there's nothing in this world that he doesn't have the power to change or fix or use for his good purposes and our eternal benefit. So people of God, know that the LORD is your dwelling place, your solid rock and refuge, and know that our present sufferings aren't worth comparing with the glory that will be ours one day.

And as you look toward the end of your time here on earth, don't be troubled or afraid, because Jesus Christ has defeated death and left it powerless. So that means for us, death isn't the ultimate punishment anymore. Now it's just the front door we walk through to get into our heavenly home. It's just like Moses said, "*You sweep men away in the sleep of death.*" Even though life in this sinful world can seem so short and transient, death isn't the end for us. For Christians, death isn't any more fearsome than lying down to sleep at night, and closing a loved one's casket is no more final than tucking them into bed. And that's because when a believer dies, like Moses says, "*they quickly pass, and we fly away.*" Though our bodies may return to dust in death, our souls fly up to heaven for *life* with God and with all the rest of our brothers and sisters in faith as well.

And that's not even all yet. Moses said, "*Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, for as many years as we have seen trouble.*" God has satisfied us with his unfailing love, because he's shown us his grace in Christ Jesus. God has done everything we needed and he's given us everything we could ever want to fill our hearts and mouths and lives with joy, because on *Easter* morning our Savior rose from the dead victorious. *That's* the morning that Jesus satisfied us forevermore, because when Jesus came out of his grave, he won for us forgiveness and salvation, and he triumphed over sin, death, the devil, and all the forces of evil that tyrannize this world and its people. They don't have power over us anymore, so we can be sure that when we close our eyes in the darkness of death, as surely as our Redeemer lives we will open our eyes once more to the bright new dawn of our own resurrection and new life in glory where we'll never have to experience sin or any of its consequences ever again. And that won't just be for as many years as we've spent in this vale of tears. That will be *forever* in unending perfection and joys indescribable.

So since we have that hope, that gives our lives purpose and it means we can look forward to Christ's return on the Last Day with eager anticipation, because for us it's not a day of impending judgment – it's a day of final deliverance and ultimate redemption. No longer do we look at this life as just a burdening death march. God's people look at this life as an opportunity to serve and glorify our Savior with every chance we get until the day when we get to meet him face-to-face. So as men and women of God, let's pray with Moses the man of God: "*May your deeds be shown to your servants, your splendor to their children. May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us; establish the work of our hands for us.*" Bless us while we're here, Lord, with the confidence that you are holding us in your hands and that every day you are guiding us home to you. Bless our lives and work so that more and more people can come to know you and your salvation. And finally, Lord our Savior, be our dwelling place for all generations, until you bring us to our heavenly dwelling place to be with you forever. Amen.