

December 31, 2017  
 Sermon for New Year's Eve  
 St Peter Lutheran Church  
 Bowie, TX  
 Larry Knobloch, Pastor  
 Psalm 90:1-17

*J.J.- Jesu Juva—Help me, Jesus*

Psalm 90:title–6, 12-17 (ESV)

A Prayer of Moses, the man of God. <sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. <sup>3</sup> You return man to dust and say, “Return, O children of man!” <sup>4</sup> For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night. <sup>5</sup> You sweep them away as with a flood; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning: <sup>6</sup> in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers. ...

<sup>7</sup> For we are brought to an end by your anger; by your wrath we are dismayed. <sup>8</sup> You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence. <sup>9</sup> For all our days pass away under your wrath; we bring our years to an end like a sigh. <sup>10</sup> The years of our life are seventy, or even by reason of strength eighty; yet their span is but toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away. <sup>11</sup> Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

<sup>12</sup> So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. <sup>13</sup> Return, O Lord! How long? Have pity on your servants! <sup>14</sup> Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. <sup>15</sup> Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil. <sup>16</sup> Let your work be shown to your servants, and your glorious power to their children. <sup>17</sup> 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!

Grace, Mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Amen.

“So teach us to COUNT,” we pray, in the ancient words of Psalm 90, the Psalm that refers to “*a thousand years in thy sight*”: “*Teach us to number our days.*”

The end of the year is an appropriate time to do just that, to count our days. So is the turning of a century, by the way. And so, especially, is the observance of a millennium—something we did almost 18 years ago; that’s more than a decade ago!

But before we begin counting over 2,000 (or even 100, or 365) in our gratitude to God, perhaps we could begin with something simpler.

Like 2, for example, the number of many of the gifts God has given us: 2 eyes, 2 ears ... 2 arms, 2 legs ... 2 hands, 2 feet ... 2 lungs, 2 kidneys.

Or 5 — for fingers and toes.

Or even one — for heart, brain, liver, spleen, stomach, throat.

At which point God says, “Even the hairs of your head are numbered”! Did you know that during the last year the average person has drawn more than 4 million breaths? That your heart has beat more than 36 million times? Most of the time you probably weren’t counting.

God was. And multiplying those numbers by a lifetime. Perhaps this is easier to comprehend: If you are a family of five, and you each managed to eat 3 meals a day — during this past year your family has experienced “the feeding of the 5,000.”

If your family is smaller, that takes a little longer, of course ... but the blessing is most surely there, and the end of a year is a good time for counting such blessings (so is the end of a decade, a century, and especially a millennium).

We could spend this whole service finding things to count, of course, things for which to give God thanks. How many rooms are in your house? How many grandparents do you remember? How many years did you go to school? How many teachers do you think you had? How many paychecks have you collected?

While we are counting, would you like to count sins? In just the past year? Not a whole lifetime, but just the past year? Would you prefer working with an average? How many sins would you find in a day? Like today? Or "yesterday when it is past"? Multiplied, then, by 365. How many sins would you find?

How many sins would GOD find? "O Lord, if you count iniquities," one of the Psalms prays, "who has a chance?" God does count sins.

But, fortunately, at this turning of the year, there are other things to count.

— Like the distance from heaven to earth, the distance it was necessary for the Son of God to come and save us from our sins.

— Shall we count the centuries in which the world waited for God's promises to be fulfilled?

— The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem for Mary and Joseph to travel?

— From Bethlehem to Egypt, fleeing from wicked King Herod? And later back to Nazareth?

— The distance from Galilee to Jerusalem, preaching and teaching and healing all the way.

— From the upper room to Gethsemane.

— Then count the steps from courtyard to Calvary.

— Count the hammer blows,

— And the 7 last words from the cross.

— The three days

— And then the wounds in our Lord's hands and side, displayed triumphantly to confirm Thomas' faith, and ours.

— The 40 days from Resurrection to Ascension ...

And NOW, maybe, after all of that, the 2,000-plus years since the birth of Christ ... or the years since YOU were born, your part in these 2,000-plus years.

And God's part in those years as well—that the God who counts sins does so in order to assure that all of them are forgiven through the merits of Jesus Christ, who shared our time just as surely as he shared our death, so that we might be given other things to count, the blessings of a loving God.

How many years do you think you have left to live?

Or how many days?

Or maybe a better question would be:

How many opportunities to serve the Lord? To care for God's children?

To offer encouragement, help, financial support? To teach someone? To learn?

“Lord, teach us to COUNT,” the psalmist prays. “To number our days.” Years, too, I guess (the psalmist counts those too). The decades, as well, and centuries. And, on rare occasions, millennia. “Teach us to COUNT the time that you have given us,” the psalmist prays, “that we may use it wisely.”

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” the Bible says. Acknowledging God at all times. Counting our blessings even as we count our days and years ... and being thankful.

“You can count on me,” God promises, even unto the end of the age. Even as the calendar moves on, let that blessed count continue ... until it is overrun at last by God’s gift of eternity!

Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Amen.

S.D.G.—Soli Deo Gloria

## **Sermon Outline**

### ***A Thousand Years in God's Sight***

*Psalm 90:12-17*

- I. Teach us to count.
- II. Multiplying the numbers by a lifetime.
- III. Blessings to count.

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