

“OUR REALLY OLD GOD.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for the Sermon: Psalm 90:1-4; John 8:56-59

Introduction.

Adam lived 930 years. Methuselah set the record at 969 years. He was the father of Noah who lived 950 years and had his three boys after he was 500. If Methuselah had died today he would have been born in 1046. If he was born today he would live until 2984.

Now that's old. That's a long time until you begin to think about eternity and then a thousand years is less than a drop in the ocean. If a thousand years is a day and a day is a thousand years to God then by God's math old Methuselah didn't even live one whole day, he only got to 969.

How can we comprehend how long eternity is?

James Joyce, in his 1916 classic novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, gives a description of eternity that has been borrowed and revised many times over.

Imagine a mountain of sand a million miles tall and deep and wide. Three times past the moon, a million cubic miles of sand. Once every million years a little bird comes and carries off one grain in his beck. Try to imagine the millions of millennia, the billions of eons upon eons of ages before the once in a million years bird carried off the entire mountain grain by grain by grain.

When that immeasurably vast mountain of sand was gone that would be one second off the eternity clock. The mere thought makes our head spin. And for the next second of eternity you would have to start the process all over again, another million cubic miles of sand.

Eternity. As we have been reflecting on the attributes of God this summer it's becoming quite clear that there are no limits to God. He is not hemmed in by any boundaries or limitations.

His knowledge and wisdom is perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

His power is absolute, whatever He wills to do He can do.

His presence fills all the universe, there is no place where God is not.

The dimension of time doesn't limit God in anyway. God is always, from everlasting to everlasting.

God is timeless (in His being and essence).

Once again I set out to explain to you something we cannot fully comprehend. Yet, in some ways this is the first and most obvious of all God's attributes. We know that He has no beginning and He has no end. When our children ask us who made God, we say no one, He has always been God.

The truth of an everlasting God runs through all the pages of Scripture like a vast mountain range, from Genesis to Revelation.

Psalms 90 is the oldest of all the Psalms, it was written by Moses when he was really old.

He says, "from everlasting to everlasting you are God." From vanishing point past to vanishing point future God is at both points at the same time and always.

Job 36:26 Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

Revelation 1:8 I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

God is not young or old, He is. I am that I am. God is the eternal I Am. It's what Jesus means when He says, "Before Abraham was, I am."

God is timeless because God existed before God created time. When God created the universe, that's when He created time. God is not dependent on time, but time is dependent on God to continue to exist.

God and Time.

God's experience of existence is completely different from ours. We experience existence as a continuous succession of moments, like the second hand on a clock, one tick after another.

24 hours ago I was in this sanctuary leading a funeral service, now I am here preaching, and at 6 PM I will be back here to preach again. But to God all His existence is present.

God is above and outside of time. Eternity is not a really, really long time. Eternity is the past, present and future at once. For God eternity is not an endless succession of days.

God sees all time equally.

For us events begin to fade into the past. What were you doing a year ago today or seven years ago today? Seven years ago today Zach and Brian Stokes and a bunch of other Cadets

and leaders camped out in a hockey arena in Sundridge, Ontario after getting rained out of their camporee. But I had to look that up to remember it.

If we lived a thousand years can you imagine how many events we would forget. We all have things that we remember like it was yesterday, but countless more that are completely gone.

Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

God remembers a thousand years of events like it was yesterday. God remembers every event of every person in human history like it was a night watch shift of three or four hours.

The thousand years is as one day we can understand, but what does it mean that one day is as a thousand years? It is as if one day never ends, any one day is present in God's consciousness forever. Whether long ago or recent all things are present to God with equal vividness.

Picture the west wall of the sanctuary as the moment of creation and the middle organ pipe as the cross of Christ and the door as 2015 and the east wall as the day of judgment and the end of time.

God stands up above and outside of the sanctuary and looks down and sees everything as present. He knows and remembers the past and the future with equal vividness.

Perhaps the closest analogy for us would be like reading a big novel. When you get to the end before you put it on the shelf you flip through the pages and quickly call to mind the whole story line and all the events. You are looking at the whole book now and you know the whole thing from beginning to end.

Isaiah 46:9-10 for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, 10 declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,'

God doesn't wait for things to happen. God is not in heaven drumming His fingers on His throne wishing the end would hurry up and get here. He doesn't see or experience time and the passage of time the way we do.

Human history is not like watching a movie to God. 10,000 years past and 10,000 years future are now, each just as present as the other.

Us and Time.

What about us and time? What about the future? Will we always exist in time or will time cease to exist in heaven? In heaven will we share God's eternity?

In Revelation events and activities in heaven are described as taking place one after the other. Walking, taking one step after another; singing, one verse following after another; the tree of life yielding its fruit each month (Revelation 22:2). In order to cast our crown before the throne means that one moment we were wearing a crown and the next moment we have laid it down (Revelation 4:10).

We will experience heaven differently from God. We will be immortal and live forever, but we will not be eternal, meaning like God and above or outside of time. We will experience it as a succession of moments, one gloriously wonderful and joyful moment after another that will never end.

That's why it's important now to think about eternity and where we will spend it. This life matters and has eternal consequences.

Implications and Applications.

When I ask us to consider implications and applications of each of God's attributes I am saying this matters for us today. Countless mistakes and bad things flow out of thinking wrongly about God and then acting on those wrong thoughts.

Also bad things flow out of having too small or too limited a view of God. If God is small or weak or distant then our spiritual lives are going to be diminished. Many of us are so caught up in our present moment that we can hardly think straight about the bigger picture and God and who He is and what He might be doing in and around us.

When God is small our problems loom large, when God is big, then our problems become more manageable. Unbelief leads to fear and anxiety and depression and hopelessness and pessimism. As faith and belief grows those things begin to grow smaller.

If you think God has left you alone, or that God doesn't think about you or care about you, you are wrong, you are thinking in human terms that are too weak and limited. God cannot forget you or overlook you or lose interest in you.

Our spiritual health and spiritual grow depend on right thinking about God. Elevate God in your mind and heart until He is so great that it's overwhelming to you, until it changes you. Think great thoughts about God until He is actually worth worshipping to you.

May God in His grace rebuke us for our small thoughts and our unbelief. May we pray, "God I believe help my unbelief." Wait on the Lord, meditate on the Lord, think on these things.

Brothers and sisters, we spend every moment of every day in the full sight and presence of the omniscient, omnipresent, infinite, eternal holy God.

May the knowledge of God's eternity not be wasted on us. Like the Psalmist, let us earnestly seek to understand how to number our days aright that we might gain a heart of wisdom (Psalm 90:12).

There is fruit in thinking about and reflecting on the number of our days. Think about how fragile and short life is; think about the shortness of our time. Talk to your children about the two reminders we have had in the past week of how short our time is, David Scholten at 46 and Sofia Milstead at 18.

Help your children and grandchildren prepare children for eternity. You should take them to funerals, take them to look at the body. I didn't attend my first funeral until my twenties.

When Scripture speaks of time and eternity it often compares man to God. We are like dust or the dew, like a fleeting wisp of smoke or a quickly passing shadow. Here today, gone tomorrow.

How quickly the seasons go, it's August already, how quickly our spring time is over, how quickly the flower fades, how quickly our children grow and leave.

We are specks of dust living our blink of an eye existence on a little speck of dust in a vast universe. Our life is that short little dash on a grave marker, that dash between two years. In the scope of eternity, what difference does it make if the dash separates two years or a hundred and two years?

Consider our obsession with diet and exercise, with eating organic and finding natural remedies and building bigger barns and bigger savings accounts. Consider our futile efforts to defy the inevitable reality. We will die and we will die quickly and many will wish we had died earlier. Since we are all living on the brink of eternity, we should live more aware of eternity.

How do we think of eternity?

Ask the average ten year old what heaven is like and they might think it like an endless church service with communion at the end. Or sitting around in white bathrobes playing harps. Sounds more like a definition for hell.

I Peter 1:4 describes heaven as an unfading inheritance, ever beautiful, never fading or diminishing, it can never get old or boring.

Because God is infinite and eternal, we will never get to the end of Him, to the top of Him. Every million years will continue to be new discoveries of His glory and goodness and more

reasons to be happy and joyful in Him, more thrilling discoveries of an infinitely satisfying God.

The God of our future will be greater than the God of our present. However much you may think of God now, it's nothing compared to what you will think of God in heaven.

God has set before us eternity, an eternity of blessings or an eternity of curses, an eternity of happiness or misery. Ask your soul, which of these is your heart's desire and what are you doing to walk on the path of righteousness and obedience that leads to eternal glory?

Are sinful pleasures in this life worth the eternal consequence? Are temporal, temporary afflictions anything compared to eternal pleasures?

Because God is eternal, He is able to promise eternal reward to His children, to those who love Him and trust Him. Whatever this life holds, consider what the life to come holds.

II Corinthians 4:16-17 So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. 17 For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison.

For a brief season we walk through this valley of the shadow of sin and death, but remember your God. The peace and joy and happiness and comfort and pleasure that awaits us is eternal and is worth every lack of those things in this life.

John Newton once said, "When you get to heaven, you will not complain of the way by which the Lord brought you."

All our trials and troubles and sufferings are short and our reward is eternal.

Psalms 90:15 Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil.

Let this spur you on to faithfulness and repentance, to turning from sin and old ways and worldly desires and pleasures. Let this future hope of eternal reward be what enables you to die to yourself and give up the things in this life you are grasping and holding tight.

If you find yourself envying what others have or how much you don't have, know that God has more than enough time in eternity to pour out on you the riches of His inheritance.

We are all of us standing on the brink of eternity. God has set eternity in our hearts. Think more about eternity than the present. Long for eternity more than the present. Long for eternal pleasures more than present pleasures.

Psalms 16:11 At His right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Psalms 90:12 So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom.