

**Sermon Series: “Growing Pains of Faith” Lord of Life Lutheran—8/27/2000**

**Title:** “Growing through Monotony”

**Text:** *Psalm 90*

**Introduction:** **Illus.:** “Who or what is mono Tony?”

**Theme:** When life seems to drag on with no purpose and the monotony of the moment seems to last an eternity, it is time to take our perspective back to the cross and let Christ redeem life’s monotony and grow us to purposeful living.

***Growing out of the monotony by letting Jesus redeem it***

**C So what is redeemable about monotony in my life?**

- Moses writing Psalm 90 in the context and monotony of a 40 year wilderness walk
- The monotony of our lives: an interrupted career for stay-at-home child-raising, stuck in a dead-end job, nausea of meaningless classes and endless homework, consigned to a life limited by accident/disease/age

**C Understanding why the curse of monotony happens to all of us**

- “My life is so short” (**Print and read Psalm 90: 1-6**)
  1. We long to make a lasting mark on life and this world but realize that our life is one drop in giant stream of time.
  2. **ILLUS.: LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF DEATH**
  3. The quick spiraling away of time that is all around us—children growth, parents death, youth graduate, body ages
- “My sins are so obvious” (**Print and read Psalm 90: 7-9**)
  1. Moses knew that he would never get to go into the promised land because of sin of rage at the stone
  2. We see the cumulative impact of our mistakes, missteps, and sin in our life
- “My days are so empty (**Print and read Psalm 90: 10-11**)
  1. **ILLUS.: BUYING TIME—TIME ‘R US**
  2. Moses understood, perhaps pretty late in life, that the things we count on to give meaning quickly slip away
  3. Hoping for better tomorrow, adventure after graduation, life after kids, bliss when retirement is often not the reality and strips us of the joy of living for today.
  4. **ILLUS.: REDEEMING THE TIME**
  5. **Most of the significant things done in the world were done by persons who were either too busy or too sick! There are few ideal and leisurely settings for the disciplines of growth.** Citation: Robert Thornton Henderson

**C Believing that Jesus not only saved me from sin but also from its curse**

- “*But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing..*” Galatians 3: 13
- “*Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won’t last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last forever.*” 2 Cor.4:16,17
- “*We, too, wait anxiously for that day when God will give us our full rights as his children, including the new bodies he has promised us. Not that we are saved, we eagerly look forward to this freedom.*” Romans 8: 23,24

***Breaking monotony’s spell requires a refocus on Christ’s redemptive power over “the now”***

**C Start counting forward not backward**

- “*Teach us to number each of our days so that we may grow in wisdom.*” (12)
- Often we yearn for days gone by instead of anticipating the days ahead
- **ILLUS.: MY PERSONAL BIRTHDAY COUNT**

**C Move from a fixation on what is wrong to a focus on what is right in Christ (14)**

- “*Satisfy us every morning with your mercy so that we may sing joyfully and rejoice all our days.*”
- “*Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*” Philippians 4: 8

**C Learn to rejoice--even in the monotony--for what you are learning and how you are growing (15)**

- “*Make us rejoice for as many days as you have made us suffer, for as many years as we have experienced evil.*”
- “*Dear brothers and sister, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy for when your*

*faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.” James 1: 2-4*

**C Focus your prayers on God’s blessing and success for the moment at hand (16,17)**

- *“Let us, your servants, see what you can do. Let our children see your glorious power, Let the kindness of the Lord our God be with us. Make us successful in everything we do.”*
- **ILLUS.: THE COLONEL SANDERS STORY**

### **Living in the Presence of Death**

A painting in the Prado Museum in Spain by Hans Baldung titled "The Stages of Life with Death." On the ground is a newborn baby. The baby is surrounded by three elongated figures. In the left of the painting is a beautiful young woman--nearly nude, alabaster skin, hair flowing down her back, the perfect picture of classical beauty.

Next to her in the middle is an old hag, a shriveled old woman with a hard, angular, mean-looking face. With one arm she is reaching out and grabbing the shoulder of the beautiful young girl, and with a sneer she is pulling her toward herself. With her other arm she is interlocked with a third person, a creature--man or woman you cannot tell, for all features have been melted down into a rotting corpse--holding an hourglass. There it is--birth, youth, old age, lived in the presence of death.

We all live in the presence of death, but what things have we put off because we have forgotten the reality of death? Let us teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom. Teach us to number our days, so that we will not fail the time in which we have been placed, so that we do not unwittingly aid the Enemy in the ruination of our souls.

### **Buying Time**

Have you seen the television commercial for a telephone company that shows a drive-through window such as you would see at a fast-food restaurant? Over the window are the words: TIME "R" US. One customer drives up and says "Gimme a couple of seconds." Another one drives up and with great weariness says, "Can I have another day?" It's a great commercial, because we can all identify with it.

### **Redeeming the Time**

During World War II, economist E. F. Schumacher, then a young statistician, worked on a farm. Each day he would count the 32 head of cattle, then turn his attention elsewhere. One day an old farmer told him that if he counted the cattle, they wouldn't flourish. Sure enough, one day he counted only 31; one was dead in the bushes. Now Schumacher understood the farmer: you must watch the quality of each beast. "Look him in the eye. Study the sheen on his coat." You may not know how many cattle you have, but you might save the life of one that is sick.

This is wise counsel for composition students as well. The one who asks "How many words do you want?" invariably strings together a poor piece of writing. But the one who focuses on the assignment--a childhood fear, a person I admire--writes something worth reading.

### **The Colonel Sanders Story**

Here's a man sitting on his porch in Kentucky. He's only recently retired from the post office, and he's sitting there when his first Social Security check is delivered. He's very, very discouraged. He thinks to himself, "Is this what life is going to be from now on--sitting on the porch waiting for my check to arrive?"

He decided he wouldn't settle for that, and so he made a list of all of the things he had going for him all the blessings and the capacities, the unique things that were in him. The list was long because he listed everything he could think of and the list was the fact that he was the only person on earth who knew his mother's recipe for fried chicken. It used eleven different herbs and spices.

So he went to a nearby restaurant and asked if he could cook the chicken, and they said yes. It soon became the most popular item on the menu. So he opened his own restaurant, and then others, and a string of restaurants. Eventually Harland Sanders sold the Kentucky Fried Chicken franchise across all of America.

He finally retired a second time (all this happened, you remember, after he had retired from the postal service), and he continued in the service of the company as a public relations representative for a quarter of a million dollars a year till death. Now here was a man who did not allow himself to be defeated by discouragement. He took a look at it recognized it was there, but then went on to look at what he had with which to deal with it and used that.

### **Psalm 90:1-17**

<sup>1</sup>O Lord, you have been our refuge throughout every generation.

<sup>2</sup>Before the mountains were born, before you gave birth to the earth and the world, you were God. You are God from everlasting to everlasting.

<sup>3</sup>You turn mortals back into dust and say, "Return, descendants of Adam."

<sup>4</sup>Indeed, in your sight a thousand years are like a single day, like yesterday—already past—like an hour in the night.

<sup>5</sup>You sweep mortals away. They are a dream. They sprout again in the morning like cut grass.

<sup>6</sup>In the morning they blossom and sprout. In the evening they wither and dry up.

<sup>7</sup>Indeed, your anger consumes us. Your rage terrifies us.

<sup>8</sup>You have set our sins in front of you. You have put our secret sins in the light of your presence.

<sup>9</sup>Indeed, all our days slip away because of your fury. We live out our years like one long sigh.

<sup>10</sup>Each of us lives for 70 years—or even 80 if we are in good health. But the best of them bring trouble and misery. Indeed, they are soon gone, and we fly away.

<sup>11</sup>Who fully understands the power of your anger? A person fears you more when he better understands your fury.

<sup>12</sup>Teach us to number each of our days so that we may grow in wisdom.

<sup>13</sup>Return, LORD! How long...? Change your plans about us, your servants.

<sup>14</sup>Satisfy us every morning with your mercy so that we may sing joyfully and rejoice all our days.

<sup>15</sup>Make us rejoice for as many days as you have made us suffer, for as many years as we have experienced evil.

<sup>16</sup>Let us, your servants, see what you can do. Let our children see your glorious power.

<sup>17</sup>Let the kindness of the Lord our God be with us. Make us successful in everything we do. Yes, make us successful in everything we do.